

The Westminster School...



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational
needs and disabilities



Innovation

Inspection Report 2015-2016

The Westminster School

Curriculum: UK

Overall rating: Good

Read more about the school



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“Don't look
behind to
see who is
following you,
but look forward
to be ahead”



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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School information

General information



Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	1988
Website	www.gemsws-ghusais.com
Telephone	04-2988333
Address	Al Qusais PO Box: 27016 Dubai U A E
Principal	Kingston Gilbert Xavier
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	7 to 10 March 2016

Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-18
Grades or year groups	Foundation Stage 2 to Year 13
Number of students on roll	5,078
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	0
Number of Emirati students	147
Number of students with SEND	288
Largest nationality group of students	Pakistani

Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	281
Largest nationality group of teachers	Indian
Number of teaching assistants	18
Teacher-student ratio	1:18
Number of guidance counsellors	2
Teacher turnover	7%

Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	UK
Main curriculum	UK / MoE
External tests and examinations	CAT4, IGSCE, AS, A levels.
Accreditation	None
National Agenda benchmark tests	GL

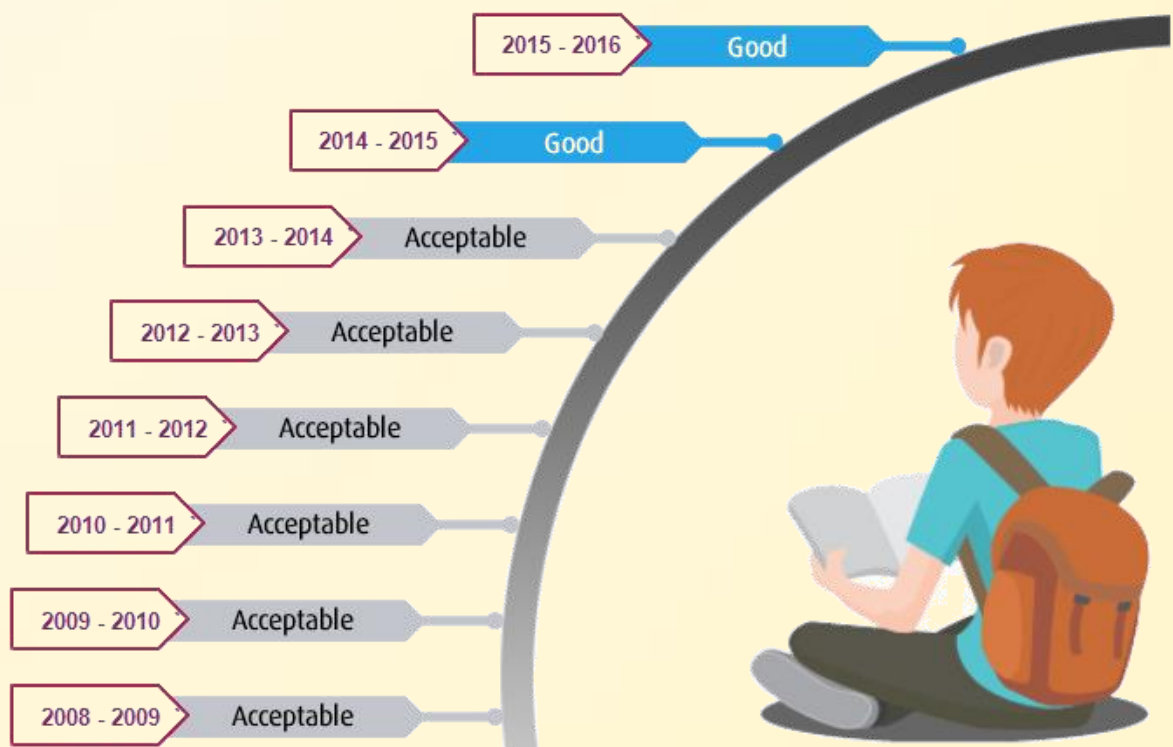


Summary for parents and the community

The Westminster School was inspected by DSIB from 7 to 10 March 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **good**.

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key standards of performance. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching and the assessment of learning were across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.

The inspection judgements were drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, **The Westminster School** provided a **good** quality of education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were at least good in the Foundation Stage (FS) and the primary phase. They were even better in secondary and post-16. Attainment in Islamic education and Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Progress followed a similar though slightly stronger pattern.
- Students had extremely well developed personal and social skills, especially so in the secondary and post-16 areas of the school. Their understanding of Islamic values, their knowledge of Emirati heritage and culture as well as their environmental awareness and service to the community had been developed to the same extent.
- The quality of teaching and assessment, particularly students' skills in evaluating their own performance and understanding their next steps in learning, enabled good progress to take place in the majority of subjects across all phases.
- The curriculum was very well designed and was kept up-to-date with regular reviews, incorporating, for example, the revisions in the National Curriculum in England. It had been well modified by the integration of learning skills, innovation and enterprise, within the UAE context.
- Procedures for the welfare and safety of all students were strong. Of particular note were the arrival and departure systems that school leaders, advised by parents, had put in place. Support for learning in FS and for career guidance in the post-16 phase was particularly effective.
- The quality of leadership, at all levels, including by students, was impressive. The school had established a strong partnership with parents that enhanced students' learning. Although leaders were making the best of limited accommodation, small classrooms and large student groups continued to impede high quality teaching and the further development of students' learning skills.



