

INSPECTION REPORT

Deira International School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Deira International School

Location	Festival City
Type of school	Private
Website	www.disdubai.ae
Telephone	04-232-5552
Address	P.O. Box 79043, Dubai
Principal	Jeff Smith
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage 1 to Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,404
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	176 (13%)
Date of the inspection	18th to 21st February 2013

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The context of the school

Deira International School in Festival City is a private school providing education for boys and girls from the Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,404 students on roll with 83 different nationalities represented. One hundred and seventy six students were Emirati.

The curriculum was based on the National Curriculum of England. The school was divided into four phases. The Foundation Stage catered for children in the early years, and the primary school included students from Years 1 to 6. In the secondary school, which included Years 7 to 11, students took the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations at the end of Year 11. The International Baccalaureate (IB) and vocational courses were the final Post-16 phase, Years 12 and 13. Students received the IB Diploma at the end of Year 13.

There were 143 full-time teachers, including the Director and senior management team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. There were 30 teaching assistants, most of whom were located in the primary phase.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress of students in mathematics, English and science across most phases, and in Arabic as a second language;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of students across all phases;
- The school had excellent arrangements to help ensure students' health and safety;
- The high quality of facilities and resources in the school.

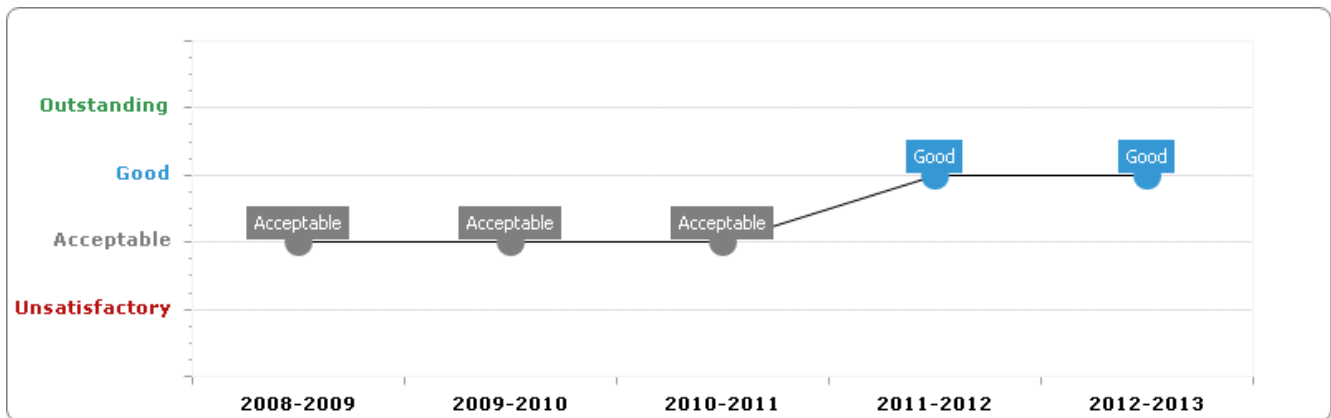
Recommendations

- Raise the expectations and level of challenge to students in Islamic Education and Arabic lessons;
- Increase the opportunities for students' leadership, and deepen their understanding of Emirati traditions and global issues;
- Ensure that teaching better matches the needs of students of all abilities;
- Increase students' opportunities for critical thinking and independent learning, particularly for the transition from Year 11 to the IB Diploma Programme;
- Ensure greater consistency in the identification, quality of support and monitoring of progress of students with special education needs.

Progress since the last inspection

- There was improvement in the attainment and progress of students in science between the Foundation Stage and the secondary years;
- The school had developed outstanding arrangements for promoting healthy living and ensuring the safety of students;
- The facilities and resources for learning had improved.

Trend of overall performance



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	Acceptable
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	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

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

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How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Outstanding

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

Most students in Islamic Education in the primary had acceptable memorisation skills. However, these skills were less well developed elsewhere. Most students had age-appropriate knowledge of Islamic values and etiquette. In Arabic as a first language, most had acceptable listening and reading skills. Speaking skills in extended answers were weaker when the students relied on colloquial Arabic. Knowledge of grammar was adequate. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students in the secondary phase had well-developed listening and speaking skills. Writing was limited to simple words and a few short sentences. In English, students' attainment in reading, speaking and listening were good. They could read a wide range of texts confidently. However, writing skills were weaker. Nevertheless, the writing of most of the older students was well organised and coherent. In mathematics, children in the Foundation Stage were gaining confidence in counting, sequencing and the use of mathematical vocabulary. In the primary classes, students could sort geometric shapes and graph the results of surveys. Students in the secondary phase were proficient in basic algebra, probability and co-ordinate geometry. Post-16 students were mastering more complex functions. In science, students learned through practical activities and used these to understand more complex ideas.

