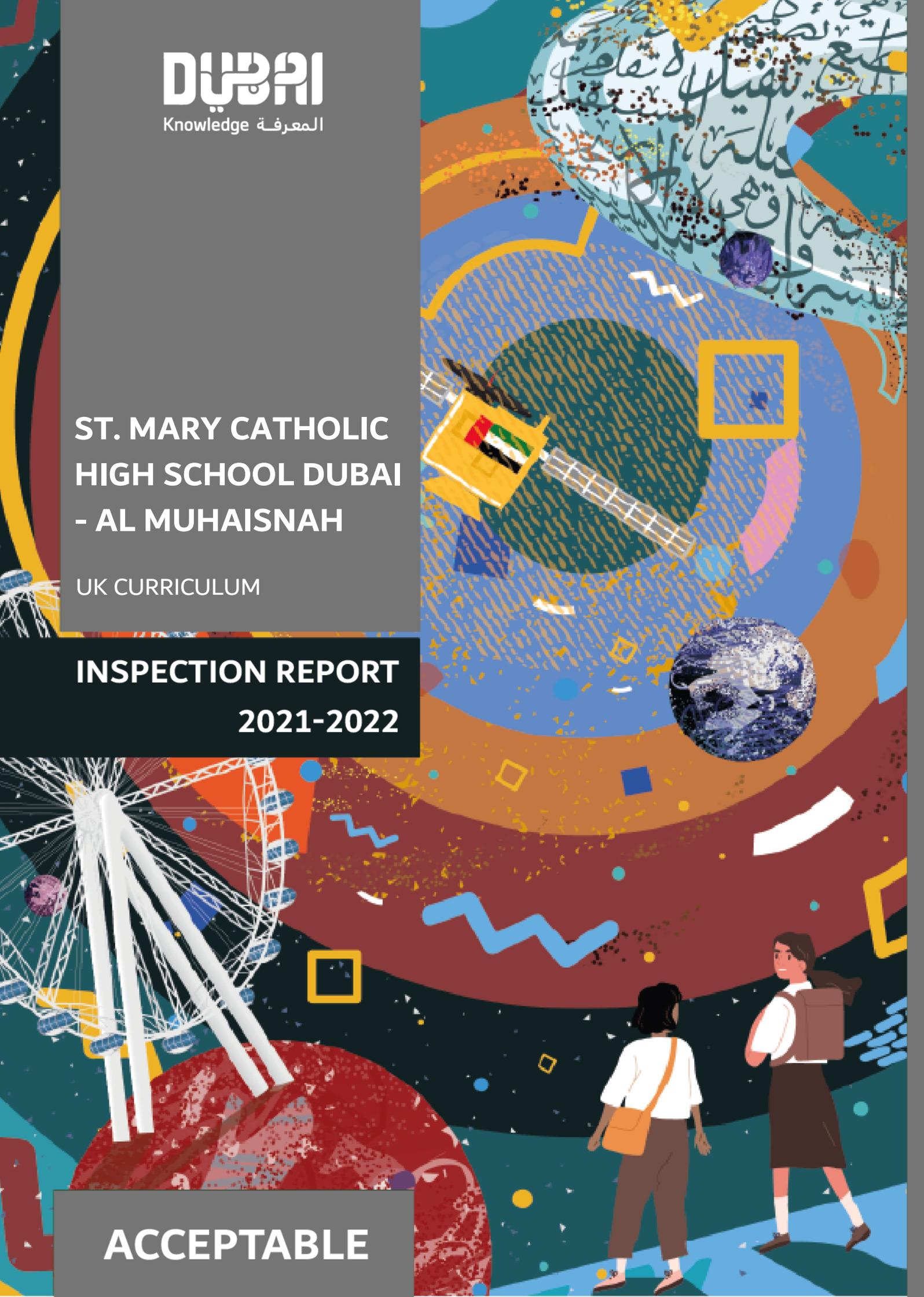


**ST. MARY CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL DUBAI
- AL MUHAISNAH**

UK CURRICULUM

**INSPECTION REPORT
2021-2022**

ACCEPTABLE



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School Information

General Information	 Location	Al Muhaisnah
	 Opening year of School	2015
	 Website	www.stmarysmuhaisnah.com
	 Telephone	97142614014
	 Principal	Jaime Roth
	 Principal - Date appointed	2/8/2020
	 Language of Instruction	English
	 Inspection Dates	23 to 26 May 2022
Students	 Gender of students	Boys and girls
	 Age range	3 to 17
	 Grades or year groups	Year 1 to Year 11
	 Number of students on roll	1105
	 Number of Emirati students	4
	 Number of students of determination	33
	 Largest nationality group of students	Indian
Teachers	 Number of teachers	64
	 Largest nationality group of teachers	Filipino
	 Number of teaching assistants	14
	 Teacher-student ratio	1:17
	 Number of guidance counsellors	2
	 Teacher turnover	17%
Curriculum	 Educational Permit/ License	UK
	 Main Curriculum	National Curriculum for England
	 External Tests and Examinations	GL, CAT4, IBT, IGCSE
	 Accreditation	NA

School Journey for ST. MARY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL DUBAI - AL MUHAISNAH



Summary of Inspection Findings 2021-2022

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **acceptable**. The section below summarizes the inspection findings for students' outcomes, provision and leadership.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Students Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across all phases, students make good progress in English. Their progress is less consistent in other subjects. Levels of attainment are low in the Foundation Stage (FS) in mathematics and science and in the primary phase in mathematics and English. Attainment and progress are not strong in Islamic education and Arabic languages. In the FS and secondary phases, students take responsibility for their own learning and collaborate well with others. These skills are less well-developed in lower primary classes. • Students' personal and social development are good. Students are mutually respectful to each other and to school staff. In the lower primary phase, students occasionally struggle to manage their own behaviour. Students across the school have a good knowledge of Islamic values and show pride in their own cultures. They willingly take on leadership roles and make positive contributions to the school community.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Provision for learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching is acceptable across the school. Teachers' questioning techniques are mostly effective, but their planning for differentiated activities, particularly in the primary phase, remains underdeveloped. