

# INSPECTION REPORT

## American International School

Report published in April 2013

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي  
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT American International School

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Location                              | Al Qusais  |
| Type of school                        | Private  |
| Website                               | <a href="http://www.aisch.net">www.aisch.net</a> |
| Telephone                             | 04-2988666                                       |
| Address                               | PO. Box 87727                                    |
| Principal                             | Othman Abdalbari                                 |
| Curriculum                            | US   |
| Gender of students                    | Boys and Girls                                   |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups           | 3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12                  |
| Attendance                            | Good   |
| Number of students on roll            | 2,258  |
| Largest nationality group of Students | Arab nationalities                               |
| Number of Emirati students            | 154 (7%)   |
| Date of the inspection                | 27th to 31st January 2013                        |

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## The context of the school

The American International School was inaugurated in 2003. It is presently located in Al Qusais, serving nearly 2,300 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12; this is an increase of nearly 400 students from the previous year. Most of the students are Arab expatriates with a minority of Emirati students who are proportionally enrolled in all phases of the school.

The school offered a US curriculum based on the State of Indiana Standards. Curriculum expectations for English and mathematics were amalgamated with the Common Core Curriculum Standards. A number of students across the phases wrote external examinations such as the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and SAT I in mathematics, in Grades 11 and 12.

The school's student population was evenly distributed among the four phases proportionate to the number of grade levels in each phase. Boys and girls studied in mixed classes from Kindergarten to Grade 3, after which classes were separated by gender. High school girls were recently relocated into a newly constructed section which also housed the computer-based examination hall. The school employed nearly 40 new teachers at the beginning of the current academic year to cater for a growing student population and to allow administrative time for Heads of Departments and others with increased responsibilities.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- The students' good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary grades and good progress in Islamic Education in the middle grades;
- The curriculum had been developed and was aligned to the US Common Core State Standards.

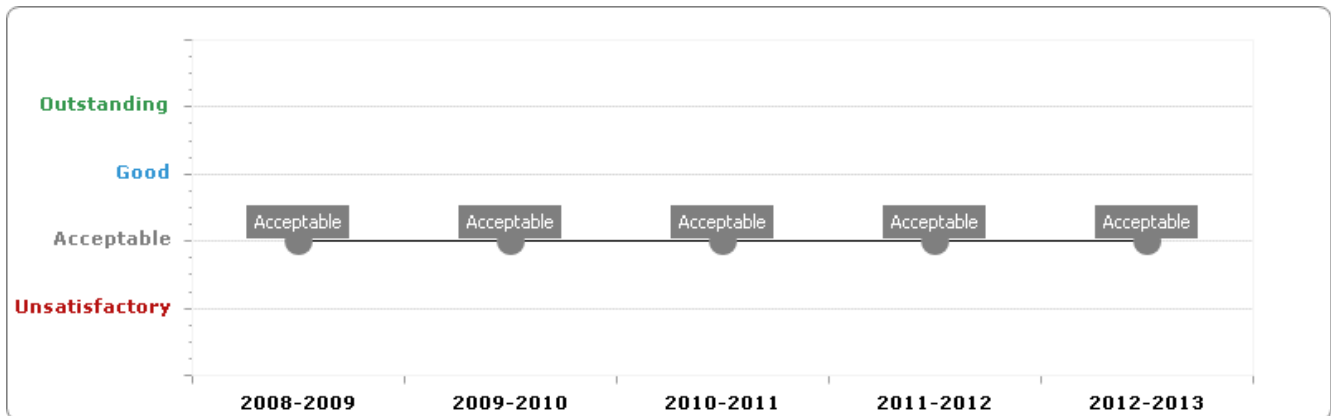
### Recommendations

- Improve the attainment and progress by all groups of students, particularly high school boys;
- Provide more learning experiences for students that are relevant, independent and practical ;
- Use assessment information to set lessons that challenge students at their levels of development;
- Ensure that effective practices are established across the phases for the early identification and support of students with special educational needs, including the more able students;
- As a whole community, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school through rigorous self-evaluation and implement an improvement plan to address the key priorities.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There was improved attainment and progress by students of English in the middle and high school grades;
- There was improved attainment and progress by students of mathematics in the high school;
- The assessment of learning had improved in all phases of the school, as internal tests were better aligned with Common Core Curriculum Standards and more students wrote various external examinations.

