

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Greenwood International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, [info@khda.gov.ae](mailto:info@khda.gov.ae), [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae)

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Greenwood International School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.greenwood.sch.ae">www.greenwood.sch.ae</a>
Telephone	04 2888000
Address	PO Box 79595, Dubai
Principal	Rashida M Badri
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	836
Number of Emirati students	726 (80%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 9th to Thursday 12th January 2012

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## The context of the school

Greenwood International School was founded in 2006, and is situated in Al Muhaisnah. It had 836 students on the roll at the time of inspection, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. About 80 per cent of students were Emirati; the other students came mainly from other Arab countries, the United Kingdom and the United States. The school had 42 classes with an average of around 20 students in each class. Classes up to Grade 4 had both boys and girls; from Grade 5 onwards, boys and girls were placed in separate classes.

The school follows a US curriculum, increasingly based on the Florida scheme of work. For the first time this year, students sat standardised tests at the end of Grades 4, 8 and 10. High school students were able to attain a High School Diploma and a recognised qualification through the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and TOEFL (English) tests. The school had been approved as a candidate for accreditation with the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement.

The school had 70 teachers, with a teacher-student ratio of 1:12. Approximately 25 per cent of teachers were new to the school. Just over half of the teachers were Arab nationals and the other teachers were from a broad range of countries. The Principal had been in post since the school opened.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Greenwood International School provided a good quality of education. It provided a positive and friendly environment where students were happy and made good progress in their academic and personal development. The staff took excellent care of the students so that they felt secure and respected. Consequently, their behaviour, relationships and awareness of the wider world were good, especially among the oldest students. Teaching and learning were, for the most part, effective; teachers were developing new strategies to diversify learning and relate it to real life. However, they were not making the best use of assessment information to make sure that all the students were consistently challenged in line with their abilities. The school's senior leaders were committed to the continued improvement of the school. Their open-minded, cohesive and energetic approach was leading to effective outcomes.

The school had improved well since the previous inspection. This was particularly noticeable in the Kindergarten, where a more child-centred approach to teaching and a richer curriculum was leading to more confident and independent learning. The school had responded effectively to most of the recommendations of the last inspection, including resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and science. It had introduced recognised qualifications by Grade 12 and was well into the process of accreditation. It had not yet embraced the concept of a representative advisory council to guide its development. In addition, it lacked a policy to provide appropriately for students with special educational needs. Nevertheless, the school was in good shape and poised to improve further.

## Key strengths

- The school's buoyant, caring and positive atmosphere in which students felt safe and valued, and acquired a good work ethic;
- Students' progress in most subjects because of effective teaching;
- Students' behaviour, social skills, understanding of Islamic values and their awareness of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and the wider world;
- The improved provision for children in the Kindergarten;
- The willingness and determination of the school's leaders to embrace change and improve the school.

## Recommendations

- Develop greater consistency in attainment and progress in all subjects through constantly high expectations of all students in all lessons;
- Ensure that the assessment of students' progress is based on appropriate benchmarks, and that the information is analysed and used routinely by teachers to provide work that meets the needs of all students;
- Establish a policy of inclusion for all children who wish to enter the school and ensure that staff are suitably qualified to identify and teach students with special educational needs;
- Ensure that all judgements about teaching and the school's development are clearly linked to the outcomes for students;
- Make every effort to involve all the school's stakeholders and members of the community more directly in the governance of the school.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attainment was mostly good throughout the school. It had improved in Kindergarten where more interactive learning had strengthened number and investigative skills, as well as self-reliance and practical skills. More focused discussion had also raised standards of Arabic and English language, especially in speaking and listening. In both Arabic and English, students had a good understanding of grammar and a wide vocabulary which assisted their understanding of text; however, their writing was a comparative weakness. In Islamic Education, primary students had a good understanding of Qur'anic verses and the context of revelation, but older students were less secure. They were able to list some of the Islamic etiquettes but sometimes struggled to link these to real life. Limited expectations of students in the middle phase had caused attainment to fall to acceptable in mathematics. Improved resources had benefited investigation skills in science.

