

INSPECTION REPORT

Rajagiri International School Dubai

Report published in February 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Rajagiri International School Dubai

Location	Al Warqa'a
Type of school	Private
Website	www.risdubai.org
Telephone	04-2800691
Address	Al Warqa'a, Dubai, UAE
Principal Designate	Arundhati Rawat
Curriculum	Indian
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-13 / Kindergarten 1 - Grade 7
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1289
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	30th September to 3rd October 2013

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The context of the school

Rajagiri International School, located in Al Warqa'a, is a private school for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 7, aged three to 13 years. The roll increased this year by 126 students to 1,289 partly because middle school students, were enrolled for the first time, into Grade 7. The school follows an Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum.

There were 82 full-time teachers, including the Principal Designate and Vice-Principal. The Principal Designate was appointed from her post as Headmistress at the beginning of the academic year. Although the post of Headmistress had been left vacant temporarily, an additional three Supervisors' posts have been permanently introduced. All teachers were suitably qualified and had engaged in recent professional development. There were 26 new teachers appointed to the school this year, a little under a third of the total, which is high.

All but one student were of Indian descent. They were grouped in 18 Kindergarten, 27 primary and four middle classes, with all classes in Kindergarten having between 23 and 25 children, and the remaining classes having an average size of 27 students. A total of 29 students had been identified by the school as having special educational needs – six less than the previous year. They received specialist support from three counsellors.

The ownership of the school changed at the beginning of the academic year when a new governing board was put in place. The school was planning to further extend to Grade 10 in the future.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The impressive, confident speaking skills of students in various contexts;
- The keen and enthusiastic attitudes to learning that students displayed in lessons which enabled them to make good progress in most of their key subjects;
- The exemplary behaviour, involvement and pride students displayed in their school and community;
- The outstanding quality of health and safety at the school, and excellent relationships within the school, which contributed to the school's caring and friendly atmosphere;
- The outstanding partnership with parents and the community;
- Spacious classrooms, with no overcrowding, provided a good learning environment.

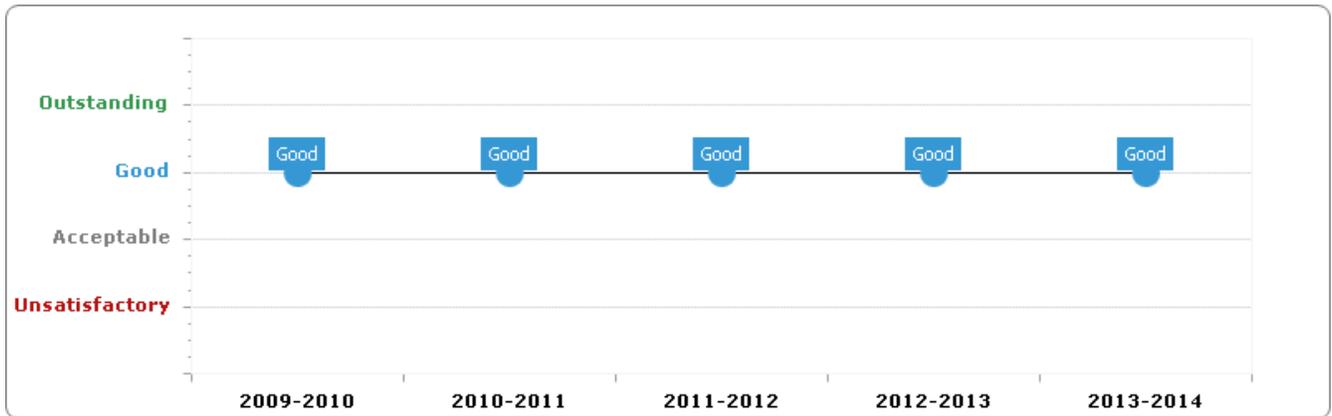
Recommendations

- Ensure that assessment data is suitably detailed and that all teachers use it consistently well in their planning so that:
 - all students' learning activities are well matched to their abilities and interests;
 - the curriculum is modified in places to better meet the needs of different groups of students.
- Improve the robustness and effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation by:
 - applying the appropriate depth of analysis to available data to improve the accuracy of evaluations;
 - ensuring that the school's improvement planning at all levels is set against specifically designated success criteria which impacts on students' progress.