What did the school do well?

- Leaders, led by the principal and vice principal, had a strong vision of the skills, attitudes and values that students would need when they took their place in 21st century society. Leadership, at all levels, including students, was empowered and developed.
- Teachers prepared their students well for external examinations at IGCSE and A level.
- A strong emphasis on the context of UAE and Dubai, in particular, had developed an excellent understanding of Islamic values and Emirati heritage, especially in secondary and post-16.
- Valuable opportunities had been given for students to express their creativity, develop their ability to think more deeply and make connections with the real world, through art.



What does the school need to do next?

- Raise students' attainment and progress:
 - in Islamic education by aligning the teaching more closely to the standards, so that teachers have higher expectations for students' learning
 - in Arabic as a first language in the secondary department by providing a balance of all language skills, through a range of strategies, at the appropriate level for the different groups of students
 - in Arabic as an additional language by narrowing the range of language experience in each class.
- Increase the proportion of high quality teaching by:
 - developing teachers' conceptual understanding of the range of effective teaching strategies available
 - enabling teachers to make informed decisions about how best to progress students' learning in every lesson.
- Improve governance, by acting with some urgency, on issues such as reducing the substantial over-crowding in many classrooms that is a barrier to students' learning.
- Improve the sufficiency of staffing in the school through:
 - extending the range of specialised expertise in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) department and the delegation of greater authority to its leaders
 - providing greater support for the students in the early years of primary as they transition from a condensed one-year FS programme
 - separating the leadership functions of Arabic and Islamic education.



How well did the school provide for students with special educational needs and disabilities?

- Students' progress was variable across the subjects. It was stronger in English and science but weaker in Arabic and Islamic education. Students made good progress in their personal and social development. The school had a new but effective system for assessing and tracking the academic and personal progress of students with SEND.
- Parents received regular reports of their child's progress in the school's curriculum subjects but additional SEND reports of their child's progress with individual specific targets.
- The school had strong informal and formal communication links with parents of students with SEND and saw this as essential in promoting a trustful and effective partnership, which supported both students and their families.
- Parents were fully involved in reviewing their child's individual education plan and worked with the school to help their children reach goals appropriate to their specific need.
- The SEND team, under the guidance of senior leaders, was very effective in supporting and guiding parents when their children experienced difficulties with learning and behaviour. This was a small team for the growing range and number of students with SEND. Parents very much appreciated this support.

National Agenda Parameter



In 2014, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, launched the UAE National Agenda 2021, with education being a prime focus. The National Agenda includes two major objectives developed with the intent of placing the UAE among the most successful countries that provide world-class education. By 2021, it is expected that the UAE will feature in the top twenty countries in the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) test and in the top fifteen countries in the 'Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies' (TIMSS) test.

In response to this, each participating school was issued a report on their students' performance in these international assessments and in addition, they were provided with clear targets for improving their performance. This academic year, KHDA introduced the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments.

Main points:

- The school met the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter.
- No attainment data from the National Agenda Parameter was available at this stage to make a judgement on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- Governors and the principal successfully promoted awareness of the National Agenda and the National Agenda targets with the majority of their stakeholders. All governors were aware of TIMSS, PISA and the targets set by KHDA. They saw great value in participating in international benchmarking tests. Parents were well informed and supportive of the school's action in participating in such testing.
- Teachers were conversant with TIMSS and PISA and well aware of the implications for curriculum change and shift of emphasis in both learning and teaching styles. Students, in particular, were most knowledgeable about the rationale for the UAE National Agenda and enthusiastic about the ways in which they were being prepared for it and for success in the tests.
- The curriculum was carefully aligned so that students might perform well in TIMSS and PISA tests. Planning for continuity and progression in National Agenda relevant subject skills and knowledge was systematic. Teachers had received professional development in questioning skills and inquiry pedagogy. The curriculum had been reviewed and modified to meet the content and skill requirements of TIMSS and PISA.
- Development of critical thinking, investigations, problem solving, inquiry and application to real life situations were regular features of the teaching strategies. Teachers had attended professional development sessions to improve questioning techniques of how to develop students' higher order thinking skills. Good examples existed of open-ended questioning, investigative approaches, and the development of research and independent learning.
- Students effectively used information technology (IT) and other resources to develop their research skills. Technology played an important role in how the school had developed its students' skills for the future. The school was a Microsoft Showcase School and its Microsoft Student Ambassadors played a leading role in contributing to ever more effective and innovative ways in which IT could be used.

Innovation in education

The *UAE Vision 2021* sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for ‘innovation’ and ‘innovative leadership’. It provides a basis for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, to experiment and to test assumptions as well as questioning and challenging the status quo. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.








Promoting a culture of innovation:

- The principal and senior leaders had a well-developed understanding of the role and importance of promoting a culture of innovation within the school, in line with the UAE vision 2021. Staff had engaged in professional learning to develop their understanding of innovation in learning, teaching and in leadership. Key strategic leaders across the school had already embedded innovation-learning opportunities within the curriculum and across all phases of the school. Students had multiple opportunities, through formal lessons and through their participation in many national and international competitions, to begin to explore, apply and further develop their innovation-learning skills. Innovation and creativity permeated the school and was at the heart of developing students as confident and skilled learners and leaders.

