

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Islamic School for Training and Education

Report published in April, 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Islamic School for Training and Education

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.sslootah.com
Telephone	04-2646001
Address	Muzher - Muhaisnah (1) Dubai
Principal	Faddah Said Ahmed Nasser Lootah
Curriculum	MoE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-17 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 10
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	927
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	363 (39%)
Date of the inspection	11th November to 13th November 2013

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## The context of the school

The Islamic School of Education and Training is located in the Al Muhaisnah area of Dubai, providing education for boys and girls aged three to 17 years, from Kindergarten through to Grade 10. There were 927 students: thirty-nine per cent of these were Emiratis. Classes in the Kindergarten were mixed gender. From Grade 1 onwards boys and girls were taught separately. The school is spread over two sites; boys are based in one building, with the girls and younger boys in the other building.

The school followed the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. There were additional Qur'an recitation lessons from Kindergarten onwards and vocational subjects were offered to students from Grade 10. Students took the relevant curriculum examinations and these were supplemented by internal assessments.

A special feature of the school was a residential component that housed orphans from outside the UAE. The older students benefited from access to excellent technical, media and engineering vocational facilities at the adjoining Technology Centre.

Seventy students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN). There were 55 full-time teachers, including the senior leadership team. The teachers in the school had a range of appropriate academic and teaching qualifications. The president of the Board of Governors had recently assumed the role of overall director of operations based at the school.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- The good and outstanding attainment and progress in Islamic Education in cycles 1,2 and 3;
- The good and outstanding attainment and progress in Arabic in Cycles 2 and 3;
- The quality of relationships between all students and staff;
- The good partnerships with parents and community;
- Excellent technical, media and engineering vocational opportunities for the older students.

### Recommendations

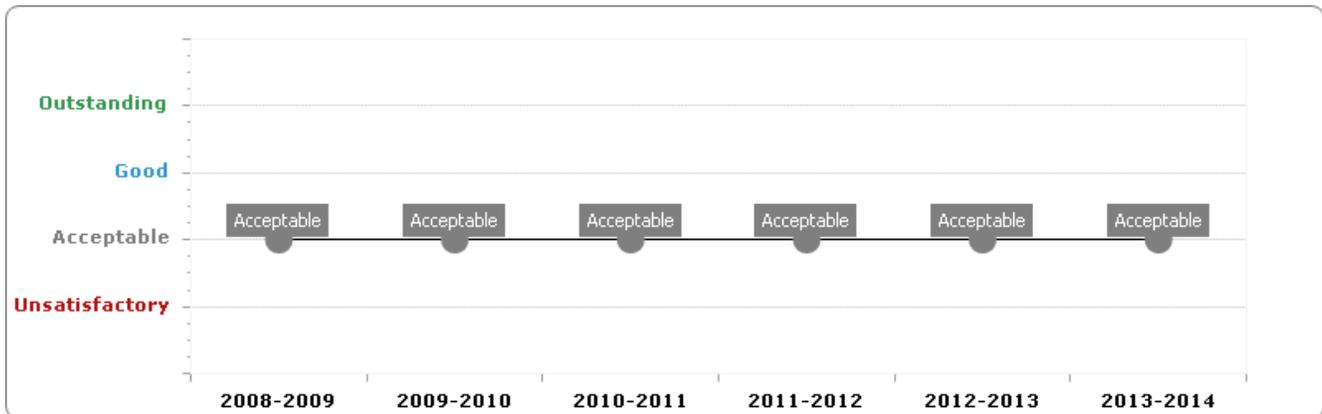
- Improve the consistency of quality teaching and learning in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1
- Further develop assessment processes in lessons and use assessment data to inform lesson planning and to modify teaching and the curriculum to meet the needs of all students;
- Improve the systems for identifying and supporting students with special educational needs throughout the school;
- Develop consistency and accuracy in the monitoring of classroom practice, with a focus on the quality of students' learning and use the information gained to inform improvement planning.

## Progress since the last inspection

The Islamic School for Education and Training provided an acceptable quality of education. It had some good features, which included Islamic Education in all phases. The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1. There had been some improvements as senior leaders had encouraged teachers to share good practice. In Cycles 2 and 3, teaching was good. This had contributed to the improvements in attainment in English and science in Cycle 3.

