

INSPECTION REPORT

Deira International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Deira International School

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Location | Festival City |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.disdubai.ae |
| Telephone | 04-2325552 |
| Address | PO Box 79043, Dubai Festival City |
| Principal | Jeff Smith |
| Curriculum | UK/IB |
| Gender of students | Boys and Girls |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups | 3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13 |
| Attendance | Acceptable |
| Number of students on roll | 1,261 |
| Number of Emirati students | 167 (13%) |
| Date of the inspection | 27th February to 1st March 2012 |

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The context of the school

Deira International School is located in Festival City. It is a private school providing education for boys and girls from the Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years.

The curriculum was based on the English National Curriculum with the International Baccalaureate (IB) and vocational courses at the post-16 stage. Students took International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) at the end of Year 11 and the IB Diploma or Certificate at the end of Year 13. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,261 students on roll with 83 different nationalities represented. One hundred and sixty-seven students (13 per cent) were Emirati.

There were 130 full-time teachers, including the Director and senior management team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications.

The new Director had taken up his post in January 2012, eight weeks before the inspection.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Deira International School provided a good quality of education, an improvement since the last inspection. There was a strong drive for improvement, with the leadership team and teaching staff sharing the vision and determination to ensure all students did as well as they could. Parents held the school in high regard and were especially pleased with the school's welcoming ethos and its inclusive, international nature. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning were outstanding. Good teaching engaged and motivated students in most lessons and enabled them to make good progress in English, mathematics and Arabic as an additional language. Their engagement and enthusiasm was generally strong in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and science. Although their rate of progress was improving in these subjects, it was at an acceptable level.

Effective methods for assessing students' attainment had been established. However, the use of data from assessment information to track students' progress over time was not consistent. Staff members took care to get to know individual students and their needs. This meant that those with specific learning needs

were quickly identified and provided with good support. Strong partnerships with parents and the wider community made a valuable contribution to students' learning and personal development.

Key strengths

- The students' outstanding behaviour and extremely positive attitudes, which made a valuable contribution to their academic progress and personal development;
- Teachers were very successful in engaging students, motivating them to make their best efforts and encouraging them to reflect on their own learning;
- The curriculum included many practical activities which brought learning to life and engaged all groups of students;
- Students' welfare was given a high priority and they benefitted from well-organised support that focused on their individual needs, particularly those who were second language English learners;
- The strong, determined and effective leaders who had successfully embedded improvements.

Recommendations

- Build upon the good start made in accelerating students' progress in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and science, in order to raise levels of attainment in these subjects;
- Further develop the systems for tracking students' progress and analysing assessment data to provide an overview of students' achievement through each year and across each phase;
- Ensure that the individual education plans for students with special educational needs are written in more accessible language for students;
- Ensure that all staff members are trained in the implementation of the new child protection policy;
- Ensure that the time allocated for Islamic Education and Arabic is fully compliant with statutory requirements.

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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Islamic Education | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as a first language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Good |
| Arabic as an additional language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Good | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Not Applicable |
| English | | | | |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Mathematics | | | | |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Science | | | | |
| Attainment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable across the school with strengths in the understanding and implementation of Islamic etiquette, morals and values. Students' ability to follow the rules of recitation was relatively weak, as was their understanding of the links between different aspects of the subject, for example, The Holy Qur'an and Fiqh laws. The majority of students studying Arabic as a first language demonstrated strong listening skills but other aspects of the subject were weaker. Those studying Arabic

as an additional language demonstrated relatively strong listening and reading skills. Speaking was more developed in the secondary phase than in the primary. While writing was a strong feature of secondary students' performance, it was in line with expectations in the primary phases. Students' attainment in English across the school was good. Most primary students read fluently and many did so with expression and good understanding, although their written presentation was not consistently good. Most secondary students developed their writing skills well. By post-16, most students were able to analyse and compare novels and plays and to write insightful reports. In mathematics, early years children had a good understanding of number and could recognise and describe two-dimensional and three dimensional shapes. Primary school children knew number bonds and multiplication facts well and could use the four operations and interpret graphs. Students in the lower secondary classes had very good knowledge and understanding of algebra, quadratics and geometry. This was further developed through calculus and statistics for the oldest students. Across the school, students' ability to read, understand and solve word problems was less well-developed. In science, children in the Foundation Stage gained an appropriate knowledge of the world around them and could ask simple questions based on it. Other students developed sound knowledge and understanding of the key concepts studied. They developed a relevant range of scientific skills and carried out experiments proficiently. However, their investigative skills were less well developed.

Progress in Islamic Education was good in the primary years while acceptable in the secondary and post-16 phases. Progress in general was better in understanding and applying Islamic etiquettes, morals and values than in applying the correct recitation rules in both The Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth. Students studying Arabic as a first language showed better progress in the primary and post-16 phases of the school than in the secondary phase. Speaking skills were the fastest to improve while writing skills were the slowest. Students studying Arabic as an additional language made good progress in the four skills of Arabic. The most considerable improvement in their skills was noted in reading and writing. A majority of students entered the school with few English skills. Children in the Foundation Stage made good progress in English in speaking, listening and early skills in reading and writing. In the older phases, students made more rapid progress in reading than in writing. In mathematics, students made good progress in measures, number operations and data-handling. This provided a secure basis for later years, where students also progressed well, particularly in algebra, geometry and statistics. Although progress in science was acceptable across the school, students' investigative skills were less well developed overall than other aspects.