Overall school performance

Good

1. Students' achievement

		Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic education 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable ↓	Good
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable ↓	Good ↑
Arabic as an additional language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not applicable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not applicable
English 	Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Very good ↓
	Progress	Very good ↑	Good	Outstanding	Very good ↓
Mathematics 	Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Science 	Attainment	Good	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding
	Progress	Good	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Very good ↑

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal development	Very good ↓	Very good ↓	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding

3. Teaching and assessment

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

4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum adaptation	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Care and support	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Very good ↑

6. Leadership and management

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



Main inspection report

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the standards reached by students and the quality of education provided in Dubai's private schools.

Judgements are made on a six-point scale



Using this scale, the *Main inspection report* contains the judgements about the different aspects, phases and subjects that form the work of the school.

It provides the reasons for the answers to the questions in the *Summary for parents and the community*:

- How well did the school perform overall?
- What did the school do well?
- What does the school need to do next?

1. Students' achievement

Foundation Stage

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as a first language	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Good	Very good ↑
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- Children in FS were developing age-appropriate early literacy skills with the majority attaining above curriculum and international expectations. Phonic skills were improving and children recognised how to use these when reading new words. Guided reading was introduced to improve the attainment of children's reading skills at the beginning of the year and was starting to have an impact. Internal assessments indicated that the large majority of children were making better than expected progress especially in speaking, listening and phonic skills. Most groups of students made much better than expected progress in relation to their learning objectives and starting points.
- The majority of children attained well and made better than expected progress in gaining mathematical knowledge and skills. Internal ongoing assessments indicated that the majority of children made better than expected progress in the different aspects of mathematics from their assessed starting points and in relation to the learning objectives in lessons. The progress of children with SEND was in line with curriculum expectations. Other groups made similarly good progress. Children spent only one year in FS but this helped children's attainment and progress considerably before entering the primary department.
- The majority of children attained levels above curriculum expectations and international expectations in science. So, for example, through their investigations children developed a sound understanding of animal habitats and discovered how different animals had evolved to adapt to them. Internal assessments and classroom observations indicated that a majority of children made better than expected progress in relation to their starting points. The development of using an investigative scientific process was at an early stage, although children had many opportunities to discover for themselves. The progress of children with SEND was in line with curriculum expectations. Other groups made good progress.

Primary		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- Most students attained levels that were in line with national curriculum standards for Islamic education. Most had appropriate knowledge of the Pillars of Islam, Islamic manners, morals and values. Recitation skills were less developed and their understanding of verses from the Holy Qur'an was inconsistent. The majority of students made a good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the learning objectives in the lessons and their starting points. Their progress in understanding Hadeeth and Seerah was strong. Progress of the different groups of students, including those with SEND, varied but was generally good. The internal written tests lacked appropriate levels of challenge and external assessments were not used, so wider benchmarking was limited.
- Internal tests showed that the majority of the students studying Arabic as a first language attained levels that were above curriculum standards. In lessons and recent work the majority of students made better than expected progress. Speaking and listening were the students' strongest skills. They could follow instructions and respond appropriately. Reading skills were stronger in the upper grades. Students' writing skills were less developed, although grammar skills had improved. Rates of progress were generally above expectations although girls were progressing faster than boys. The recent trend showed that, over time, attainment and progress were at similar levels.
- As for the past few years, students attained levels in Arabic as an additional language that were just in line with curriculum standards. Internal assessments indicated a better picture; however, tests were not closely linked to the Ministry of Education (MoE) expectations nor were they externally moderated. Attainment in lessons was also in line with expectations. Students' listening skills were strong. Students could speak with an appropriate level of fluency and range of vocabulary. Accuracy in reading and understanding its meaning, and writing were developing at a slower rate. Students with SEND made similar progress to their classmates.
- Assessment data showed that attainment in English was good, with girls performing better than boys. The majority of students were confident speakers and used a growing range of vocabulary. They read with an increasing sense of inferential understanding. Their writing showed maturity; many were skillfully constructing compound sentences and varying their writing to suit the purpose and audience. Progress in lessons against the learning objectives was similarly good for most groups, with writing and speaking skills contributing to a good rate of improvement over time.
- Students entered primary with attainment levels in mathematics at age-appropriate expectations. The school's own internal tests showed positive results in attainment by the end of Year 6 but did not provide sufficient information on students' progress. Progress in lessons was better than expected for both boys and girls, especially in Years 5 and 6. By Year 6, students could apply basic mathematical knowledge in straightforward situations. They demonstrated a good understanding of whole numbers and of fractions. Students could visualise three-dimensional shapes from two-dimensional representations. They could interpret bar graphs, pictographs and tables to solve simple problems. Different groups made broadly similar progress.

- Towards the end of Year 6, students' attainment in science was above expectations in the National Curriculum in England. These older students understood basic scientific concepts well, for example, that a change can be physical or chemical, reversible or irreversible. Most students in earlier year groups demonstrated good investigative skills, for example, when looking at 'push and pull' forces. In lessons and over time the majority of groups of students made good progress towards their planned learning objectives. They built on the scientific enquiry skills that they had developed in previous years. Progress of students with SEND and some who were lower attaining was in line with curriculum expectations.