The school had made limited progress towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. A more focussed action plan had been introduced. The quality of monitoring of teaching and learning was still inconsistent. Educational provision in a minority of classes was not always appropriate, particularly for students with special educational needs. However, with the focussed senior leadership and strong commitment to the shared values, the school had sufficient capacity to improve further.

## Trend of overall performance



## How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Science</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Islamic Education recitation skills were strong across all phases of the school and attainment at this aspect was above expectations for most students. Students' understanding of key Islamic values and Islamic practice was well developed. At a young age students could, for example, explain in detail the value of prayers and how they should be performed. In Arabic as a first language, almost all students had strong listening and speaking skills, especially in Grade 10. Reading skills were well above expectations for the majority of students and those in the higher grades could apply these to unfamiliar texts. In English, most students across the school listened attentively and responded appropriately in spoken or written answers. Older students wrote accurately at length, based on their own note-taking. Across the rest of the school, students were not yet writing at sufficient length. Towards the end of Cycle 1, girls used non-standard units of measure in mathematics and applied their learning to practical everyday situations. Overall, girls performed better than boys. In science, the emphasis in most classes was on the acquisition of factual knowledge. In a growing number of classes, particularly in the girls' section, students were able to connect their learning to the real world, resulting in good attainment. In external assessments, attainment was generally above Dubai averages but below international standards.

Older students made significant progress in acquiring detailed knowledge of Islamic rulings and in understanding the manners expected of a good Muslim. Progress in Qur'an recitation was above expectations across the school. In Arabic as a first language, over time, a majority of students developed their language skills in Arabic well. Their progress was stronger in listening, speaking and reading standard Arabic than in writing. Their learning of other subjects supported and accelerated their progress particularly in reading. Students progressively used English in a range of real-life contexts, such as younger students 'shopping' and conducting opinion surveys. Senior students' command of English benefited from their vocational placements where all communication was in English. Students were developing good calculation skills over time and had become more confident in solving problems. Progress in lessons in the boys' section was hampered by the lack of opportunity for involvement of students in active learning. In science, progress ranged from acceptable to good across the phases. Kindergarten children studied the seasons and investigated mixing of liquids. Grade 10 boys methodically carried out dissections of rats and performed meticulous titrations.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1, and good in Cycles 2 and 3. When given opportunity, the majority of students enjoyed and took responsibility for their own learning. Many were motivated and eager participants who showed increasing skills as learners. A minority were often passive listeners or watchers because the learning activities did not engage them. Most students collaborated well in a range of learning situations whenever they were given meaningful choices. They participated in their learning as partners. Some Cycle 3 students worked effectively in groups, contributing ideas and listening to one another. Younger students were not well-practised in developing skills and understanding and applying this successfully to solving problems. They were not always able to think critically or apply their learning to everyday situations. Students lacked the opportunities to be proficient in finding out new information from or making the best use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to become more successful learners.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The personal responsibility of students was good in all phases. Kindergarten children followed the instructions of their teachers quickly and safely and older students acted as monitors at break time. Students were almost always engaged positively in their classes and relationships between staff and students were good. At break times, almost all girls and the majority of boys behaved responsibly and thoughtfully. Assemblies were characterised by good self-discipline and the engagement of almost all students. Students were able to discuss the features of healthy lifestyles, and aspects of road safety. Attendance was good.

Students showed clear understanding of the influence of Islam on Dubai and an appreciation of Emirati culture and traditions in all phases. The school provided an environment in which Islam was an integral part of each student's life. All students took advantage of this and developed their understanding, for example, of how to apply Islamic values in all field of life outside the school. Almost all students were actively engaged in preparations for National Day and older students could discuss UAE culture and traditions at length.

