

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Deira International School

Report published in April 2014

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	Dubai Festival City PO BOX 79043
Principal	Jeff Smith
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS1-Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1492
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	191 (12.83%)
Date of the inspection	3rd to 6th February

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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 1492 students on roll, an increase of 88 since the last inspection, with 82 different nationalities represented. One hundred and ninety one Emirati students attended the school. Separate lessons for physical education were provided for boys and girls from years 5 to 13.

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 offered during the final Post-16 phase, Years 12 and 13. Students received the IB Diploma at the end of Year 13.

There were 147 full-time teachers, including the Director and senior management team, and one part-time teacher. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. There were 37 teaching assistants, most of whom were located in the Foundation Stage and primary phases.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress of students in English, mathematics and science across phases;
- Good attainment and progress in Arabic as a second language in the secondary phase and progress in Islamic Education at the primary and secondary phases
- Students' outstanding community and environmental responsibility at almost all phases;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of students across all phases and the extremely positive and purposeful relationships established between teachers and students;
- The excellent arrangements to help ensure students' health and safety;
- The impressive programme of continuous professional development available to all staff, and the outstanding induction procedures for teachers joining the staff;

### Recommendations

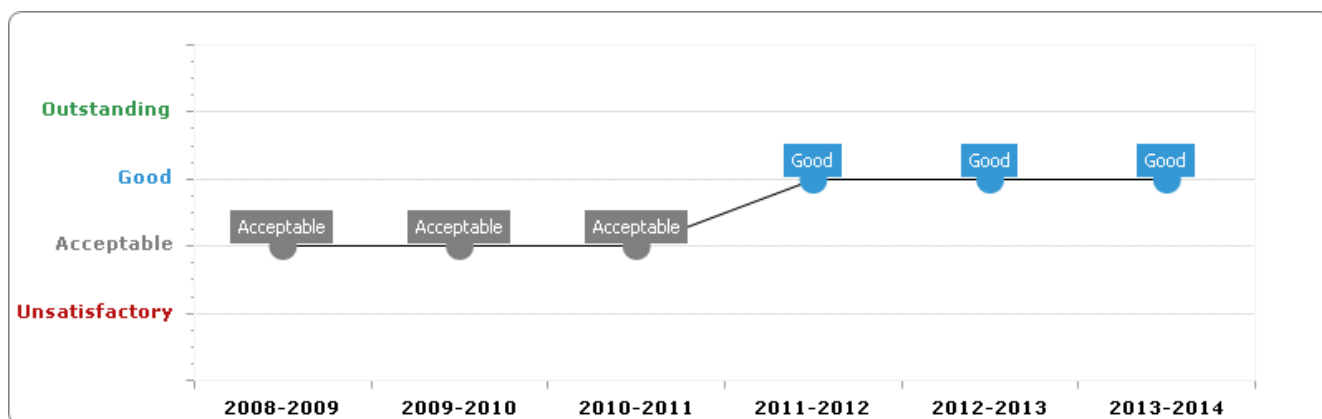
- Raise the expectations of students in Islamic Education and Arabic by improving teaching and learning;
- Further improve the quality of teaching and student attainment by increasing the accuracy, recording and use of all available assessment information about students' progress over time and taking full account of their individual starting points;
- Ensure that the pace of lessons in the secondary phase is suitably challenging and students' independent learning skills are developed progressively;
- Improve continuity and progression in learning in the Foundation Stage by the provision of outdoor activities that build seamlessly on what children are learning in the classroom;
- Improve the accuracy of the identification processes of students with special educational needs through full involvement of parents and appropriate professionals.

## Progress since the last inspection

- School leaders and all staff had worked extremely hard to address issues arising from the previous inspection and had been successful in taking the school further along the journey of improvement;
- Further development of outstanding arrangements for promoting healthy living and ensuring the safety of students;
- Increased and effective use of technology to communicate with parents, and in lessons by teachers and students to improve learning;
- Students' attainment and progress in science at the Post-16 phase were now good;
- Children's attainment in mathematics at the Foundation Stage, students' learning skills and their understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness at the primary phase were now outstanding;
- At the primary, secondary and Post-16 phases students community and environmental responsibility were now outstanding;
- The curriculum now offered students increased choice at the secondary and post-16 phases;
- Partnerships with parents and the community were now outstanding;
- Improved management by creating 35 new middle management posts;
- Staff retention had improved significantly;
- The facilities and resources for learning had improved further with the opening of a new building which included excellent provision for the performing and visual arts.