Secondary		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable ↓	Acceptable ↓
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

- In Islamic education, most students attained levels that were in line with national curriculum expectations. Most could link what they learnt to their own real life situations. Their knowledge and understanding of the Six Pillars of Faith, key Islamic events and principles were acceptable. However, their recitation skills and using verses from the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth, as evidenced in their discussions, were weak. Most made appropriate progress in gaining knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the learning objectives in lessons and over time. Their progress in understanding Islamic law (Fiqh) was adequate but recitation skills were developing slowly. The progress of different groups of students was broadly in line, with the exception that girls progressed faster than boys.
- School data showed that attainment in Arabic as a first language was in line with national curriculum expectations. This was confirmed by their work in lessons. Speaking and listening were the strongest skills, although many students were using colloquial rather than standard Arabic. Girls, in particular, could express their ideas confidently using a varied vocabulary. Writing skills were underdeveloped and did not extend beyond the basic expectation. However, by Year 11 students were able to analyse texts at an appropriate level. The recent trend was showing to be at a higher level. Progress of all groups was broadly in line with expectations, but was stronger in the girls' classes and in the upper year groups.
- Assessment data and students' work in classrooms in Arabic as an additional language indicated that most students' knowledge, understanding and skills were in line with curriculum expectation. Their listening skills were the strongest. They could conduct a simple pre-learnt conversation using familiar vocabulary and were able to read pre-learnt sentences but with some mistakes in pronunciation. Skills were less strong in reading comprehension and independent writing. Most students' progress in relation to their starting points and against the learning objectives in lessons was acceptable. Their progress in listening and reading familiar topics was steady. It was slower in speaking confidently and fluently and with independent writing. There was no external assessment to compare with the school's internal tests.

- Attainment in English in the 2015 external examinations was outstanding. This had been the trend for several years. This year, girls scored slightly better than boys. Progress in lessons was also outstanding. Students demonstrated very high levels of competence with oral language skills through activities such as role-play, debate, discussion and critique of each other's learning. They read with great fluency and could analyse texts, giving evidence for the authors' intended purposes. Their writing was developing specific features which they used for good effect. They had an excellent grasp of grammar, punctuation and paragraphing. Though girls made the fastest progress, different groups made similarly outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Towards the end of secondary phase, attainment in mathematics was good for the majority of students. External examinations showed that the attainment of the majority of students was above international and national standards. Internal data, from 2015 confirmed good attainment in all year groups. In lessons, the majority of students made good progress against the standards of the new National Curriculum in England. Progress increased as students moved through secondary with little difference between the boys and the girls. By Year 11 students could understand and work with multiple representations, including algebraic models of real-world situations. They could modify a functional model or graph to fit a specified change to the situation and could communicate the resulting explanations and arguments clearly.
- Attainment in science, as judged by external examinations, was consistently very good when compared to curriculum standards and international averages. In lessons, the large majority of students demonstrated very good knowledge, understanding and investigative skills. For example, in Year 7 students could analyse the acidic and basic properties of given substances using indicators, whilst in Year 11 they were able to use the unit of a mole in calculations involving a limiting reagent. In relation to their starting points most students, including those with SEND, made very good progress over time.

Post-16

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good ↑
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Very good ↓	Very good ↓
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In Islamic education attainment was in line with national curriculum expectations. Most students could link their knowledge to real life situations. They had good knowledge of Islamic principles and Fiqh, but generally their ability to use Hadeeth and verses from the Holy Qur'an to support their views and opinions was less strong. Recitation skills were weaker too. Sufficient progress was made towards the learning objectives in lessons. Students' progress in understanding Fiqh, Hadeeth and Islamic manners was steady, while it was slower in recitation. The progress of the different groups of students was varied, but generally acceptable. Internal test results did not reflect an accurate picture of attainment because they were not appropriately challenging.
- Internal test results and classroom performance indicated that the majority of students attained levels in Arabic as a first language that were above MoE curriculum expectations. Students were confident in writing independently and in expressing their ideas clearly. They were able to analyse the different literary texts that were presented to them. Progress in lessons also was good for the different groups of students. Students' use of grammar in independent writing was developing at a good pace, especially that of the girls. Good attainment and progress continued the trend of the last three years.
- The attainment and progress of the large majority of students in English was very good. Students skillfully participated in classroom and small group discussion, leading discussions and responding appropriately to challenges to their views. They were becoming skilled in analysing and comparing different texts and citing evidence for their opinions and assertions. They had developed the use of 'anchor charts' to capture the skills and processes of writing and were particularly effective in their persuasive writing because of this. A variety of features were chosen well to give precise meaning. Attainment and progress had dipped slightly from the very high levels of 2014.
- External assessment results in mathematics in 2015 were outstanding for the small group of Year 13 students. External results, for well over 100 students in Year 12, were also above international standards. In lessons and in their recent work, students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that reflected the assessment results. Students' progress from late secondary to Year 13 was outstanding. Students could reason with data from several sources to solve multi-step problems. Many understood mathematical modeling as applied in probability and statistics. Others could apply integration to real life situations such as cooling bodies at crime scenes.
- External examinations showed that levels of attainment in science at Year 13 were outstanding in all three science subjects, with students performing well above international averages. In lessons students demonstrated very high levels of understanding of complex concepts. They carried out practical experiments independently and collaboratively, clearly explaining their learning and their interpretation of results to one another. The majority of students made excellent progress, usually above the examination targets set for them. Students demonstrated extremely high levels of understanding, for example, when they led a lesson explaining the mechanism of neurotransmission through a neuron.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Very good ↑