## Trend of overall performance



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

|   | KG             | Elementary     | Middle         | High           |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Islamic Education</b>                |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Not Applicable | Good           | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Not Applicable | Good           | Good           | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as a first language</b>       |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Not Applicable | Good           | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Not Applicable | Good           | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as an additional language</b> |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Not Applicable | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Not Applicable | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| <b>Click here to enter text.</b>        |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress                                | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| <b>English</b>                          |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| <b>Mathematics</b>                      |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| <b>Science</b>                          |                |                |                |                |
| Attainment                              | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress                                | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |

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

|  | KG         | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour  | Good       | Good       | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness | Good       | Good       | Good       | Good       |
| Community and environmental responsibility                               | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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 |

[Read paragraph](#)



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

|                    | KG   | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|--------------------|------|------------|------------|------------|
| Curriculum quality | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

|                    | KG         | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Health and Safety  | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Quality of Support | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language was good in the elementary grades. Elsewhere in the school and for other subjects, their attainment was acceptable. Students in all phases demonstrated age-appropriate understanding of Islamic fiqh and etiquette, while in the high school, students' knowledge of comparative economic systems, including the Muslim model, was in line with expectations. In Arabic as a first language, students in the upper elementary grades accurately identified similes in poems. High school students read poetry with adequate expression; however, their extended writing skills were limited. The language skills of high school students studying Arabic as an additional language were in line with expectations based upon their years of study. In English, students' oral skills were strong but they lacked the skills to critically analyse texts, especially the older boys. In mathematics, students were confident in their ability to apply basic number skills and recognize patterns in numbers and shapes. Older students had good understanding of algebraic processes, but their application to problems was limited. In science, students exhibited acceptable knowledge and understanding of key concepts, ideas and theories. Most enjoyed science and showed great enthusiasm when responding to questions and conducting experiments. There was, however, little grounding in the use and application of the scientific method.

Students' progress was acceptable in most subjects across the phases, except in Islamic Education in the elementary and middle grades and in Arabic as a first language in the elementary grades, where it was good. By Grade 5 students had made evident gains in their knowledge and understanding of key concepts in Islam, supported by their increasing skills of reading Arabic texts. Independent and creative writing skills were developing slowly in both Arabic as a first and additional language, as well as in English. In mathematics and science, students made sufficient progress in their knowledge and understanding, and made better progress when activities were practical and based on the application of skills. In general, and across the subjects, girls made better progress than boys, especially in the high school. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress overall.

[View judgements](#)

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

As Emirati students were proportionally registered in the four phases of the school, their overall attainment in all subjects was acceptable. Attainment data showed that Emirati students in the lower grades fared much better than those in the high school grades, where attainment data for Term One tests demonstrated low attainment in English, mathematics and science. Students' knowledge and understanding was better in Islamic Education and Arabic in general. Emirati students made acceptable progress across the subjects in all

the phases. During lessons, Emirati students made the same progress as their peers in relation to the learning objectives. School data affirmed that students in general made acceptable progress, but less so for boys in the high school, particularly in English and mathematics.

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

Students' attitudes and behavior were good in the Kindergarten and elementary grades, where they were courteous and respectful in lessons and around the school. In the middle and high school phases, students' attitudes and behavior were acceptable overall. When they were engaged in learning, students worked well together and were positive; however, this was not always the case. Most students were well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and, in the Kindergarten, children often made healthy choices. Students' attendance was good overall, yet a few were not punctual in arriving to school in the morning. Most students had good understanding of how Islamic values influenced contemporary society in Dubai. Students were well aware of the heritage and culture of the UAE and their own cultures, yet their knowledge of non-Arab cultures was somewhat limited. Students were involved in roles and responsibilities around the school, such as class leaders. They encouraged cleanliness inside the school and helped organize dismissal. Students showed appropriate awareness of environmental issues both locally and globally and demonstrated positive attitudes towards these. However, only a limited number of students assumed responsibilities and took initiative. Students were not often involved in the community outside their school.