Students' progress was mostly good. In Kindergarten, children made significant progress from their starting points in most subjects, but especially language and number awareness. They also swiftly acquired confidence in working independently and with others. In other phases, students' progress was usually good, as lesson content was sufficiently stimulating to encourage students to work hard. Progress was consistently good in the primary phase. In middle and high school phases, progress was more mixed. It was acceptable in Islamic Education, because students lacked opportunities to apply their learning, and in Arabic, because speaking and writing skills were not fully developed.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

Students demonstrated positive behaviour across the school. They cared for each other and were very sensitive to each other's needs. They had a strong sense of responsibility born out of excellent relationships with staff and peers. Students were successful in forming healthy habits during their school life. Their attendance was acceptable and a few students were late coming to school. Students had a good level of understanding of Islam and its impact on the contemporary society in Dubai and internationally; in high school, this understanding was outstanding. Students had good respect for and appreciation of local traditions and heritage. They had a good understanding of multi-cultural nature of Dubai as well as their own culture. Students were responsible citizens inside and outside school, especially high school students who developed their leadership skills, for example, through a programme of ecological awareness. Students had a strong voice through their council, led very well by high school students. This voice was influential in changing things in the school, such as enriching the extra-curricular activities. Middle school students could explain the reasons for the prosperity in Dubai as well as their responsibilities towards their country. Kindergarten children developed a good awareness of economy through the mini-supermarket in their classes.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching was good across the school for a variety of reasons. Almost all teachers were confident in their subjects, were well prepared and a majority made use of resources for learning beyond the textbook. Following a whole-school emphasis, most teachers promoted interactive and practical learning. They focused on developing specific skills and encouraged collaborative learning. In the better lessons, teachers provided interesting and demanding activities which motivated students and allowed them to learn at their own pace. Activities in a minority of lessons, however, were not planned enough to challenge or support different groups of students. In a few classes, especially in the elementary phase, teachers'

questioning was not sufficiently focused to allow good quality learning to take place. Interactive whiteboards were well used by teachers but often not fully exploited as teaching resources.

There was clear commitment across the school to make students' learning relate to the real world. Most students were enthusiastic and responded well to opportunities to be responsible for their own learning. They took good advantage of active learning, discussion and reflection if opportunities were provided by teachers. Children in Kindergarten worked well with teachers and teaching assistants, and were learning how to take responsibility for their learning. Although most teachers outlined learning objectives in lessons, students were not in the habit of relating their learning back to the planned outcomes. In a minority of classes, mostly in the middle and high phases, teachers encouraged students to be analytical and use critical thinking skills.

The school had acceptable systems for the management of assessment data. In Kindergarten, good assessment strategies had been introduced which, although not fully embedded, were already helping to improve attainment. In other phases, there was insufficient analysis of assessment data to support teaching and learning. In addition, too much of the assessment was based on internal testing. Importantly, teachers did not systematically make use of the available data to influence teaching and learning in the classroom, especially to challenge the more able students. Guidance in the classroom was often helpful to students but not varied enough to meet the needs of all students. Feedback to students, in workbooks, was usually limited to single words or marks and insufficiently related to curriculum standards. Consequently, students were often unclear about their strengths and weaknesses in different subjects, and what the next steps would be in their learning.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was good. Its structure was essentially based on US textbooks, although the school was introducing a curriculum directly linked to Florida standards, beginning in the Kindergarten. Subject choice had improved a little since the last inspection with the introduction of international history, but was still limited for older students, limiting future career choices. Despite this, most students were well prepared for their next stage of education. The school's regular review of the curriculum was effective, as seen in the improved curriculum in the Kindergarten. Here, a more child-centred approach was beginning to improve skills in investigation and exploration; it allowed children to make their own choices and talk about what

they had learnt. Spoken English was central to the daily life of the school and this supported most students to become more confident linguists. The school did not do enough to adapt the curriculum to the needs of all students, including the more able and those who were underachieving. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities such as salad days, science weeks, sporting activities enriched the learning experiences of most students.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

The school had excellent health and safety procedures. It was housed in an attractive and clean facility without any obvious safety issues. Regular fire drills and maintenance checks ensured that the environment was secure for students of all ages. There was very good access for students with physical disabilities. Healthy living was enthusiastically promoted throughout the school in all activities, and through presentations by the school nurse; students responded very well. Child protection procedures and precautions were in place and well known by staff.

