

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Khaleej National School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Khaleej National School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsakns.com
Telephone	04-2822707
Address	PO Box 26780, Dubai
Principal	Valerie Thompson
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/ Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,864
Number of Emirati students	1,241 (67%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 14th to Thursday 17th November 2011

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The context of the school

Al Khaleej National School, located in Al Garhoud, is a private school providing education in English for boys and girls aged three to 18 years. At the time of the inspection the school roll had increased to 1,864 students with the recent addition of 636 new students. The school followed a US curriculum. Student attendance was acceptable.

There were 126 teachers and 31 assistants; 32 teachers were newly appointed in the current school year. The Principal had been in her post for six years and led the school with a deputy and a six-person senior leadership team.

Students were grouped into 72 classes from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Classes from Kindergarten to Grade 4 were mixed and from Grades 5 to 12 there were separate classes for boys and girls. About 1,240 students, or approximately 67 percent of the students, were Emiratis. Fifty-five different nationalities were represented among the student population.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Al Khaleej National School provided an acceptable quality of education, characterised both by its clear Islamic values and the choice of a combined US and Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. It had some good features, which included improved progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language in the middle and high schools. Student numbers had increased considerably since the last inspection and space and resources were restricted due to the increased population. The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable throughout the school. A variety of 'booster' classes provided support for beginning English language learners. However, certain teachers did not have a well-developed understanding of the needs of English language learners.

The school had taken the recommendations from the previous inspection report seriously. A variety of strategies were in place to support the improvement of teaching, learning and student behaviour. Nevertheless, plans did not clearly state the expected effects upon students' learning, and there was

insufficient monitoring of their implementation. Expectations of students needed to be raised, since the majority did not demonstrate independent learning or critical thinking skills. Consequently, the provision was not always appropriate, particularly for the most able students. The school had recently appointed an expanded leadership team, but it had not implemented all the necessary changes.

Key strengths

- The improved progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language;
- The well-developed speaking and listening skills across all subjects;
- The students' knowledge, understanding and application of Islamic values;
- The improved systems for the identification of students with special educational needs.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in the key subjects through a rigorous process of monitoring and accountability;
- Improve the quality of teaching to focus on students' understanding, skill development and responsibility for their own learning and behaviour;
- Use assessment data to track individual students' progress and inform lesson planning;
- Ensure that Kindergarten children have opportunities to learn actively with a focus on language development and choices;
- Ensure a safe exit for all students at the end of the school day.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Attainment was acceptable in all key subjects in all phases except Arabic as an additional language, which was unsatisfactory in the middle and high schools, and Islamic Education which was good in the elementary grades. The program introduced to support recitation skills and memorization of The Holy Qur'an had raised attainment in the elementary phase. Girls effectively related knowledge from Islamic Education to their lives. Students taking Arabic as an additional language in the higher grades, whose

attainment was unsatisfactory, were frequently new to the school and beginners in both English and Arabic. In English, at all grade levels, speaking and listening skills were well developed. Across the school in all subjects, students could understand and express their understanding far better orally than through reading and writing. In mathematics and science, students had secure knowledge but lacked the ability to solve problems, analyse data or apply knowledge to real life situations. Attainment in the higher grades in economics and business was good. Examination data, which was mostly internal, indicated that attainment was gradually improving in all key subjects.

Progress across the school was acceptable in all key subjects with the exception of Islamic Education, where it was good in the elementary, middle and high phases. The progress of students of Arabic as an additional language was enhanced by well-differentiated programmes. Students made secure progress in developing knowledge in most subjects. However, they lacked opportunities to make similar progress developing thinking skills, because they were not often enough able to apply what they were learning to real life situations. Students with special educational needs made good progress in their withdrawal groups, but their progress was not sustained in most of their mainstream classes.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

Attitudes and behavior were good in the Kindergarten and high school, but only acceptable in the elementary and middle phases. In Kindergarten children followed routines and demonstrated positive relationships. In the elementary and middle phases students behaved appropriately when supervised, but were not always self-disciplined. In the high school grades, students had more positive relationships and a sense of responsibility, supporting the values the school placed upon caring and teamwork. Attendance over the last term was acceptable. Students' understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local culture were acceptable in the Kindergarten and elementary phases, but good in the middle and high school phases. Across the school students highlighted the effect of Islam on their personal lives and their roles as learners; they respected the local culture and traditions. In the middle and high phases, students stressed the importance of faith in making them better citizens. Similarly, their economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in the Kindergarten and elementary years and good amongst older students. Children in Kindergarten understood the role of work and of money. Elementary students could relate some environmental concerns but had limited awareness of their implications. Older students demonstrated good economic and environmental understanding.. The Environmental Group had been involved in cleaning local beaches and tree-planting, while other groups visited homes for the elderly.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of teaching was acceptable across all levels of the school. Teaching was particularly strong in Islamic Education and the high school business classes. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge and shared their learning objectives with the students in age-appropriate terms. Most lessons were well planned. However, the pace of instruction often did not allow for a review of what had been taught or a preview of future activities. While teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources to enhance their lessons, most lessons remained text book based. Differentiated worksheets were used in a minority of classes. Most instruction in the Kindergarten did not allow for independent, creative learning opportunities. The use of differentiated instruction was inconsistent. Writing strategies were not taught consistently. More opportunities were needed for students to express their thinking and creativity through writing across the curriculum. The most successful lessons benefited from real life examples, connecting learning to the students' lives.

Students' learning in all grades was acceptable. Most students had positive attitudes towards learning, were well behaved, well prepared for lessons and remained on task and motivated throughout their classes. The most successful examples of consistently high learning mirrored the strongest areas of teaching: Islamic Education in the middle and high school. A few students in higher grades used ICT for projects and assignments. Students rarely took initiative in their learning; for example, students took notes only in response to the teacher's direction. Most student writing samples reflected a lack of originality and reliance on copied material.