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage their students in learning. Internal assessments are not fully aligned to the expected standards of the curriculum. Assessment data are not always used effectively to modify the curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning • The curriculum provides students with interesting topics that are well linked to their interests. The secondary curriculum enables students to study a narrow range of subjects to IGCSE level. In the FS, the science curriculum does not align well to the EYFS requirements. Adaptations of the curriculum occasionally lead to low expectations of students and hinder independent learning. • The school has an ethos which is warm, welcoming and caring. The arrangements for health and safety are good throughout the school. During the inspection, a number of safety issues were identified and drawn to the attention of school leaders and were all addressed. Procedures for identifying students with special educational needs are well established. Support for students with significant barriers to learning is variable. Gifted and talented students are identified but are not fully supported with their learning needs.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Leadership and management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders provide a clear direction for improvement. Middle leaders have a growing capacity to support school development. However, a lack of targeted training and unclear roles and responsibilities, hinders their effectiveness. Parental partnerships are good, but less developed are those within the wider community. The Governing Board effectively ensures the growth of student numbers and monitors the school's performance effectively. It has not investigated a number of key staffing issues, such as those relating to improving school assessment systems, ensuring sufficiency of inclusion provision and further developing the secondary curriculum.

The Best Features of The School:

- Students' good progress in English and their awareness of Islamic values and world cultures, across all phases.
- Health and safety and the effective care and support that the school provides.
- Students' personal development, including their social and innovation skills.
- The strong partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- The caring and supportive ethos, promoted by the self-disciplined and responsible student body.

Key Recommendations:

- Improve students' progress and attainment in all subjects, particularly in Islamic Education, Arabic, and mathematics.
- Improve leaders' understanding of the assessment systems, linked to the curriculum expectations of the National Curriculum for England (NCfE), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Early years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in order to ensure that:
 - measures of students' attainment and progress are more accurate in relation to the relevant standards
 - curriculum adaptations enable all students to reach their potential.
- Improve the effectiveness of the self-evaluation processes, by ensuring that the analysis of accurate internal assessment data provides information that measures the impact of the quality of teaching on students' learning
- Governors must ensure that all teachers have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the NCfE to accelerate students' progress.