Progress since the last inspection

- There had been improvements in attainment and progress in several key subjects.
- Very positive attitudes and behaviour across the school and towards community involvement had been sustained.
- The excellent work ethic and environmental awareness of the primary and middle school students had continued;
- The reconstituted Governing Board had expanded and now represented stakeholders well.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Primary	Middle
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary	Middle
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	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	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Primary students demonstrated a good understanding of Islamic values and morals, and had a good knowledge of Prophet Mohammed's Seerah. Middle phase students demonstrated an acceptable knowledge in Islamic principles. They understood the importance of Hadeeth, but their ability to link Hadeeth texts to their lives was weak. In both phases, students' recitation skills and knowledge in Qur'an were underdeveloped. In Arabic, students had improved in speaking and listening skills in primary and middle phases, but older students sometimes needed prompting in English. Students also showed an acceptable level in reading and comprehension of text from their books. In the Kindergarten and primary phase in English, students' listening, speaking and reading skills were good, but writing was weaker with few opportunities to independently develop these skills. In the middle phase in English, attainment was good in all skills with higher expectations of students to develop language skills independently. In mathematics, a majority of students demonstrated good knowledge of numerical concepts and skills above the curriculum expectations. Across the school, their attainment was consistently good in their school examinations for the last three years. Students have excellent factual scientific knowledge across all phases, particularly in the middle phase. However, their investigation skills and ability to conduct scientific experiments were underdeveloped, particularly in upper primary classes and middle phases. Here, experiments were almost all classroom-based with very simple equipment. International benchmarking, including the use of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the International Benchmark Test (IBT), also supported the good attainment in English, mathematics and science.

Primary students were making good progress linking their understanding of the five pillars of Islam and the pillars of faith with other Islamic aspects. Students in the middle phase, were learning to link their understanding of Islamic principles with life application, but their progress was slow. Primary students made acceptable progress when learning new everyday Arabic vocabulary. Middle phase students' progress in reading was a little slower, but they learned new vocabulary and used it in familiar contexts. In both phases, students were making acceptable progress in writing. Middle phase students were making progress using grammar skills in writing, but only a minority of them could use their grammar skills in both speaking and writing. In English, writing was less developed in Kindergarten and lower primary phase for the students' age. Progress was held back because learning activities were not well matched enough to students' needs, and too little independence in language learning was experienced. Kindergarten children showed significant gains in their understanding of numerical concepts and could apply this when manipulating objects. Older students made good progress in lessons when applying their knowledge of the numerical concepts in real-life situations and deriving geometrical properties. In science, students made better progress in developing their scientific knowledge and understanding than in learning how to

conduct scientific enquiry and experimentation. There were also some variations across classes and phases as a result of teaching and the use of assessment data. Students with special educational needs made good progress.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills across all phases were good. Students across the school showed enthusiasm, positive attitudes and motivation in their learning. There were high levels of co-operation and collaboration between students. The majority of students made connections to other learning, could relate their learning to the real world and were able to find out things for themselves. Primary and middle phase students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses and took steps to improve. However, learning activities in lessons did not always meet the needs of all students. Critical thinking, as part of learning, was more commonly seen in upper primary and middle phases. There was insufficient independence in learning in the Kindergarten and lower primary. Students did not routinely use ICT to support their learning.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students throughout the school had very positive attitudes and resolved issues in a mature way. They were courteous, thoughtful, confident, conscientious and highly self-motivated. They engaged eagerly and enthusiastically in all aspects of school life. They demonstrated exemplary leadership skills and led by example. They understood the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and readily took part in healthy living activities. However, some food in the canteen was not healthy. Students' attendance was good. In the primary and middle phases, students demonstrated a good understanding of Islamic values. However, only a minority were able to link the impact of Islamic values on their experiences inside and outside the school. Kindergarten children could name different places in the UAE, and different Islamic and cultural celebrations. Older students highlighted the privilege of living in a country of rich culture. Across the school, students appreciated and celebrated their own culture, and celebrated Dubai's multicultural nature. Kindergarten children respected each other and understood the school rules. Students across the school showed their strong sense of care and responsibility to the school and the community. They had a very positive work ethic and played an active role to improve the environment. They were concerned about conservation and the changes to the country's economy. They regularly contributed to causes in their community. Primary and middle phase students often took initiatives. For example, the bigger swimming pool was built as a result of one such initiative.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Good teaching was underpinned by the secure subject knowledge of most teachers. Simple resources were used creatively to stimulate learning but use of ICT was rarely seen in lessons. Good examples of challenging questioning were observed in some key subjects. However, it was not consistent across all subjects or phases and insufficiently promoted critical thinking and discussion. In the better lessons, teachers checked relevant prior learning and adjusted their teaching to match students' needs. They also checked progress during and at the end of lessons through productive interactions with students. There were also some encouraging examples of independent learning, but in a few lessons, overly didactic teaching restricted the opportunity for students to discover things for themselves.