The assessment of learning was acceptable across the school. The analysis of student progress was becoming increasingly more sophisticated and used to focus instruction in the best classes. Parents and students were able to access assessment information through an electronic portal. The graduating classes

had displayed gradual improvement in their SAT mathematics scores over the past three years. However, the absence of regular use of external benchmarks limited national and international comparisons. The randomized process of administering the end-of-term examinations added validity to the internal assessments. More specific regular feedback to students was required in order to help them understand how well they were doing and thus be able to improve their work.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable across all phases. It had breadth and balance and was reviewed regularly. The school offered art, music, physical education and ICT as part of the regular schedule. Islamic Education and Arabic were available in the Kindergarten and Arabic as an additional language was taught at Grade 10 and above. Field trips, most frequently for the younger students, enriched the curriculum as did the after-school program which included karate, art, French, leadership and team sports. Students were able to handle increasingly complex ideas as they progressed from grade to grade, but the priority was knowledge acquisition, with few opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and research skills. The Kindergarten program in particular was not well-suited to young learners. It lacked opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning, make choices and develop language skills. Levels of differentiation were available in the curriculum, but the more able students were not sufficiently challenged in lessons and the less able were not accommodated to an adequate degree.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The health and safety arrangements were good. The school provided a safe, hygienic and secure environment. All entrances to the school were guarded and visitors to the school were closely monitored. The school had improved safety measures in the swimming pool through the deployment of an additional lifeguard and nannies to help with supervision. Staff members ensured the safety of students as they moved around the school. The arrangements for the arrival and departure of students transported by cars posed a potential hazard to their safety. Buildings and facilities were well maintained. Fire safety drills and maintenance of equipment were carried out regularly. Well maintained records showed that no serious accidents had happened at the school. A doctor and two nurses provided good medical care and kept appropriate records of health checks and the administration of medicines. They monitored students who were overweight and supported them in adopting healthier eating habits and taking more exercise. Healthy lifestyles were promoted through the curriculum, workshops and extra-curricular sporting activities. The school provided mostly healthy food options for students. Staff members dealt sensitively with students' concerns and ensured that the school's child protection policy was implemented.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. In general, relationships between staff members and students were positive, but at times there was a tense atmosphere in the boys' section. Systems to manage behaviour across the school did not allow students to take responsibility for their actions and this limited their personal development. Most teachers knew their students well. When students had worries or concerns, they were comfortable to seek ask teachers' for advice and support. In lessons, teachers did not sufficiently challenge the more able students, or modify work for the less able. Arrangements for careers guidance were acceptable, and the school recognised the need for better vocational guidance for special education students. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator and guidance counselor had assessed students with particular learning needs, or other concerns. There were precisely written individual educational plans, showing how to adapt teaching and giving focused targets for improvement. The support for these students was effective and enabled most to make acceptable progress. The school maintained records of attendance and lateness, but did not analyse them to show patterns or trends affecting particular students or events. Teaching time was lost during the day when teachers had insufficient time to move between different parts of the school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was acceptable overall. The Principal promoted a team spirit and led a unified team of senior managers, subject and team leaders which had been enlarged since the last inspection. Leadership was most effective in the Islamic Education, Arabic and Special Education departments, where the needs of students had been accurately identified and successful strategies were in place to meet them. However, initiatives had not yet resulted in significant improvements to student attainment and progress throughout the school and aspects of discipline management required a more consistent approach.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. New subject leaders had engaged in the process with enthusiasm and their work had led to improvements. For example, in Islamic Education, the students' recitation skills had developed through focused review. However, the school lacked a clear idea of starting points and thus could not set accurate expectations for improvement. Leaders had taken action to address the recommendations in the previous report to change instructional practices to a learner-centred approach. The majority of teachers had responded well to this priority; the Islamic Education and Arabic departments had made the most progress. In other subjects, despite greater clarity in curriculum objectives there had not been enough focus on learning outcomes for students. The school demonstrated an acceptable capacity for continuing improvement.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. Parents were supportive of the school, especially as they considered that their children were happy and enjoyed being at school. They thought teachers were caring and approachable; if they brought issues to their attention they were quickly resolved. The school had new strategies to partner with parents, successfully engaging them in workshops about curriculum and their children's development. The newly formed Parents' Support Group was active in social activities; it was also a channel of communication with the governors of the school. However, parents were largely recipients of the school's decision-making processes rather than active participants. Reports

about academic progress were regular and informative; parents could request additional reports at any time. Links with the business community were particularly effective in extending learning beyond the classroom.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The governors had a strong commitment to the school and a realistic overview of its work. Their monitoring of development was adequate but did not focus enough on learning outcomes and therefore did not sufficiently hold the school to account regarding required improvements in student attainment, progress and behaviour. Governors supported the school through increased provision of professional development and networking with partner schools. Regular consultation with parents and students took place on a range of issues by means of questionnaires and random sampling of parents' views.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Following the recent expansion of enrolment, space in classrooms and recreational areas was limited. Specialist facilities for subjects such as ICT and science were satisfactory, although they were not always used to provide opportunities for active learning. Resources in the Kindergarten and elementary phases were not sufficient to allow active learning and choices for young children.

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	62	4%
	Last year	177	16%
Teachers	16		13%
Students	31		10%

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

A very few parents, teachers and senior students responded to the survey. Consequently, their views were not representative. Parents who responded were generally satisfied with the school and their children's progress in the key subjects. Students expressed a lower degree of satisfaction with the school than the parents, especially regarding the range of subjects available to them. A few senior students indicated that school leaders did not listen to their opinions about the school. Teachers expressed positive views on all aspects of the school's provision and leadership.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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