- Most students were fully engaged in their learning. They had a clear understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, guided by the targets that were agreed at the end of unit of learning. Post-16 students were the most independent learners, needing much less guidance from teachers. They were more actively involved in the assessment and development of their own learning.
- Students collaborated well, especially in the upper secondary phase and post-16. They were respectful of each other. In the other year groups, when discussion took place it was often given insufficient time to elicit deeper understanding. Collaboration in Arabic was good when students were given the opportunity to discuss. Students were able to communicate their learning well.
- Connections to the real world and different curriculum areas were regularly planned but were sometimes tenuous. They were most beneficial in science and English. For example, topics such as experimentation on animals and capital punishment were effective in developing argument and persuasive writing. In FS teachers made regular connections to real life through a variety of practical activities linked to the curriculum themes.
- The use of technology to develop research skills was encouraged through a 'Bring Your Own Device' initiative. However, not all students had access to such devices. Students' abilities to think critically were developed through teachers' probing questions. Hypothesising was a regular feature in post-16 science. Opportunities were created to develop students' creativity and skills of innovation by collapsing the normal timetable.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal development	Very good ↓	Very good ↓	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Most children and students demonstrated a sense of personal responsibility for their actions and for the success of the school. In classroom activities it was clear that most were confident in taking risks to further their learning. Consistently, students rose to the challenge. They thrived on both peer and teacher feedback which supported their learning.
- Aside from a few minor exceptions, students throughout the school were self-disciplined and focused on learning. They responded with genuine smiles and attentiveness to one another, their teachers, and visitors to the school. A few instances in the early primary years were observed of children and students not exhibiting sufficient self-discipline, especially when teaching was not engaging.
- Throughout the school, children demonstrated empathy for one another, their teachers and for visitors to the school. Students felt their ideas mattered and took their school citizenship seriously. A healthy, respectful relationship existed between adults and children. Students expressed themselves confidently and teachers demonstrated that children's voices mattered by responding with attention.

- The school's commitment to healthy life styles clearly influenced students' food choices. Students were well supported in their decision making by the school's medical staff who advised on packed lunches. Students were involved in helping design menus and special events such as 'salad day'. Many opportunities were taken by the students to engage in physical activity.
- Attendance at school had been outstanding last term, however during the inspection period it had dipped well below that. Students were punctual to lessons from their breaks. Students felt supported and cared for in schools and this perhaps helped encourage the usual positive attendance.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students' understanding and appreciation of Islamic values were good and developed further as they progressed through the school. For example, students in secondary were able to contrast and compare Islamic values with other religions. Students appreciated the relevance and impact of these values on everyday life in the UAE and were able to give many examples to support their views.
- Emirati heritage and culture were well known and understood by students but especially those in upper years and the girls' sections. Students enjoyed participating in the celebration of National and Martyrs' Day. Many students could compare and contrast the lives of Emiratis in the past with those of the present. Older students, particularly, were clear on the economic basis for Dubai's modern day economy.
- The many and varied nationalities in the school appreciated and respected each other. They could explain the common elements between themselves and their friends and were well aware of some of the differences in their cultures. This understanding was at a lower level with the children FS and the younger students in primary.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students in secondary and post-16 contributed actively, taking the initiative in organising many activities and workshops to help younger students to play major roles in community life. Boys and girls were active in the SHE summit, which promoted women's rights. Primary students were community minded, making a social contribution through technology projects such as robotics and climate change and holding Core Council roles.
- Primary and FS students had a positive work ethic which was shown through their enjoyment in their learning activities. Students in the upper years understood most of the qualities needed to be successful. They were confident and creative thinkers, willing to take the initiative to develop their own projects and make independent decisions. Through these they had developed excellent communication, leadership and critical thinking skills.

- Post-16 and secondary students showed a deep awareness and understanding of environmental sustainability. As an example, green chemistry in science was translated into daily activities like recycling that gained a 'Green Gratitude Award'. In primary and FS this was less developed. Students were aware of recycling initiatives and were active in clearing up their classrooms on a regular basis. However, they were participants more than initiators of these approaches.