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## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Islamic education was acceptable. Most students, across the phases, had appropriate knowledge of Islamic concepts and principles. However, their ability to explain and support their learning was less developed. Attainment in Qur'an recitation and understanding was weaker, particularly for older students. In Arabic as a first language, most students had strong listening comprehension skills and were able to respond well to questions. Across all phases, they demonstrated speaking skills that were in line with expectations. Students' ability to write at length was underdeveloped across most grades, particularly in the secondary phase. In Arabic as an additional language attainment was acceptable in primary and good in secondary. Listening skills were within expectations at all phases and most students found little difficulty in understanding simple, spoken standard Arabic. Across most grades in the school, students' ability to produce the language and express their ideas independently, particularly in written form, was limited. In English, most students demonstrated impressive speaking skills. Most read widely and students of all abilities responded well to suitably challenging texts. Across the school, most students wrote increasingly accurately and at suitable length for a range of purposes. Attainment in mathematics was good in all phases. Students' ability to decide their own lines of inquiry, investigate and record accurate conclusions in a variety of ways, were particularly strong in the primary phase. In science, children in Foundation Stage were knowledgeable about their everyday environment and in the primary phase, students had developed strong enquiry based and critical thinking skills. Post-16 students understood and could discuss complex and abstract scientific concepts.

In Islamic Education progress was acceptable at Post-16 and the majority of students made good progress in the primary and secondary phases in most key aspects of the subject as a result of the involvement of students in many active learning experiences. Progress with Quran recitation and using Tajweed rules was slow across most grades in the school. In Arabic as a first language, most students across the phases made better progress in listening and reading than in speaking and writing. In Arabic as an additional language, most students in the secondary phase demonstrated better progress than that of those in primary. Progress with free writing and extended speaking skills was developing at a much slower rate. In English, across the school, students' progress in writing had benefitted from a consistent focus on writing accurately at suitable length. A minority of students in secondary needed more suitable challenge or support to apply their knowledge and understanding to their responses to literary texts. In mathematics, students' progress was at least good in all phases. Children in the Foundation Stage made outstanding progress. They rapidly developed their ability to count, order and recognise numerals to 20. They progressed with confidence to using their knowledge in simple calculations. In science, students across all phases were now making good progress. Those in Foundation Stage developed a rich understanding of

the world around them and at the primary phase students made good progress in their predicting, testing and recording skills.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students learning skills was at least good across the school and outstanding in the primary phase. Students demonstrated good levels of concentration. They knew their individual targets for improvement and were effectively developing the independent learning skills needed to be successful in school and beyond. Students in the primary phase set their own challenges and lines of inquiry and used excellent skills of investigation to arrive at sensible conclusions. In the Foundation Stage, children were able to make independent choices from a wide range of learning activities but this was less successful when working outdoors due to a lack of good quality learning environment. When teaching lacked pace, students were passive and did not take responsibility to move their learning forward but waited to be led by the teacher. Throughout the school, students were able to work in groups or pairs and were comfortable either taking the lead or contributing to team decisions. Students were confident in the use of information communication technology (ICT) but in some lessons the use of these skills to carry out research was limited.

[View judgements](#)

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

Personal responsibility was outstanding across all phases. Students demonstrated a strong work ethic, responsible attitudes and behaviour. The development of the Student Representative Council as a strong student voice in recommending and initiating school improvements was exemplary. Primary student leaders were also demonstrating excellent role modelling in a range of areas. Students enjoyed strong and respectful relationships with staff and said they felt safe and valued. Students were very clear about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and acknowledged the support that the school provided them with to achieve this.

Students demonstrated a good understanding of Islam and could make links between the UAE, Dubai and the Islamic culture. Students had also a good understanding of the cultural heritage of the UAE through their own experiences of Emirati traditions. They could describe their own cultures and traditions providing appropriate details and some insightful comments. Students showed respect to visitors and one another and acquired a good cultural knowledge from the multi-cultural society of the school and of Dubai.