[View judgments](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall. The teaching observed ranged from unsatisfactory to good. However, there were inconsistencies in the teaching across all phases and key subjects. Most teachers had appropriate subject knowledge. In the better lessons, they were committed to improving students' performance by creating positive and challenging learning experiences. In a majority of lessons, there was an over-reliance on the content of the textbook to direct students' learning. The spread of ability was not always sufficiently catered for and there was insufficient challenge, especially for the most able students. Relationships were generally strong and teachers often praised and encouraged students to motivate them. The quality of teachers' questioning skills varied; at times students did not have the opportunity to offer extended answers. Homework was inconsistently used to consolidate and extend learning.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in all phases. When opportunities were provided, students from the youngest ages could work in pairs, in groups and independently; they generally interacted well and collaborated on activities. In the better lessons, students were confident to express themselves, communicate what they had learned and take responsibility for developing their skills and knowledge further. These skills were inconsistently developed across the school. Teacher-dominated lessons discouraged the development of independent learning skills. Students' application of their learning to the real world was underdeveloped in a majority of lessons, as were students' enquiry and research skills. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by students in lessons was very limited. Many students had only a general awareness of their progress and strengths as learners and were unclear about what they needed to do to improve.

The assessment of learning was acceptable across the school. Examinations to provide a baseline were administered to students in Grades 3 to 10 at the beginning of the first term. Other assessments, including questioning, self and peer assessment, and the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests were used to monitor students' progress. However, the information from assessments was used inconsistently to adjust the curriculum and teaching. On-going assessments, including teacher-created term tests were also administered. The school tracked and recorded students' progress accurately. Most teachers had a general knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses and attempted to structure learning accordingly. The effects were inconsistent. Most students received assessment in the form of a check mark or a single word; few students received written comments on how to reach the next steps in learning.

[View judegments](#)

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

The curriculum was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable across the other phases. The curriculum, which was adapted from the Indiana State Curriculum, was aligned with Common Core State Standards in English and mathematics, and Indiana standards in science. There were Ministry of Education standards in Islamic Education, Arabic, and social studies, and a variety of standards in non-key subjects. The curriculum provided limited choice for students, although Kindergarten children had some choices during morning play time. Curriculum maps and unit plans had been developed for the key subjects and were used consistently across the phases in all subjects to ensure continuity and progression. An integrated approach to learning topics was implemented in the Kindergarten. The curriculum was reviewed annually and updated to meet the needs of most groups of students, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of students who were English language learners and students who had special educational needs. However, the implemented curriculum was not consistently adapted to meet those students' needs and did not consistently provide

good levels challenge. A range of enrichment activities, including extra-curricular activities, broadened students' learning and enhanced their development.

[View judegments](#)

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

Health and safety provision was acceptable in all phases of the school. Students were well supervised in classrooms, playgrounds and as they moved around the school. Effective procedures were in place for the arrival and departure of buses and the orderly movement of students at the end of the day. However, school policies were not always well implemented on buses. Evacuation procedures were established and included special measures for students in wheelchairs, although they were not included in the school policy on emergency evacuation. The school building and premises were generally well maintained but not easily accessible to all students, especially those with special educational needs. Some areas in the playgrounds and buildings were not of the same quality or cleanliness as others. The facilities and personnel for students' health and medical needs were in accordance with regulations. Child protection procedures were in place and well known by staff members and students. Healthy living was promoted in most aspects of school life, particularly in the Kindergarten.

The quality of support for students was acceptable across the school. Staff members knew most of their students well and provided effective counselling and guidance for their future careers, in addition to meeting their social and emotional needs. These relationships underpinned the management of behavior and nurtured the confidence of students to ask for help if they needed it.

Effective systems were in place to monitor students' attendance and punctuality. Absences were followed up, reasons were recorded and parents were contacted.