3. Teaching and assessment

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Very good ↑

- Teachers generally demonstrated a solid foundation in both content knowledge and knowledge of how students learn. In FS, teachers and teaching assistants were purposeful in ensuring that learning was focused and included play and independent choice. Science teachers particularly demonstrated outstanding subject knowledge. Arabic teachers were less clear about how students learn.
- Planning was purposeful, containing activities that challenged and supported students in their learning. The better lessons offered students a variety of experiences that helped their understanding. In some classrooms, planning was linked to the needs of students with SEND. The pace of some lessons was rushed, which resulted in less productive work than otherwise might have been accomplished.
- Teacher-student interaction was respectful, creating a positive and supportive atmosphere for learning. Discussion, debate, peer critique and problem solving were integral to learning in many classrooms. Students enjoyed the interaction and were engaged participants. The use of open-ended questions was strong in English and science, allowing teachers to probe for deeper understanding. Teachers' abilities to use questions to move learning forward were inconsistent.
- Teachers of English set individualised learning targets and personalised their responses to students. Worksheets were often the main means of matching learning effectively to the needs of different groups. In a minority of subjects, teaching was still predominantly directed at the whole class, so missing opportunities for personalised learning.
- The development of students' critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning was a growing feature in the majority of lessons and was particularly strong in Post-16. These features were less developed in Arabic and Islamic education lessons. The 'Bring Your Own Device' initiative allowed some students to access a rich array of resources with ease and supported independent work.
- In Arabic as a first language teachers' subject knowledge was better than their understanding of how students learn best. Learning objectives were clear in lesson plans but lacked sufficient challenge, especially in the secondary phase. Time and resources were well managed. The development of effective questioning to fully engage students was at an early stage. Consequently, opportunities to develop critical thinking were often missed.
- In Arabic as an additional language teachers had secure subject knowledge and they planned adequate lessons. Teachers' interactions with students ensured that they were engaged learners and encouraged collaborative learning, especially in primary phase. Teachers did not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and independent learning skills.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

- The school had an appropriate range of internal assessments that were aligned to the UAE MoE for Arabic and Islamic education, and English national curricula. Available data was used to judge students' attainment and to standardise grade boundaries. FS had implemented a school based target tracker to better judge attainment and progress and support transition arrangements.
- Different international assessments were used to monitor students' attainment and to predict future performance. With these, the tracking of students' progress by year group and by subject was somewhat problematic, so the adoption of recommended international benchmarking tests was seen as providing more objective measures to moderate results. FS had online assessment tests to better judge children's attainment levels on entry to the school.
- Assessment data was analysed regularly. Students' monthly performance marks were collected, standardised and converted to grades. In this way student performance was tracked and those students 'at risk' were identified. Most teachers used this 'traffic light' grading system effectively, though this was weaker in Islamic education and Arabic.
- Assessment information was used effectively to influence teaching and the curriculum. A good example was in English, where a teacher and students were using 'formative' assessment software for their plenary. Students answered the teacher's questions online. The results were shared, giving immediate feedback to both teacher and students as to how successful the learning experience had been.
- Most teachers had good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. Teachers were successful in challenging higher achievers, particularly through effective questioning. They were less skilled in supporting those who were experiencing difficulties. Students' involvement in assessing their own learning was more highly developed in Post-16, where they contributed to their assessment portfolio and participated in regular online assessment.

4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good	Good

- The curriculum had a clear rationale and fulfilled the requirements of the new English National Curriculum and the MoE regulations relating to Arabic and Islamic education. It provided a balance between the development of knowledge and skills which interested most students. It was very good in its promotion of innovation through special events and the use of new technologies. Being a Microsoft showcase school supported curriculum development.
- The curriculum in primary, secondary and post-16 was planned to build on the firm foundations of prior learning. The curriculum in FS had been reduced to a one-year programme and this had some effect on children's transition to primary in terms of their academic, personal and social development. Students in post-16 were well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- A relatively wide range of curricular options was provided for students in Year 9 to pursue their IGCSE studies. However, this did not include many vocational courses. Post-16 subject choices did not allow students to pursue some subjects beyond IGCSE, but in these cases students studied them in their own time. This opportunity included a rich opportunity for talented artists.
- Cross-curricular links were systematically planned. Project based learning had been enhanced in primary and a specialist skills day developed in secondary. Enterprise and business games, alongside other curriculum activities, provided opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and technology skills. These were further opportunities for students to consolidate and apply their learning in different contexts.
- The progression and coverage of the curriculum was regularly reviewed across all year groups. An analysis of external data helped leaders to identify gaps in the curriculum, such as reasoning skills. Subject specialists also regularly reviewed and modified their curriculum content, taking into consideration the views of students. Curriculum changes were well considered and met the needs of most students.
- UAE social studies was being developed as an integrated part of the school's wider curriculum programme. Curriculum content was often chosen because of its local relevance, whether historical, geographical or social.



	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum adaptation	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

- Teachers and leaders recognised the range of students' learning and personal needs and endeavoured to provide a curriculum which motivated all students. The curriculum was designed to challenge the most able and support the less able, including those with SEND. However, the success of modifications was still too variable across subjects and age-ranges for them to be excellent.
- The imaginative curriculum enabled most students to develop their interests, talents and skills. There were enriched opportunities for expression through the arts and in the development of enterprise and workplace skills. Extra-curricular provision included teams in a variety of sports. The student leadership programme was particularly innovative in its development of confident, responsible and thoughtful young people who played a key role in the community.
- Links with UAE values and culture permeated the school's curriculum. Discussions about core values frequently made very relevant links between Islamic values and the students' daily lives. Special Islamic events were an important part of the curriculum. An outstanding art exhibition showcased students' work, some of which skillfully depicted aspects of UAE heritage. Older students had an exceptionally good knowledge of the UAE national agenda.
- Arabic was taught in FS. Children benefited from two 30-minute lessons a week, with the stated purpose of preparing them for learning the language in Primary.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Good	Good	Good	Good