The overall quality of support was good throughout the school. Staff-student relationships were strong and students felt very comfortable confiding in adults whenever they had personal or academic issues to resolve. Staff members handled behaviour problems well. There were effective procedures to promote students' attendance and punctuality, with a clear system of sanctions. However, temporary exclusion from school because of repeated lateness was a questionable practice. Although staff supported students well generally, they were not trained in identifying and providing for students with special educational needs.

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

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good

<b>Governance</b>	Acceptable
<b>Management, including staffing, facilities and resources</b>	Good

The Principal had a good vision for the school and promoted a caring ethos that was shared across all members of staff. Senior leaders were energetic and committed to driving improvements, such as in the Kindergarten, although the improvements were not far-reaching. Leadership was well structured and delegated; new subject leaders were well supported. All leaders were receptive to change and were keen to adopt new ideas that might be beneficial to the students. They succeeded in promoting respectful and positive relationships throughout the school.

Senior leaders had a clear view of the school's strengths. Systematic monitoring of performance gave a clear picture of how effectively teachers worked, although areas for development were not clearly enough highlighted. Improvement plans were suitably based on known weaknesses and were well structured with sensible timescales. However, evaluations were sometimes too generous, mainly because judgements in the monitoring activities and in actions plans were not measured in terms of the outcomes for students. The school had responded well to the recommendations of the last inspection.

The Board of Trustees had a good knowledge of the school and supported the school well in practical and financial matters. However, as the board only comprised the Chairman and the senior leaders, it was not representative of the school's stakeholders. An invited parents' committee helped to provide some parental views to the board but did not have a direct influence on decision-making. The board was not independent enough to act as a critical friend and hold the school to account. For example, it had not checked on the legitimacy of the school's admissions policy.

The school had a good policy of involving parents in their children's learning and there was good rapport with parents to improve lateness and attendance. Termly reports of attainment and progress were helpful to parents, but were not detailed enough and did not give comparative data or areas for improvement. The school had established several useful channels of communication, such as e-mail, SMS and the website portal, to keep parents well aware of curricular and other matters. Visits and links with the local and wider community benefited students' learning.

The school operated smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Efficient procedures resulted in a disciplined but happy atmosphere. The school employed staff shrewdly, but the sizeable annual turnover of teachers undermined the development of the teaching. Professional training was regular and extensive, although it was mostly internally led. The premises were well planned, clean and accessible to all students, including those with physical disabilities. The science laboratories were well resourced and well used; the book stock in the libraries and the range of computers had improved but not all subjects benefited. Displays of work were good in Kindergarten and the primary phase, but not elsewhere.

## What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	52	11%
	Last year	191	46%
Teachers	21		30%
Students	46		49%

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

A small minority of parents responded to the survey. Almost all of these parents held a positive view of the school. They especially approved of their children's knowledge of Islam. A few raised concerns that were shared by a minority of teachers and students – namely, the limited range of curricular subjects and extra-curricular activities, as well as communication with parents. Lesser concerns included the teaching of Arabic as an additional language, homework and the provision for more able students. The inspectors did not find any significant weaknesses in these areas, except for the limited expectations of the more able students. Almost a third of teachers responded. They too were essentially positive, with additional praise for the quality of care, health and safety, professional development, leadership and management, as well as community links. Just under half the senior students responded and agreed with much that teachers said; they added behaviour as a strength.

## What happens next?

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

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

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

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:  
[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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