Economic and environmental understanding was good in all phases. Community links were particularly strong in Cycle 3 through vocational work outside the school. Students acted as monitors at break times to assist with student management and led sections of assemblies. Senior students defined success in life as doing your best and getting a good job. They were aware of the strategies for achieving this. Environmental

awareness was strong across phases and many students had taken action through activities such as fund raising, clean up days and tree planting.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. Most teachers knew their subjects well and a majority knew how best to teach them. Age-appropriate practices were not always evident in Kindergarten. In the better lessons, teachers' interactions with students ensured that they were active participants in their learning and made good progress. Occasionally, there was far too much teacher talk and control, particularly in Kindergarten. The quality of lesson planning was inconsistent; only a minority of Kindergarten and Cycle 1 teachers planned lessons imaginatively or made good use of resources to enable students to learn successfully. The quality of the learning objectives was variable as was their usefulness in helping students to understand what they had learned during their lessons. Teaching strategies did not consistently meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and those with special talents. Many teachers did not expect enough of students in taking responsibility for their own learning. They did not facilitate collaborative or independent learning sufficiently, nor require students to think deeply.

The quality of assessment was acceptable across the school. Most teachers had some knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of those they taught. Students received encouraging and positive feedback about the quality of their work but often teachers did not give sufficiently detailed information to help students make better progress. Assessment systems to monitor the achievements of students, to identify what they had learned and to involve them in evaluating their learning were at an early stage of development. Insufficient use was being made of the detailed performance profiles included in the National Assessment Programme (NAP) publication. Arrangements to track and record progress were not yet consistent enough. The analysis and use of data was underdeveloped, an example being the design and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Too little was seen of assessment information being used by teachers to modify their lesson planning to meet the needs of all students or to ensure that all students were making appropriate progress.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The quality of the curriculum was good in Cycle 3 and acceptable in the other phases. The school aimed to place learning at the heart of the curriculum and to enable its students to lead fulfilling and useful lives in society, in accordance with Islamic values. It placed considerable emphasis on students developing additional language skills, and planned the curriculum accordingly. Much of the curriculum, from Kindergarten onwards, and all of the activity in the training centre, was taught through the medium of English. A wide range of vocational courses helped older students to develop skills that prepared them well for the next stage of their education, or employment. These additional elements combined well with the Ministry of Education curriculum to provide a broad and balanced education distinctive to the school. Through regular review of the curriculum, teachers sought to improve what they offered to students. They had begun to plan students' learning using a wider range of teaching resources in addition to the subject textbooks. This approach worked best when it was carefully and imaginatively planned to enable progression in students' research skills as well as subject knowledge. However, this was not yet consistent practice across the school.

The curriculum design was good in Cycle 3 and acceptable in other phases. For almost all of the relatively small number of older students, the school had skilfully modified its curriculum in ways that effectively met their learning and personal development needs. These students benefited from a choice of well-planned vocational opportunities that improved their prospects for further education and employment. The school had not yet planned to the same extent for students in other groups, including those with special educational needs (SEN).

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students were acceptable. All areas of the school were appropriately supervised and good safety arrangements were in place. The school was clean and provided a secure environment for students and staff. Medical and personal records were well maintained. The school promoted healthy eating through projects and by providing healthy foods for lunches and for sale in the school shop. Students engaged in physical activities during break times and other periods. The social worker liaised well with the staff, students and parents in promoting child protection awareness. At the time of the inspection the school did not have a written child protection policy.

The school's arrangements for supporting all students were acceptable in Kindergarten, Cycles 1 and 2, and good in Cycle 3. Teachers enjoyed a good rapport with students of all ages and there was mutual respect. Kindergarten students were supported well when settling into school routines. The social worker had

successfully introduced a number of projects involving students, teachers and parents aimed at encouraging good behaviour. The school effectively promoted good attendance and punctuality. Older students received helpful guidance on the next stages of education and employment. The school did not fully apply the SEN categories as set out by KHDA. The processes to identify students with SEN were underdeveloped resulting in little assistance or curriculum modification of the curriculum in a majority of classes. The school was initiating a process of developing IEPs but their impact across all subjects was limited.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership in the school was acceptable and senior staff demonstrated the capacity to deliver further improvements. The school's founder had based himself in the administration area in order to use his personal presence to promote further improvements. Leaders' roles and responsibilities were defined clearly and increasingly effective teams, including subject coordinators, contributed to on-going school review and improvement. Nevertheless, leaders did not always have a sufficiently detailed or accurate views of international standards data. Communication was good across the school and with the broader community.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Senior staff and coordinators carried out lesson observations to evaluate and help improve teaching. They recognised the need to identify aspects for improvement and new priorities but this still required further development. For example, reviews of lessons and work scrutiny did not always focus on attainment or progress of students. The school had made limited progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and the leadership team. There were effective communication systems with parents, including regular written and oral reports. Links with the community were established and effectively supported the curriculum. The Mothers' Council provided a formal communication channel with the school leaders and parents valued the welcoming 'open door' approach of the school.