- A clearly written child protection policy was in place. All staff were aware of the procedures to follow if a concern arose. Students felt safe and knew whom they could approach with any concerns. The school had given high priority to raising students' awareness regarding cyber safety and had installed very strong firewalls and filtering systems to protect students from inappropriate material.
- A safe and secure environment was provided. Arrival and departure from the school was extremely well organised. Nearly all students reported that they felt safe on the school buses and student escorts were well briefed on procedures for safety. Supervision around the school site was very effective. However, procedures for evacuation were not sufficiently effective.
- Systems and procedures for recording individual student incidents were in place, as were procedures for reporting maintenance issues. Members of the medical team were very effective in administering healthcare and routine checks on students. Details of any medical issues relating to students were known by teachers. Clear and effective procedures were in place for record keeping and storing medicines safely.
- Many improvements had been made to the FS environment, making it a safe and pleasant place for learning. In the old building classrooms were still too small for the number of students in them, despite improvements to the furniture. The premises, equipment and resources were adequate to meet the educational needs of all students including those with SEND.
- The promotion of healthy living was evident across the curriculum. Even the youngest children were aware of the need to eat healthy food. Meals provided by the canteen offered nutritious choices and students had been involved in creating the menus. Sport was provided and enjoyed, both within the curriculum and the extracurricular activities. Almost all outdoor areas were well shaded.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Care and support	Very good 	Good	Good	Very good 

- An ethos of mutual respect and courtesy between staff and students was evident throughout the school. Procedures for managing students' behaviour in lessons and around the school were almost always effective, although occasionally less so in lower primary classes. A particularly strong feature in the school was the sensitive care and guidance provided by student leaders to younger students.
- The school kept accurate records of attendance and punctuality. Systems to manage and follow up absence were efficient and effective. The school actively promoted and rewarded full attendance and punctuality and parents were regularly reminded of their responsibility in this regard.

- The school was inclusive and provided a welcoming environment where SEND students were cared for and valued. There were effective systems for prompt and accurate identification of a student's additional need on entry to the school. The school also identified those students who were gifted and talented and provided opportunities for them within an enriched curriculum.
- Appropriate support for most SEND students was provided. The SEND specialist team was small but gave regular additional support when possible. Most teachers provided some individual attention to students with SEND in lessons and SEND children in FS had a support teacher. Consequently, the majority of students made adequate progress in their academic skills and good progress in their personal development.
- The school had a strong ethos of personal support for students' welfare. Students had access to individual advice and support from phase managers and the school counsellor. Workshops, addressing particular issues relevant to their personal needs were arranged for parents. Older students and their parents were provided with effective guidance and support in their choice of, and preparation for, future careers and paths of education.

Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities

Good

- The principal's attention to the well-being of students with SEND drove the inclusive ethos. The small SEND team was well qualified and committed to providing good support for students and delivering the staff training necessary for this to become effective. However, there were insufficient specialist staff to provide the very regular interventions needed to support students who found it particularly difficult to access the curriculum.
- The school's effective systems ensured that students with additional needs were quickly identified. Assessments and observations were comprehensive and parents were quickly involved. The school made good use of the information it gathered about a student's individual needs to plan the best support it could provide within its means.
- Strong informal and formal communication with parents of students with SEND was established. Parents were regularly involved in reviewing their child's individual education plan and worked with the school to help their children reach their personal goals. Parents very much appreciated the support, guidance and advice they received from the SEND team and their child's teachers.
- Curriculum modification for students with SEND occasionally resulted in exemption from certain subjects or additional support at examination time. Usually this involved the modification of lesson plans for additional intervention. Successful modification of lessons in class was still not sufficiently consistent across the school to enable students with SEND to be fully involved and make very good progress in their learning.
- A new, effective system for tracking the progress of students with SEND was in place. Regular assessments of students' progress against their individual goals were used appropriately to set next steps of learning and evaluate provision. The progress of students with SEND overall was good in English and science but slower in Arabic and Islamic education. The development of students' personal and social skills was good.

6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership

Very good ↑

- Although not highly visible, there was a shared and well-understood vision which underpinned the school's direction and decision making. An element of that vision was the establishment of a community which embraced the benefits of the nationalities that the school served. Within that was a focus on the context of the school's location within the UAE, with its values, culture and aspirations.
- Led by the complementary skills of the principal and vice-principal, leaders at all levels, including students, were creating a culture which valued and nurtured learning. There was a balance of skills and expertise in the leadership team. However, the responsibilities for some posts in the team, such as the combined leadership for Arabic and Islamic education curriculum, were too broad.
- Generally, leadership roles were well delegated and responsibilities were clearly understood. Effective communication between the teams focused discussion on decision-making. The core of the meetings was invariably the factors that were determining students' performance. There was a strong collegiate feel to the school and everyone was keen for the school to improve further.
- Some members of the executive leadership team were new. Succession planning was a priority and many of the senior leadership team had developed the necessary skills as teachers within the school. All had a very clear understanding of the needs of the school, the current priorities and the barriers that needed to be overcome in order for the school to improve further.
- Recently, leaders had been very successful in developing many aspects of school performance and had ensured that the school was fully compliant with statutory and regulatory requirements. The quality of teaching continued to rise and partnerships with parents and the community were having a very positive effect of the attainment and progress of students in many curriculum areas.