In Islamic Education, most students in the primary years made good progress in recitation skills. Older students made the expected progress in their understanding from Islam about global issues such as poverty. In Arabic, students made faster progress in listening and speaking. In Arabic as a first language, significant progress was made in students' grammar, but its application was limited. In English, students quickly developed a range of speaking, listening and reading skills from their starting points. However, progress was more rapid in reading than in writing. Most of the older students could support their opinions regarding the work of various authors during complex discussions. In mathematics, most students met or exceeded the lesson objectives. There was clear progress between year levels in key mathematical areas. External examination data showed improvement in the IGCSE exam and IB Diploma results. In science, students used language and the mathematical aspects of science with increasing accuracy.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were good overall and in line with other students. Emirati students had a sense of belonging and ownership. In the Foundation Stage and the primary years, in particular, teachers linked the curriculum to Dubai, the UAE and the outside world. This strengthened the learning of local students. In the upper phases, there were also links, through the International Baccalaureate Career Related Certificate (IBCC) and the 'Skills 4 Life' programme. The school had regular communication with Emirati parents about the education of their children. Student culture across the school was excellent. Emirati students, who were a major group, displayed exemplary attitudes and behaviour.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across all the school. Students were highly responsible and treated others with courtesy and respect. They had strong friendships with other students and appreciated the diversity of cultural backgrounds. Students understood the benefits of following a healthy lifestyle and ate healthy snacks. Across the school, students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good. In the Foundation Stage and primary, students knew how to conduct themselves and dress respectfully. Students in secondary and post-16 talked confidently about the role of Islam in their lives and in Dubai society. They understood developments in Dubai such as building, traffic growth and public transport. However, they needed to develop a deeper awareness of Emirati heritage and traditions. Students' community and environmental responsibility was good across all phases. In the Foundation Stage, children took care of their classroom and could make choices about their play. Across primary, secondary and post-16, students demonstrated a good understanding of local environmental and economic issues. Students took part readily in planned activities but had too few opportunities to be active leaders in class and the school community. Older students talked confidently about pollution, recycling and sustainability. Attendance over the last term was good.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good throughout the school. Teachers used their strong subject knowledge to plan well for the needs of the range of students. They included interesting ideas and a variety of learning strategies to engage students and to support learning. Positive relationships with teachers enabled students to discuss their ideas and ask questions to clarify learning. Opportunities for students to lead presentations and help other students were evident in physical education lessons but were not typical across other curriculum areas. A few teachers used questions skilfully to help students to think more deeply about their learning. Opportunities for students to develop skills of enquiry and critical thinking were strong in English lessons but less well developed in other parts of the curriculum. They were not central to learning across the school. Students did not use information and communication technology sufficiently to accelerate their learning. When teachers made learning interesting and ensured that the students understood how to complete tasks successfully, they were highly motivated to learn. As a result, they gave their best efforts and typically made good progress.

The quality of students' learning was good throughout the school. Students understood the importance of learning. They readily collaborated, discussed and developed their ideas. In English and science lessons, in particular, there were real-world contexts to stimulate learning. This aspect was less developed in mathematics and Arabic. In the Foundation Stage, learning was led by children's interests; their teachers' input balanced with children's independent learning. However, opportunities to work independently decreased as students moved up the school.