Overall School Performance

Acceptable

1. Students' Achievement

		Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
 Islamic Education	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
 Arabic as a First Language	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
 Arabic as an Additional Language	Attainment	Not applicable	Weak	Weak
	Progress	Not applicable	Weak	Weak
 English	Attainment	Good ↑	Acceptable ↓	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
 Mathematics	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good ↑	Acceptable ↓	Acceptable ↓
 Science	Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑
	Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑
Learning skills		Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
		Good ↑	Acceptable	Good

2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal development	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good	Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Good 	Good

3. Teaching and assessment

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum design and implementation	Acceptable 	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/ safeguarding	Good	Good	Good
Care and support	Good	Good	Good

6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership	Acceptable
School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Good

For further information regarding the inspection process, please look at [UAE School Inspection Framework](#)

Main Inspection Report

1. Students' Achievement

Islamic Education

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- A review of students' recent work and lesson observations confirm that their levels of achievement are broadly in line with curriculum expectations. Students demonstrate a secure understanding of basic Islamic concepts, beliefs and practices. The progress of Arabic speaking students is slightly better than that of non-Arabic speaking students.
- Students' Holy Qur'an recitation skills are underdeveloped. Their insecure knowledge of the Arabic language is hampering their progress. As a result, they struggle to read and pronounce Holy Qur'anic verses correctly when applying the rules of Tajweed.
- Students' understanding and their knowledge of Seerah is stronger than their ability to apply their knowledge in real life contexts. Memorization skills of the Holy Qur'an remain underdeveloped across the school.

For Development:

- Ensure the Holy Qur'an and Hadith are closely linked to all areas of learning, in all phases.
- improve students' skills of memorization and recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

Arabic as a First Language

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Most primary students read and understand familiar words. They create charts to track events and write summaries of their findings, but they make errors in their grammar and punctuation. Students' speaking and independent creative writing skills are insecure. Secondary students identify differences between facts and opinions when reading informational text.
- In their lessons and recent work, students identify the main ideas in literary texts. A majority apply appropriate reading strategies to predict the meaning of unfamiliar texts. Writing persuasive, informational and creative paragraphs and the use of standard reading indicators are all underdeveloped.
- The introduction of guided reading and the use of the digital reading platform 'I read Arabic', help students to learn new vocabulary. However, their participation in these initiatives is inconsistent, which slows reading development.

For Development:

- In assessing students attainment and progress, ensure the assessments used are linked to the relevant MoE curriculum standards.
- Ensure students redraft their written work and follow teachers' feedback through marking to enhance their extended writing.
- Design and implement a strategy to encourage out of school Arabic reading, to develop students' vocabulary and understanding of unfamiliar texts.

Arabic as an Additional Language

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Weak	Weak
Progress	Not applicable	Weak	Weak

- Students understand only a limited range of spoken Arabic, such as teachers' instructions and familiar high frequency words. They can answer questions using one-word or short phrases, with assistance from visual prompts. A majority read short texts and understand the key ideas. Students' skills in writing and speaking are underdeveloped.
- A majority of primary students recognise almost all letters of the Arabic alphabet, but they make errors in the use of grammar. A minority of secondary students read confidently and provide accurate information about unfamiliar topics such as the value of voluntary work.
- Students' listening skills are developing slowly. Few are able to engage in discussions. Free writing skills are underdeveloped. In reading, most students struggle to decode words for understanding.

For Development:

- In both phases, improve students' speaking, reading and writing skills.
- Accelerate progress in reading by raising expectations, the level of challenge and the use of questioning to probe understanding.

English

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good 	Acceptable 	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good

- Internal and external assessment results, show consistent improvements in reading and writing. Most secondary students on the IGCSE literature and language courses make rapid progress. By Year 11, a large majority of students produce thoughtful responses to a range of practice examination questions.
- Children in the FS learn letters and sounds and make good progress in understanding vocabulary in context. From their starting points as non-English speakers, progress and attainment for these children are strong.
- Almost all Year 6 and secondary phase students make strong progress in reading, analysis of literary texts and speaking. For lower primary students, progress in the development of language skills has been slowed by the period of off-site learning. They demonstrate low levels of confidence in reading.