The school was aware of the international benchmark data relating to its students' attainment from international tests. The use of this data was only beginning to influence curriculum planning and classroom practice. Most teachers knew students' strengths and weaknesses well but did not always use this understanding in their lesson planning or in matching learning well enough to students' needs. This was particularly so in the case of higher attaining students whose progress was often held back as a result. Marking and written comments in students' books were frequent, but often lacked clear and specific guidance on the next steps to take to improve. However, new initiatives, such as the introduction of a mid-year review were beginning to address this and were welcomed by parents. Students' self-evaluation and their evaluation of other students' work were limited. Some good assessment initiatives were being piloted in the senior classes but these were not yet embedded or widespread. Tracking of students with special educational needs was excellent. Good use of assessment data was rarely seen elsewhere, except mainly in Kindergarten, where on-going assessment information was more readily used to inform the following day's lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The outstanding Kindergarten curriculum was due to the school's very successful combination of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Early Years Foundation Stage curricula which enabled children to enjoy learning and make good progress. They experienced a rich range of learning opportunities, such as creative and engaging free flow lessons, followed later by interesting learning trails, that complemented a strong focus on basic skills and successful promotion of social skills. The curriculum generally had a clear rationale with good planning for progression that ensured good transitions across all grades and phases, within and after Kindergarten. It was effectively reviewed and developed annually, though much more frequently in Kindergarten through daily planning meetings. Subject benchmarks were used to set expectations and objectives in planning lessons. This included particularly good references to real-life examples and good cross-curricular links with literacy. The extensive enrichment provision significantly enhanced the all-round development of students. Clubs also provided students with many opportunities for involvement in everyday situations. Thematic assemblies allowed the students ample opportunities to develop personal and social skills. Students participated well in a range of environmental and fund-raising events. The school was a regular participant in community projects, and members of the school's *GREEN GANG* were responsible for the successful energy control and cleanliness in the school. Much emphasis was placed on promoting the school's values, for example through the monthly focus of 'virtue of the month'.

There was only limited modification of the curriculum and lesson planning to meet the needs of various groups of students. Attempts were made to match teaching to different abilities, to support students with special educational needs through individual plans, and the gifted and talented students had opportunities through sport, choirs and performance in school concerts, and online publishing for the school. However, assessment data was not used to systematically guide this process and so limited its effectiveness. Although the enrichment programme was strong, there were only limited opportunities for student choice.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements and procedures for health and safety were orderly and thorough. A newly engaged provider ensured that school transportation was safe, efficient and timely. The premises were subject to frequent inspections and maintained to a high standard. Fire safety and evacuation procedures were regular, and detailed records were kept. Healthy living was very well promoted and the school was awarded a certificate of merit by Dubai Health Authority. However, the canteen offered unhealthy snacks. Medicines were stored securely and students' medical information was filed and communicated appropriately. A comprehensive range of child protection policies were in place and shared with the school community. Induction was effectively provided to new staff, and school leaders ensured that students' concerns would be managed sensitively.