The school maintained comprehensive assessment information about students' progress and shared this with teachers. As a result, they were better able to target their teaching to help students make the best progress possible. The analysis of this assessment information was not always thorough enough. In some cases it did not accurately identify underachievement or target teaching specifically to meet individual students' needs. Targets set for students motivated them to achieve highly, but sometimes the targets did not provide enough challenge. Students carried out self- and peer-assessment and learned the skills of self-management. This was a strength in the English and physical education departments, but was less well developed in other subjects. Feedback from teachers was useful for students with advice about how to improve their work. This was a strong feature in most English lessons but varied across other subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was broad and balanced both inside and outside classrooms. Increased subject choices were offered, particularly through the IBCC. Students were involved in the planning and conducting of extra-curricular activities. The innovative trial of Year 6 as a link between the primary and secondary schools was further improving transition between these two phases. The positive impact of the school's ongoing curriculum review and development was evident in the improving student outcomes in key subjects. However, the curriculum was not compliant with MoE time requirements for Islamic Education in the secondary years. The level of challenge in Arabic in the Post-16 phase was not high enough. There was a strong commitment to cater for the educational needs of all students, with a pilot environmental programme in the primary school and a life skills programme in the secondary school. The programmes for special needs and for English language learning were developing. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were also developing. However, they were not robust enough to ensure continuity of these skills across the school, particularly in the IGCSE and IB phases. Community links were being expanded through the IBCC, 'Community, Action, Service' and the extra-curricular programmes.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. The school provided an exceptionally safe and secure learning environment. The premises were maintained in an excellent condition. All areas were clean and litter-free. Staff members were updated on child protection arrangements and made aware of any student's medical needs. All medicines were stored safely and administered by the school doctor and medical staff. Detailed records of fire drills and other statutory safety requirements were maintained. Students displayed a very good understanding of what constituted a healthy lifestyle. The cafeteria provided suitably healthy food choices. Bus safety arrangements were stringently followed. Student safety had been enhanced by effective actions to control the flow of traffic at the start and end of the school day.

There were excellent relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students. The recording of attendance and punctuality was rigorous. Contact was made with parents if students' absences were not explained. There were developing procedures for greater consistency in the monitoring of students' academic progress. Students were able to seek advice and support on academic or personal issues. Their concerns were dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

[View judgements](#)

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

Procedures for the identification of students with special educational needs were effective. Support from the specialist staff for students in classes or withdrawal groups was mostly good. This enabled students to make good progress overall. However, there was inconsistency in the lesson planning, in the support provided and the monitoring of students' progress towards their learning targets.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. There was a positive working ethos in the school with a dynamic Principal and leadership team. They had high expectations of everyone in their school. New appointments were strategic and responsibilities were well distributed. The vision of the school was clear and shared with the school's key stakeholders. Communication between leaders was effective. School leaders had achieved notable improvements in the work of the school and demonstrated strong capacity to achieve improvements.

Self-evaluation plans were good. Priorities for improvement were clearly defined and distributed between leaders at all levels. Progress toward the goals was monitored closely through a reporting and reviewing system. However, the quality of the monitoring varied between departments and phases, hindering improvement in some areas of school. The recommendations from the previous inspection report showed improvement in some aspects, such as the improved attainment and progress of students in science. The school's approach to evaluate, monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning was not always consistent. School leaders, with the professional development team, had not capitalised on the best practices they had identified.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were regularly informed about both the academic and personal development of their children through the school reporting system. There was a vibrant school virtual social network. Links with local businesses and the community were improving. However, their effects on students' learning and development was not consistent over the four phases of the school.

Governance was good. The board of governors supported the leadership team well and shared the same vision for improvement. Governors were focused in providing the best education for students. They had invested effort and resources in expanding the school facilities.

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Staffing and resources were outstanding. Teachers held appropriate qualifications to the ages of students they taught. They were deployed effectively. Teaching assistants were used effectively in the majority of lessons. Resources for learning such as interactive boards in lessons were used by teachers and students. The physical education facilities were varied and of excellent quality. The number of books in the library was increasing and included a variety of attractive Arabic books. The school was expanding with a new building being built to accommodate and promote the creative arts.

[View judgements](#)

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	245	26%
	Last year	272	31%
Teachers	100		70%
Students	174		95%

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

There were fewer responses than last year to the parents' survey. Most parents, students and teachers were very positive about the quality of education provided by the school. Most students enjoyed school and felt safe. Both parents and students believed that progress was good in most key subjects. However, in Islamic Education and Arabic, a minority of parents and students thought that progress was slower than in other subjects. A few students commented on the lack of variety in the teaching strategies in Islamic Education and Arabic. A minority of parents and students, including a majority of Emirati parents, believed that students' understanding of Islamic values and the local culture was not strong. There were positive comments from parents and students about the new Principal in school. There were also many negative comments from parents and students about the lack of healthy food in the canteen. Teachers were positive in their views about the different aspects of provision by 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

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