For Development:

- Improve the reading skills of FS and primary students by providing weekly reading practice that is carefully monitored and their progress rigorously tracked.
- Stimulate students' engagement in reading by using materials that match their interests and abilities and promote independent reading for pleasure.

Mathematics

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good 	Acceptable 	Acceptable 

- The attainment and progress of most primary and secondary students are in line with expectations. In the FS, most children demonstrate knowledge and skills in line with curriculum standards and are making better than expected progress.
- From a relatively low starting point, children in the FS, and students in primary steadily improve their skills in numeracy. Secondary students understanding of algebra, statistics and geometry is stronger than in other areas of mathematics. Throughout the school, number fluency and the ability to solve word problems remains underdeveloped.
- A recent focus on mental mathematics is improving younger students' confidence and competence in the handling of number and word problems involving calculations.

For Development:

- Provide more opportunities for students to create and lead their own mathematical learning and to undertake investigations.
- Actively promote the use of mathematical vocabulary across all phases.

Science

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑

- Attainment in science improves as students move through the phases. On this journey, their knowledge and understanding of science is enhanced by the acquisition of key scientific learning skills. By time they take IGCSE examinations, almost all students can independently plan investigations.
- From FS1 to Year 3, students make less rapid progress due to a lack of opportunities for exploration and investigations. In Year 5, students understand how the absorption of carbon dioxide enables plants to grow. In Year 10, students can compare aerobic and anaerobic respiration.
- Students have a secure understanding of the protocols for handling variables in scientific investigations. However, their inquiry skills and abilities in extended writing in the scientific genre are limited.

For Development:

- Improve the continuity and development of age-related scientific skills across the early phases by ensuring that students are engaged in more practical learning activities, as well as in-depth research and reporting.

Learning Skills

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Learning skills	Good ↑	Acceptable	Good

- Most FS children and secondary students demonstrate positive attitudes towards their work. They can make connections in their learning, across subjects. In most subjects, students can communicate their learning effectively. However, weaknesses in language skills limit the quality of discussion in Arabic.
- FS children enjoy their lessons and are eager to explore their learning environment. For most primary students, their critical thinking, problem-solving and independent inquiry skills are in the early stages of development.
- In most lessons across the school, particularly in the secondary phase, students engage effectively in group activities. Secondary students engage in independent research and are competent in the use of digital technology. These skills are less evident in primary.

For Development:

- Provide more opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, inquiry and problem-solving skills.
- Improve the use of digital technologies by younger students, to promote greater levels of curiosity and exploration.

2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal development	Good	Good	Good

- Most students display positive attitudes and behaviour. They show respectful attitudes towards staff and peers within a climate of mutual respect. However, some lower primary students lack self-discipline and behave inappropriately. Bullying is rare and students feel safe, valued, and supported.
- Students take leadership responsibilities in the school council, and in the fitness groups. They understand the importance of healthy living and demonstrate awareness of the importance of healthy eating and an active lifestyle.
- Students enjoy coming to the school. Lateness to school and to lessons is rare. Across the school the average rate of attendance of 94% is good.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good	Good

- Students have a growing appreciation and understanding of how Islamic values influence contemporary UAE society. They share examples of how the values promoted in Islam, such as fairness and tolerance, support the ways of life in the UAE.
- Students are knowledgeable and appreciative of the heritage and culture that underpin and influence contemporary life in the UAE. They participate in a range of cultural activities and are able to share examples of different types of food, traditional sports and dress.
- Students are knowledgeable about their own heritage and cultures. With pride, they discuss the history, customs, and traditions of their home countries. However, students' general knowledge of other world cultures is less secure.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Good ↑	Good

- Students of all ages strongly promote the school's community ethos and older students are proactive in taking on roles of responsibility. They enjoy being school council members, prefects and heads of school. Primary phase students lead prayers, exercise sessions and support their peers.
- Across the school, students show a positive work ethic, with the youngest children diligently engaging in all of their activities. However, opportunities for students of all ages to creatively generate their own ideas and be innovative are limited.
- Students are aware of the key environmental issues, such as endangered species, the effects of shrinking rainforests and climate change. They participate in various recycling initiatives and whole school events, such as World Environment Day and Sustainability Day.