Governance was acceptable. The Board of Governors continued to oversee the school, supporting the Principal with advice and reviewing the school's improvement planning activities. Governors assisted the school's leaders in ensuring statutory requirements were met. The Board responded to ideas from parents for school improvements, but did not always act upon them. There was no elected parent, teacher or community representative on the Board. The Board had a strategic and advisory role and held the professional leadership of the school to account for its performance.

Staffing, facilities and resources were of acceptable quality. A strong aspect of the school's provision was the link with the adjoining Technology Centre with its excellent resources for older students. The outdoor environment was enhanced by a grassed play area and school garden. All teachers were qualified and, along with the team of support staff, were generally deployed effectively. However, a minority of teachers were being asked to teach subjects in which they were neither well qualified or experienced.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Overall, the attainment and progress of Emirati students generally matched that of the student population across all phases. Most students began school with low levels of English, but their starting points in other subjects was similar to other students. Attainment in Islamic Education, Arabic, English and science was good or better in Cycles 2 and 3. Progress was stronger in Islamic Education and Arabic in these phases. In line with their peers, Emirati students' attendance was good. When the opportunities were presented to them, Emirati students engaged actively in lessons and homework in all phases. Written and oral reports to parents were informative and accurate, explaining the students' attainment levels. Preparation for adult life was effective and encouraged students to gain awareness of the world of work. Emirati parents utilised the school's open door policy and feedback from formal reports to become involved in their children's education. The governors were pro-active in their interactions with the Emirati families, valuing their contributions to the school's improvement planning.

## How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The assessment and identification of students with SEN and teachers' knowledge and understanding of their needs was under-developed at the school. The school had no SEN policy, no designated co-ordinator of SEN and did not identify students with SEN across the range of categories. Nevertheless, the school had made some efforts to identify and assist students with SEN, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic with some success. However, this was more variable in other subjects. Support for students with SEN and their progress was better in Kindergarten and in the girls' school. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were written for a few students. These IEPs were at an early stage of development. They lacked parental input and had resulted in little improvement of the students' learning and progress. The frequency and quality of differentiation in lesson planning to support students with SEN was inconsistent throughout the school.

## How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge and planned lessons well to meet the needs of most students. They provided good models for students in the use of spoken standard Arabic, which supported their progress in developing listening and speaking skills. Most lessons were characterised by good use of dialogue and discussions which engaged most students. Teachers' questions offered high levels of challenge for students particularly in the middle and higher grades. They used ICT well to support learning. However, there was often limited focus on developing independent learning skills particularly for older students.

The school's curriculum was soundly based on the Ministry of Education standards and was enhanced by teachers in most grades in order to achieve the school's vision. It was well supported by a good range of additional reading resources prepared by the school. An area of strength in the curriculum was the opportunities to consolidate listening, speaking and reading skills in Arabic through other subjects, particularly Islamic Education. There were limited opportunities for students in Cycles 2 and 3 to write creatively or at length for different audiences.

## What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	54	27%
	Last year	151	17%
Teachers	17		31%
Students	12		70%

\*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Only a few parents and a minority of teachers and students responded to the surveys. Most students and their parents felt good progress was made in Islamic Education. A majority of the parents and students felt that students were making good progress in Arabic as a first language, English, mathematics and science. Just over half of parents believed the school prepared their children well for the next stages in lives. Most parents, students and teachers felt that the behaviour of students was good. A quarter of students felt their school reports and meetings with teachers were regular and helpful. Most stakeholders agreed that the students were treated fairly at the school. Students and parents commented that there was a good selection of extra-curricular activities for older students. A majority of parents felt the school was well led and that school leaders listened to their opinions about the school.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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