Emirati students, a growing proportion of the school population, achieved as well as other students. Their behaviour and attitudes were outstanding. They were mature and had very respectful and effective relationships with other students, teachers and school staff. The curriculum was enriched with a variety of extra-curricular activities to help them keep their own identity and be proud of it. This was especially

evident in Islamic Education and Arabic subjects through visits to Islamic heritage sites, museums and landmarks. Emiratis were proud to take part in the UAE's 40th anniversary celebrations and were looking forward to taking a full part in the school's international day.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture | Good | Outstanding | Good | Good |
| Civic, economic and environmental understanding | Good | Outstanding | Good | Good |

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They behaved respectfully, kindly and politely with schoolmates and adults throughout the school. In the classroom, at break times, supervised or unsupervised, students consistently behaved in ways that demonstrated keen understanding of their responsibilities to themselves and to others, as members of a diverse school community. Friendships abounded among students throughout the school and many reported that their friendships with others from around the world were a cherished part of their school experience. Students' attitudes were positive; they were happy and excited to be in school. They exuded enthusiasm and love of learning. They were self-reliant and hard-working, and took their responsibility for themselves and others seriously.

Students demonstrated very good understanding of Islam and its effects upon the lives of people in the society of the UAE and the Muslim world. Younger students knew that Dubai was a safe place to live due to the influence of Islamic values on people's behaviour. Students exhibited good awareness of local and international cultures and traditions and knew the underlying values behind them. Most were appreciative of living in UAE and preferred it to other countries due to the international exposure it provided for them. Across all phases, students were well aware of their rights and responsibilities. They valued the views of

others as much as they did of their own. They had very good attitudes and took initiative in issues of interest or concern to them.

Students demonstrated very good understanding of the reasons that lead to economic prosperity in UAE and reverted this not only to the discovery of oil, but also to the visionary rulers of the emirates. Students were very much aware of the threats endangering the environment. They talked extensively about renewable and non-renewable sources of energy. Their understanding of pollution was well-developed and they suggested ways of saving nature through being more responsible by conserving energy, reducing carbon footprint and adopting environment friendly lifestyles.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Quality of students' learning | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Assessment | Good | Good | Good | Good |

Teaching was of good quality in all phases of the school. Most teachers had strong subject knowledge and understood that students learn in a variety of ways. They planned according to the range of students' needs using a variety of resources, including technology, to enhance and enrich learning. Language development was a priority in all lessons. The majority of teachers displayed and discussed learning objectives with the students at the start of each lesson to help them understand how to be successful learners. They valued and displayed students' work. In the best lessons teachers acted as facilitators enabling students to learn independently and collaboratively. The majority of teachers asked increasingly difficult questions to challenge students' thinking. In some lessons, however, particularly in Arabic and Islamic Education, the questions posed were inappropriate and did not help students to develop higher order and critical thinking skills.

The quality of students' learning was good in all phases. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners. They responded well in most lessons, especially when it involved practical activities. They were confident; working independently and they enjoyed sharing ideas with their classmates. Most students could see the

relevance of classroom learning in their daily lives. For example, in science they learned about water purification. Their skills in problem-solving were not well-developed in mathematics. Although students usually completed their homework, they were not accustomed to carrying out research independently. Nor were they used to reflecting critically on what they had learnt to help them improve. In a minority of lessons students were passive, especially when their teachers dominated the lesson or when language was a barrier to learning.

The assessment of learning was of good quality in all phases. Students' attainment was regularly assessed, recorded and analysed to check on how individuals and year groups were performing. The resulting information was used in a variety of helpful ways to promote improvement in students' learning and academic outcomes. However, tracking systems were not fully comprehensive or systematic. There was more emphasis on measuring their attainment than on tracking students' progress. Students had targets in all subjects and generally understood what they needed to do to reach them, especially in the primary phase. However, they were not referred to as a matter of routine in lessons to help students take on responsibility for their learning. Nevertheless, in some classes, students were involved in assessing their own learning. The quality of marking was variable across the school. Some marking was very detailed and gave students helpful information about how well they were doing and what to do to improve further, but not all teachers did this.

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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Curriculum quality | Good | Good | Good | Good |

The curriculum was good, as it was well developed across all grades and disciplines. The school provided an excellent breadth, depth and balance in the curriculum across a wide range of subject areas from the arts to the sciences. Within this context, there were ample opportunities for students to pursue areas of personal interest. The quality of the curriculum was abundantly evident in students' continuous engagement in learning, for example in music and physical education, and the work they produced for their art exhibits. To enhance continuity and progression within the curriculum, teachers communicated across grades and phases to ensure students were prepared for the next level. Leaders engaged in continuous curriculum development in an effort to ensure good provision for all students in all subjects. Heads of departments and counsellors worked collaboratively to support students in their personal growth and development. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of the wide range of students' abilities and interests. Students with special educational needs received good support to help them develop to the best of their ability. Those with particular talents or gifts were challenged and supported to achieve the

high standards of which they were capable. The school provided ample opportunities for students to engage in enrichment and extra-curricular activities, and fostered partnerships with organisations outside the school to enhance learning. The time apportioned for Islamic Education and Arabic did not fully meet government requirements.