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Community and environmental responsibility was good at Foundation Stage and outstanding in the rest of the school. Students' proactive involvement in the school, local and international community was resourceful. They were involved in a wide range of environmental and community work on a regular basis. They could talk knowledgeably about conservation, recycling and sustainability.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in all phases with some examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in the primary phase. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and used this to good effect in the explanations provided to students. Learning objectives were consistently shared with students. In a minority of lessons these lacked clarity and were a description of activities rather than what students were required to learn. In most lessons the use of effective questioning required students to think deeply about their answers and to give full explanations. A climate of mutual respect pervaded lessons and provided students with the confidence to try new learning without the fear of failure. Most lessons were conducted at a suitably challenging pace with a good range of teaching strategies and high quality resources which engaged and motivated students to try their best. In a minority of lessons, particularly in the lower secondary classes, teaching styles were limited and the pace of learning slowed. There were particular strengths in the teaching of humanities, ICT, modern languages, the performing and visual arts and physical education.

Overall, the quality of assessment systems and their use in driving improvement were good. Improved systems to gather and record information from a range of external and internal assessments had provided the school with a wealth of data. The majority of teachers were using this information to set tasks which resulted in students' good progress. This was not yet fully consistent. Consequently, work in some lessons was too easy for some or too difficult for those who required further adult support. The tracking of progress did not yet provide a full picture of student progress over time from their individual starting points. Students were provided with good opportunities to be involved in the setting of personal and academic learning targets and regularly reviewed their progress through self-assessment. Feedback to students through the marking of their work, including the setting of new challenges, was variable.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good. Clear but differently expressed principles governed the Foundation Stage and primary phase curriculum, and that of the secondary and Post-16 phases. The school's regular review of its curricula had informed its continued refinement of students' transitions between phases. Teachers had adjusted courses, for example in Islamic Education, in ways that supported greater depth of learning. Meaningful cross-curricular links were increasingly evident in lessons. Students themselves increasingly applied knowledge and skills across different areas of their learning. The school provided a wide range of curriculum enrichment, including trips and expeditions, sports and the arts. More boys were now involved in arts activities. Notwithstanding these improvements, continuity and progression in learning was not yet consistent for all students. At Foundation Stage, outdoor learning as part of 'free flow' activities was insufficiently focussed on purposeful learning through play. In the secondary phase, teaching approaches and use of assessment did not consistently build on students' learning experiences in the primary phase.

Older students could choose from a broad range of academic and vocational subjects. These choices included both science and language options as well as visual and performing arts. Vocational pathways also included elements of work experience. At secondary, some students made an early start to examination courses. Across the school a range of support classes catered well for different groups, such as English language learners. In a few support classes, however, the quality of students' learning experiences was not always as stimulating as that of their peers. Most teachers' planning of different tasks and activities for different groups did not yet lead to consistently effective provision for all learners in lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school's arrangements for the health, safety and security of their students was outstanding. There were thorough procedures and policies in place supported by meticulous documentation and record keeping. The buildings and school facilities were well maintained and provided a safe learning environment. Effective arrangements were in place for school transport. Fire evacuation arrangements were very effective and carefully recorded. The excellent whole-school approach to the promotion of healthy living ensured a successful programme delivered by specialist staff. There were a range of healthy food options served in the school cafeteria. The medical care of students was excellent and was delivered by a well-qualified team. The child protection policy was detailed and confirmed that arrangements were

in place for all members of the school community. All staff had received appropriate training and this formed part of the induction process for new staff.

The quality of support was good. Most teachers had a good awareness of students' needs and this led to high levels of mutual respect and trust. Systems to manage behaviour were clearly understood and monitored by senior management. Attendance and punctuality were emphasised at school assemblies but improvement was still needed at the Foundation Stage. The school admitted students with a wide range of special educational needs. The accuracy of the identification process required input from experts and the support of parents so as to ensure high quality and appropriate provision. Students made good progress in literacy and numeracy during support sessions. The school had a systematic approach to supporting the career paths of senior students. All students had access to trusted and well-informed counsellors who provided high quality personal advice and guidance.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of leadership was good. The Director provided strong and effective leadership and motivated his leadership team well. Together they set suitably high expectations of staff for delivering improvements in students' learning experiences. A significant number of staff had delegated responsibility. Thirty five new middle management posts had recently been created. These post holders played a crucial role in promoting best practice; some had yet to work fully effectively with others to ensure consistency in practice and continuity in learning across phases. Leaders demonstrated a strong capacity to continue to bring about continued improvement in the work of the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Inspection and accreditation reports were used effectively to develop plans for improvement. All staff were involved in evaluating the work of the school but evidence did not always support judgements made. Systems to evaluate, monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning were good but were not always implemented consistently. Students' views were taken into account. Good steps were taken to identify best practice and to share this widely.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. A communications coordinator had been appointed. Increasing use was being made of ICT, including social media, to link teachers with parents, students, other schools and businesses locally and further afield. The use and monitoring of home-school Student Planners was erratic and required review. The Parent Council operated effectively to raise any parental concerns. Parents appreciated the 'open-door' facility to meet with senior leaders. Very good support was given by parents to major school events such as International Day.