[View judegments](#)

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

The school did not as yet have well established systems to identify and support students with special educational needs. A recently appointed co-ordinator had started to consolidate the individual efforts and arrangements in a few departments and set up consistent policies and procedures. The school did not effectively modify the curriculum to meet the varying needs of students with specific needs. Assessments were sometimes modified by teachers. Although lesson plans noted students of varying abilities, they often did not include effective strategies to cater to the abilities of students with special needs. In the

Kindergarten, not all teaching assistants were sufficiently skilled to help the children requiring specific assistance. In general, the staff was not sufficiently trained or qualified to ensure that students with special educational needs made good progress.

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

The quality of leadership was acceptable overall. Most of the leaders across the school were dedicated, committed and well intentioned. There was an apparent desire to improve students' outcomes and the quality of education throughout the school. Leaders were re-writing the school's vision statement to align it with the spirit of improvement and development. Although comprehensive and ambitious, the vision was not based on sufficient consultation with all stakeholders. A number of existing and new staff members were developing clear roles and responsibilities in a more distributive leadership scheme. Communication and relationships were professional and positive. Most staff members knew what was required of them through the existing management hierarchy and lines of accountability. However, new initiatives were taking place without due input from students. Leaders at all levels were proactive in devising strategies that would secure further improvements. The leadership team and the majority of middle managers and others demonstrated sufficient capacity to improve the school. They had some success in raising the learning outcomes of students.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school had more reliable internal and external data for judging students' attainment and progress, but it was not sufficiently analyzed to give the school an accurate view of students' achievements. Although performance management arrangements were in place and used by leaders at all levels, they tended to focus on teachers' behaviour and not on teaching that ensured all students made good progress. The school's five-year strategic plan and short term action plan pertained to all aspects of the school's life. However, objectives were not closely aligned to students' outcomes. The plans did not include quantitative and qualitative targets for measuring the school's success in achieving its goals.

The quality of partnership with the parents and the community was acceptable. Parents were highly supportive of the school and felt that they were part of a close knit community. Parents were always welcome at the school and reported that there was an 'open door' policy. Their concerns, queries and suggestions were well received and acted upon quickly and discreetly as needed. Reporting on students' achievements was regular. However, school report cards were just numerical summations of results and seldom included helpful comments for parents and students on what and how to improve. The school did

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not set or benefit from a formal process by which it gathered parents' views to involve them more effectively in decision making. Growing links with the community were enhancing students' educational experiences.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The school had a board of governors and it ensured that statutory requirements were met. The board represented the owners, community members, educational experts, parents and students. Although a board member was permanently on school grounds, this was not sufficient to represent the teachers well. The school discussed and shared its performance with the board; yet, formal and rigorous mechanisms for holding the school accountable for its performance were lacking. Board members were keen to know the views of the school community, yet they were not formally sought, analyzed or incorporated into a strategic plan for improvements.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was of acceptable quality. The management of the school's daily routines was mostly effective and efficient. The teacher retention rate was high and the school employed an adequate number of people to fulfill its growing needs. Although most staff members had university qualifications, a few lacked the appropriate teaching qualifications and experience to meet the needs of learners, particularly in the lower grades. The premises were adequate, but specialist facilities such as laboratories, sports facilities, playgrounds and the library were somewhat restricted and did not sufficiently enhance students' learning.

[View judegments](#)



## 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 | 140 | 10%        |
|                          | Last year | 99  | 8%         |
| Teachers                 | 70        |     | 53%        |
| Students                 | 293       |     | 66%        |

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey, slightly more than last year. About half the teachers and two-thirds of the senior students responded to their surveys. Survey responses and comments revealed that most parents and teachers were positive about the school and its leaders. Most of the parents and almost all of the teachers agreed that students were making good progress in the key subjects and that they were well received by the school. The views of students were generally less positive than those of parents and teachers. Opinions were less positive amongst students regarding their involvement in decision making and the range of subjects and activities available to them. A majority of parents agreed that they were involved in decisions related to their child's education.



## What happens next?

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

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

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

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

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

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

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