For Development:

- Increase opportunities for students of all ages to be creative and innovative, and to generate and conduct their own independent projects.

3. Teaching and assessment

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Only a minority of primary teachers use questioning to promote critical thinking and engagement. In secondary, where some teaching is stronger, the best teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that promote independent learning and investigations. However, across the school, teachers do not always make the best use of available time and resources to support learning and rapid progress.
- In the FS there are positive interactions between teachers and children. In this phase, teachers' use of questioning is effective in encouraging children to explore the learning environment and to extend their communication and language skills.
- In most lessons, teachers begin by sharing the learning objectives with students. In secondary English, tasks are designed to match students' varied learning needs. However, this is not consistently seen in other subjects, particularly in primary lessons

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Across all phases, the results of regular summative assessments are recorded systematically. However, internal assessments are not always accurate or reliable. They neither provide a secure basis for making comparisons of students' performance nor for improvement planning.
- In the FS, teachers carefully track children's phonics and language development. However, the assessments are not closely aligned to the EYFS framework. In other phases, not enough use is made of assessment information to ensure that work in lessons is matched to students' learning needs.
- A recently introduced tracking system is being used to monitor students' progress on their learning pathways through the school. However, current assessments are not reliable enough to support this initiative.

For Development:

- Improve the accuracy and reliability of internal assessments.
- Ensure that, in all lessons, teachers make effective use of assessment information to match work to students' learning needs.

4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum design and implementation	Acceptable 	Acceptable	Acceptable

- The curriculum is the subject of ongoing review and development. Continuity and progression in subjects have been enhanced since the last inspection and there is little repetition of topics or content. A focus on skills development has improved some student outcomes in primary science. There has been no similar focus in the secondary phase.
- As a result of inconsistencies in understanding the NCFE age-grade standards, transitions at the end of phase seldom consider the best ways to prepare students for new learning. The school has considered student interests and career preferences in offering IGCSE subjects.
- A newly introduced three-year IGCSE course has increased students' choice and motivation. Within the organisation of the IGCSE subjects, cross-curricular links and innovative and creative opportunities are built into tasks to make learning more engaging.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Analyses of students’ performance have guided the adaptation of the IGCSE course into a three-year programme. This change is beginning to have an impact on the achievements of secondary students, particularly in science. Adaptations to engage students in creative and innovative projects are less well-developed.
- The development of students’ social and other skills through extra-curricular activities, visits, and student initiatives, is limited. A range of learning experiences that link well to the values and culture of the UAE is being developed.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well adapted to match students’ differing learning needs in teachers’ lesson planning. This results in an often insufficient level of challenge, particularly for higher ability students. The FS curriculum is not fully aligned with the relevant age-related content.
- FS 2 children are provided with one 40-minute period of Arabic a week.

For Development:

- Ensure that students experience a seamless transition in learning between phases by improving teachers’ understanding of the NCFE and EYFS age-related curriculum standards.
- Ensure that all students, including the most able, are always sufficiently challenged when reviewing the curriculum.
- Structure classroom opportunities for students to make cross-curricular connections and to be involved in self-initiated innovative projects.

5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Good	Good	Good

- Effective procedures, clear roles of responsibility and up-to-date safeguarding and wellbeing policies, ensure students of all ages are well protected and feel safe in school. Incident record-keeping is well-established and thorough.
- Students are supervised effectively on school transport. The school is attempting to resolve issues of traffic congestion, to ensure the safety of parents and students when arriving and leaving school. The school also ensures that identification labels are issued to all visitors when they arrive and that these are worn whilst on the premises.
- Medical staff are effective in encouraging students to lead healthy lifestyles. There are regular opportunities for exercise and ‘Healthy Week’ activities in the FS. Consequently, most students maintain a healthy weight.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Care and support	Good	Good	Good

- Positive, mutually respectful teacher-student relationships are a feature of the school. Students’ social, physical, emotional and academic needs are given high priority. The school employs effective systems for managing behaviour, attendance and punctuality.
- The inclusion team provide the required specialist support for students of determination. However, staffing is insufficient to fully meet the needs of the growing number of students of determination. Support for students identified as gifted and talented is variable.
- The pastoral care support staff monitor the well-being of students and are available to discuss any concerns. Students are provided with appropriate support and guidance when making subject option and future career choices.