How well does the school protect and support students?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Health and Safety | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Quality of Support | Good | Good | Good | Good |

The provision for students' health and safety was good across the school. The school buildings were kept clean and secure. Many students travelled to and from school in well-maintained buses, accompanied by a supervisor. Student drop-off and pick-up procedures for buses were well managed. Despite the best efforts of the school, inconsiderate parking of private cars by some parents was a major safety hazard to students and required review. The school doctor and nurses provided good medical care. Student files and medication were securely stored and the administration of medicine carefully recorded. Lifts provided students with physical disability access to the upper floors. Fire drills were regular and effective. Students were given good advice on health education by clinic staff and visiting speakers. A 'Health Week' promoted healthy living. Students had been successful in having the school canteen serve more healthy food options. Child protection procedures had been reviewed and set out in a comprehensive new policy statement, though the staff had not been trained in the implementation.

The quality of support for students was good in all phases. Teachers and students had excellent relationships, built on mutual respect and a shared desire to help all students learn. Staff members had established and clearly articulated guidelines, expectations, rewards and consequences for students' behaviour. They were designed to create a school community focused first and foremost on helping students excel academically, intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally. Teachers consistently supported students and held them accountable for their behaviour. Useful guidance regarding future education and career choices was provided through a university and college counseling office. A wide range of services was provided to help students with special educational needs make good progress. Assessment on admission and through the year quickly identified students who needed additional help. Teachers worked closely with specialist staff to provide effective support in lessons and in small withdrawal groups. Individual education plans were comprehensive but not always expressed terms that students could easily understand.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good. Strong and insightful leadership by the new Director built well upon the effective work of the senior management team, ensuring a common sense of purpose, a shared vision and clear understanding of the agreed strategic direction. He was held in high regard by students, parents and staff. Strong leadership by the principals, deputies and subject leaders of each phase had successfully sustained the schools strengths and had led to further improvements since the last inspection. This indicated a good capacity for continuous improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Rigorous self-evaluation by senior leaders regarding the school's overall performance provided a secure basis for development planning. This was having a positive effect upon driving improvements. The monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observations was exceptionally effective. For example, additional staff training on questioning was followed up by focused visits, which provided leaders with evidence of its effects. Assessment data was beginning to be analysed in order to identify trends, although this system was not sufficiently embedded to inform the evaluation of students' performance.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. Successful efforts were made to engage with parents and to elicit their support. Parents made very positive comments about the welcome they received from staff, including administrative staff, support staff and security personnel. A strong and active parents and friends association contributed to the sense of community. Well-established communication systems included frequent newsletters, and parents appreciated the information that the school provided to help them support their children's learning at home. They received good feedback, through written reports and consultation meetings about how their children were getting on. Useful links with local businesses and charities had been established, for example in securing highly appropriate work placements for IB students.

Governance of the school was good. The owners had good links with the management company. Both groups were clear about their roles and their relationship with the Director and senior leadership team. The Chief Education Officer of the management company was based at the school and this enabled excellent day-to-day liaison. The chairmen of the primary and secondary parent groups met regularly with him and this enabled parents to represent their views directly to the board and influence its decisions. For example, as a result of such links the school had introduced Arabic in the Foundation Stage classes, reviewed homework and reporting procedures, and improved provision for athletics and the performing arts.

The management of the school was good. Excellent administrative procedures meant that the school ran very smoothly. Staff members were well qualified and their skills and expertise were used to good effect. The school recognised the need to further distribute leadership responsibilities. Plans were in hand to revise the management structure in order to increase efficiency, provide career opportunities within the school and help retain the most effective people. The premises were spacious and well maintained. They provided students and staff members with a pleasant working environment. The libraries were very well stocked and provided valuable resources, including a wide range of material to support learning in Islamic Education and Arabic.

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 | 250 | 27% |
| | Last year | 198 | 21% |
| Teachers | 77 | | 58% |
| Students | 126 | | 52% |

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

About a quarter of the parents responded to the survey. Almost all were positive about all aspects of the school. They were particularly pleased with the inclusive ethos and the behaviour and attitudes of the students. Almost all parents said their children were happy, safe and looked after well. They believed that

students with special educational needs benefitted from good support. The majority believed that the quality and amount of homework was appropriate, although a few disagreed. They were happy with the quality of teaching and the positive relationships between staff and students. The views of teachers were extremely positive. They felt valued and that their skills were appreciated. They expressed a strong team spirit and were happy about the opportunities provided for further training. Senior students were very positive about their relationships with staff, and way teachers treated them fairly and supported their learning. They were happy with the range of extra-curricular activities and the way that the school encouraged them to take responsibility and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

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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