School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Good

- Robust processes existed for gathering information about the school's performance from all groups in the school community. These took account of external feedback, needs determined by the school and on-going plans. Referencing intentions to the school's vision was consistent. Leaders had carefully aligned these to the ambitions of the UAE National Agenda and were completely committed to the aim of being a fully inclusive school.
- Thorough processes for monitoring the development of teachers linked lesson observations to a well-designed performance management system. The system was supported by effective professional development. Leaders had not maximised the benefits of sharing exceptional practice across curriculum areas. Assessment data was systematically gathered, recorded and analysed in order to influence curriculum change or support and challenge for students.
- From the gathered evidence, leaders had successfully identified a small number of key priorities and developed plans for further improvement. Targets were often successfully linked to students' achievement and contained appropriate actions. Plans contained effective measures for measuring success but were insufficiently specific in terms of timescales, costs and the details of who was responsible for each initiative.

- School leaders had been successful in developing most priorities in the plans. Most notable was the improvement in students' learning and personal skills. Opportunities for students to innovate were being embedded into the curriculum and information technology was becoming a feature of learning in most areas. Some curriculum areas, particularly Arabic as an additional language and Islamic education, were improving at a slower pace.

Partnerships with parents and the community

Very good ↑

- Parents valued what the school was doing. Leaders had provided a variety of ways for parents to become involved. These included events such as National Day and innovative processes of parents sharing their interests and expertise with students in classrooms. Parents gave many examples of how their views were considered. These ranged from traffic calming to the quality of food provided by the cafeteria.
- Parents, including those whose children were receiving SEND support, were extremely positive about the improvements to communication. They felt informed about what was happening and the rationale behind the decisions that the school had made. Consequently, they expressed strong support for the school's direction. School leaders valued the parents' council as it informed many of the school's organisational decisions.
- Informative reports were regularly shared with parents electronically. These were complemented by four parent/teacher consultations annually. Parents of students in Years 11 to 13 had further opportunities to discuss their child's progress and targets. Students' reports were detailed but only a minority made reference to students' next steps in learning. They did not provide an opportunity for students to contribute a written comment.
- The school was involved in local, national and international communities. Learning was often placed outside the classroom, for example with the work experience programme. There were many occasions when students represented their school in sporting, cultural, environmental or artistic events. Considering the high quality of student art, it was no surprise to see that it would be shared with a wider audience.

Governance

Acceptable

- The governors sought to gain the views of the school community through surveys of students, staff and parents. In addition, the school community had access to the corporate office. Systematic processes through which parents could discuss the strategic direction of the school and inform the decision making processes of governors were not developed.
- Governance had strong procedures for monitoring the actions of school leaders. Through an effective system of regular reports from the principal to frequent visits to discuss progress with members of the school community, the governing body was able to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. Educational, financial and student growth targets were set as part of the principal's performance management.

- The governing body had an accurate view of the school's needs. It provided timely and well-directed support to further the school's improvement journey. Its understanding of progress made was realistic and differed only slightly from that of the school leaders. Although governors had limited the worsening of cramped classrooms, this still continued to be a major problem in the quality of provision.




Management, staffing, facilities and resources

Acceptable

- School leaders had created excellent systems for the day-to-day management of the school. Timetabling of lessons ran smoothly and there was no loss of learning time. The teaching of Arabic to different year groups at the same time gave the school the option of regrouping the students efficiently. Teacher absence was well covered and supervision around the school met health and safety needs.
- Sufficient staff enabled the school to function well. Around half of the teachers had teaching qualifications and most leaders had sufficient time to fulfill their responsibilities. Teaching assistants supported children in FS but not in the early primary years. The capable staff in the SEND department were too few to provide for the growing number and range of students with SEND.
- The premises were adequate, apart from the adverse impact of the small classrooms and large student groups which meant that teachers were unable to use strategies that maximise students' progress. The infrastructure for digital learning was in place but, as yet, Wi-Fi bandwidth did not support all students having Internet access at the same time. Best use was being made of the accommodation available.
- Some improvements had been made in furnishing classrooms. Resources in FS supported learning well and were accessible to the children. Resourcing for other age groups across the subjects was of a lesser quality and quantity. The school had made some investment in digital projectors and devices and they complemented the provision in the information technology laboratories.

The views of the parents, teachers and students

Before the inspection, the views of the parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys		
Responses received	Number	
Parents* 	2015-2016	720
	2014-2015	827
Teachers 	225	
Students 	350	

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

- A minority of parents and a majority of teachers and students took part in the survey.
- All members of the school community were positive about the school and its provision.
- Most students believed teaching to be good, that they were developing their learning skills, that they had access to a broad curriculum and a wide range of resources. They felt that these factors led to them being well prepared for their next stage of education. Most parents supported the students' views.
- Nearly all parents reported that their children felt safe in school and whilst on school transport. Most parents and students felt that any instances of bullying were dealt with effectively.
- Most of the school community shared the view that the school was well led. There was a strong belief that the school gave careful attention to their views.
- Nearly all teachers responded that they were involved in curriculum review, school self-evaluation and had good information on the National Agenda and international benchmark testing, such as TIMMS and PISA.

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