The quality of support was good across all phases. Consistently good behavior and positive interactions fostered mutual respect and confidence, and an effective complaints procedure was in place. There was very effective management of attendance and punctuality, with prompt follow-up on the few occasions it was necessary. The school was inclusive, and the early identification of students with special educational needs was managed by a team of three counsellors. Individual education planning had begun, and those students withdrawn by counsellors made good progress. However, teachers' provision and planning for these students varied, and modifications to their teaching were limited. The progress of gifted and talented students was also not securely recorded. Students appreciated the clear and useful individual advice and support that was readily available to them.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Dedicated and committed leaders responded well to the Principal's drive to promote a culture of improvement which was becoming very well embedded and resulting in pockets of excellent practice. Teams were effective across the school, and there was mostly very good communication at all levels of the school. However, good practice was not always sufficiently shared; for example, the counsellors' excellent approach to assessment was not fully applied in other areas. Leaders are held accountable for their performance and some showed a good capacity to devise strategies for further improvement. Improvements had occurred in several key subjects, but some inconsistencies restricted this improvement.

The school's self-evaluation was supported by the good use of parent, student and teacher surveys and the very frequent evaluation of teaching. This enabled the school to identify some important priorities,

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plan for a wide range of improvement and identify professional development needs for its staff. However, the processes used were not sufficiently robust nor analytical, and sometimes resulted in an inaccurate picture of how good the school was. Although teaching was improving, its monitoring lacked sufficient guidance, and often resulted in objectives that were too general; there was not enough focus on students' progress. Across the school's work, comprehensive improvements were planned. However, success criteria were not specifically assigned to each of the intended improvement which resulted in limited progress being made. This was also reflected in the extent to which the school met the recommendations of the last report, except in governance, where the recommendation was fully met.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents felt welcomed and involved in the school and in their child's learning. Communication was effective and built a strong sense of collaboration between school and home. Parents were consulted through regular surveys by the school and felt part of the decision-making processes of the school. There was an active Parents' Council. Reports were regular and informed parents of their child's progress. However, reports did not contain students' next steps in learning. Links with the community were strong with students involved in numerous local activities. However, links with local businesses were not strong. An effective complaints procedure was in place.

A newly reconstituted governing board now included a parent, a teacher and prominent active members of the community. The new Chairman's strong drive and commitment had ensured the new board had made an excellent start in fulfilling its expected role. Initiatives had already been launched to improve attainment and learning, planning for further growth of the school to Grade 10 was in place, and accountability was being established more rigorously. However, insufficient time had elapsed to expect these measures to have had their full impact. In holding the school to account, the board needed to focus on the school's self-evaluation and assessment processes.

The school's day-to-day management and communication were very effective. Staff were suitably qualified and deployed, and were provided with a good range of relevant professional development matched to the needs of the school. There were no over-sized classes and rooms were spacious enough to create good learning environments throughout the school. The good quality accommodation and learning resources were used well but lack of a science laboratory had held back aspects of students' progress in science.

[View judgements](#)

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

The provision for students with special educational needs included effective identification processes and led to good progress by students. A very committed team of three counsellors had put in place excellent procedures and interventions for categories of low achievers in line with KHDA requirements. However, less secure were the data on progress and subsequent support for the gifted and talented students. A new special educational needs co-ordinator had been appointed with expertise in both clinical and educational psychology. Better provision for the more able students had now been prioritised as part of her new remit.

There was still a number of challenges for the school in some key areas. Identification systems were not comprehensive enough. Subject leaders and teachers across the school did not all embrace the positive outcomes that quality provision would bring for a wider range of special educational needs. The special educational needs teachers had insight into how to modify the curriculum and develop varied teaching strategies to meet individual needs that would benefit all students, but were not involved sufficiently in the school planning process. Parents did not yet appreciate the benefits derived from quality support for students with special educational needs. Some parents were still reluctant to allow their children to be assessed and to take up support that the school offered.

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 judgments. 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	422	42%
	Last year	608	62%
Teachers	73		89%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

Of the proportion of the parents that responded to the survey, most were satisfied with all aspects of the school's provision for their child. One parent felt their child was safe and happy at school but bullying was an important issue that needed to be addressed. A small number of parents felt the quality of teaching needed to improve and that the curriculum should be broader with more choice for students. Teaching and learning in Arabic was a concern for a significant minority of parents. There were only a few teachers' comments. They believed inspections improved the work of 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.

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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

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