Governance was good. The Governing Board provided good support to the school's leadership team. Recent and proposed developments, both in buildings and resources, were testimony to Governors' clear commitment to providing students with a high quality educational experience.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Suitably qualified teachers were deployed to good effect. Teaching assistants supported teachers and students, particularly in the Foundation Stage and primary phases. Resources were of a high quality, including increased use of technology to support teaching and learning. The new performing and visual arts building added much to an already rich learning environment. An excellent programme for the professional development of staff was in place. The induction programme for new teachers was impressive.

[View judgements](#)

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

Emirati students made good progress in core subjects, namely, Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. In non-core subjects, such as the performing and visual arts, ICT and humanities, they performed well overall and in line with their peers. As Emirati students moved up through the primary years, the majority were making overall progress in line with their peers. The students were fully integrated in lessons and enjoyed excellent relationships with their classmates. Curriculum topics often included cultural studies and covered areas of particular interest to Emirati students. The Emirati students showed the same enthusiasm for learning as other students. However, attendance and timekeeping of Emirati students at the school were only acceptable and these were important factors which had an adverse effect on their progress over time.

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

The identification process for placing students with special educational needs on the school register was based almost solely on internal assessment data and this was unsatisfactory. The school categorised children using the KHDA categories without appropriate evidence or backup, such as a psychological report. School leadership had been less than proactive in developing a consistently strong engagement with parents in order to support good quality assessment practices. The majority of students with SEN had made good progress but those students in Islamic Education and Arabic made only acceptable progress. A key factor being the lack of consistency by teachers in enabling students to fully access the curriculum. In primary, good progress in English and science was recorded and outstanding progress in mathematics at the Foundation Stage. Teachers displayed some knowledge in their planning and modification for students with special educational needs. Some modification was evident at the Foundation Stage during 'free flow'



activities within the classroom setting. Differentiation was rarely implemented across the key subjects in the other phases, although most teachers were unaware of the profile of children with special educational needs on the class register. Individual education plans lacked key information on the specific needs of the student or did not contain clear targets or learning outcomes for the key subjects. The school had demonstrated a willingness to be inclusive and the building was an exemplary model of a facility with excellent access for students with mobility issues.

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

Most teachers of Arabic as a first language demonstrated secure subject knowledge. Teachers often planned and delivered lessons using a range of teaching strategies. These strategies, however, did not always ensure a balanced development of the different key aspects of the language. Teaching was generally adequate although in too many cases it followed a didactic approach, with lessons dominated by excessive teacher talk. There were a few opportunities for independent learning, and the development of research, enquiry skills and application of learning in meaningful contexts. In the majority of lessons, teachers' expectations were modest. There were some attempts to provide different tasks to different groups of students although these were not always matched well to their needs or their next stages of learning. The school's curriculum was based on MoE standards and assessment was consistently against the content of the MoE textbook content. There was still a need to raise expectations. The curriculum review was inadequate as it did not result in good modifications to address students' individual needs for their linguistic development. There were a few extra activities implemented by the school for the different year groups to support and extend students' knowledge and awareness. A key area for improvement was the insufficient focus in the planned and implemented curriculum on creative writing and, to a lesser degree, on deeper reading comprehension skills.

## 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	194	20%
	Last year	249	28%
Teachers	97		66%
Students	145		78%

\*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. Almost all parents and students thought that students' progress in English was good and most thought this for mathematics and science. A minority of parents and students felt that students did not make sufficient progress in Islamic Education or in Arabic as a first or as an additional language. Almost all students felt safe and well looked after at school and thought that students' behaviour was good in school. A minority of students and parents felt that homework was not always purposeful or sufficiently regular. Students and parents wished greater attention to be given to careers education prior to the Post-16 phase. Parents and staff thought that the school was well led. Half of parents wanted to know more about how the school performed against international assessments. Almost all teachers commented positively on how the inspection process helped to bring about school improvement.

## 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.

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## 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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