For Development:

- Resolve the school’s traffic and pedestrian issues and ensure that all visitors wear identification labels.
- Provide appropriate support and challenge for students identified as gifted and talented.
- Provide additional specialist staff to meet the growing number of students of determination.

Inclusion of students of determination

Provision and outcomes for students of determination	Acceptable
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- Governors and school leaders are committed to the inclusive principles that permeate the life of the school and its diverse student population. The school has an inclusion governor representative, an inclusion champion and the inclusive education improvement plan is implemented.
- The school has procedures in place to identify students of determination on entry. Although the procedures are appropriate, not enough use is made of the information to ensure that subsequent interventions match students’ individual needs and therefore support lowering barriers to learning.
- Staff work closely with the parents of students of determination. All benefit from this level of collaboration and support. Parental involvement and feedback contribute to the intervention support provided.
- Curriculum modification to meet the needs of students of determination is inconsistent. Adaptations that appear in teachers’ lesson plans are not always put into practice. As a result, the learning needs of the students of determination are not always met.
- Assessment generally enables staff to draw accurate conclusions about the progress of students of determination. However, not enough use is made of assessment information to guide the personalisation of teaching, nor to provide appropriate feedback to students.

For Development:

- Ensure that teachers fully understand how to use assessment information to guide lesson planning.
- Ensure that curriculum adaptations and well-informed lesson planning, aiming to fully meet the needs of students of determination, are always put into practice.

6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership	Acceptable
School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Good

- Leaders share a commitment to achieving the vision of this inclusive school, founded on the principles and values of the UAE. Senior leaders demonstrate a developing understanding of the best practices of teaching. Their knowledge of the NCFE, the EYFS and the MoE curriculum standards and their assessment, is not secure. This is an impediment in their attempts to set clear, strategic directions for raising student achievement.
- An evolving evaluation process, using internal and external assessment information, is used judge school effectiveness. However, a lack of moderation results in internal assessments being insecure. As a consequence, leaders' views of the school's effectiveness are not always accurate, because they are based on inaccurate assessment data. The monitoring of the quality of teaching is generally effective, although it is sometimes not aligned sufficiently closely to the impact of teaching on the outcomes of students. Improvement planning is thorough and provides a useful template to guide developmental processes.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's education. They use the school's portal as the prime means of communication. The school engages parents as partners in their children's learning through a range of online forums. They receive regular reports on their children's performance in internal and external assessments. These keep parents informed about the work and progress of their children. Parents of students of determination express their satisfaction at the progress that their children make.
- Governance of the school includes representatives of most stakeholders. Through meetings, reports from the principal and visits, governors gain knowledge of most aspects of the school's performance. Governors' support and challenge school leaders appropriately and make useful suggestions for improvement which are frequently taken on board. However, governors have not identified the inaccuracies in internal assessments, the lack of sufficient specialist inclusion staff, and the weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the NCFE.
- The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Although teachers are academically qualified, they have insufficient knowledge and experience of the NCFE. There is a lack of leaders for the IGCSE and A-level programmes and for the overall coordination of assessment. Targeted professional development programmes are delivered at whole-school and departmental levels. Specialist learning facilities are available across many areas of the curriculum, but a number of learning spaces do not provide high-quality learning environments.

For Development:

- Improve leaders' understanding of the assessment systems, linked to the expectations and standards of National Curriculum for England (NCFE), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curricula
- Urgently recruit key coordinators knowledgeable in assessment, and for the IGCSE and A level programmes
- Ensure that when recruiting teachers, account is taken of prior experience of the NCFE.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This 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 school inspection will report on changes made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report, you should contact QA.Schools@khda.gov.ae