

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai Arab American Private School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Arab American Private School

Location	Al Muhaisnah 1
Type of school	Private
Website	www.daaschool.ae
Telephone	04-2882222
Address	PO Box, 232212, Dubai
Principal	Wasfieh Sh.M.Al Yousef
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	663
Number of Emirati students	529 (80%)
Date of the inspection	5th March to 7th March 2012

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## The context of the school

The school, which is located in Al Muhaisnah, opened in 2006. It was first inspected by Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) in 2009. The school was found to be providing an unsatisfactory quality of education overall. Subsequently, DSIB completed five Follow-Through Inspections of the school between 2009 and 2011. Inspectors found that the school had not successfully addressed all the recommendations from the full inspection of 2009. The inspection of March 2012 reviewed all aspects of the work of the school.

At the time of this inspection, there were 663 students on roll from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Most of the students were Emirati and most of the other students were from other Arab countries. A small minority had Arabic as an additional language. Very few students spoke English as a first language. Boys and girls were taught together up to Grade 3. From Grade 4, boys and girls were taught in separate classes. In Grades 11 and 12, students were taught in scientific and literary sections. The school did not have systems for identifying students with special educational needs.

There were 62 teachers, a teacher-student ratio of 1:11. There had been quite a high staff turnover within the past year. Almost all teachers came from neighbouring Arab countries. A few were native English speakers. Most had a degree in the subject they taught though the kindergarten teachers were not so well qualified. There were eight classroom assistants.

The school had begun to follow the new common core US curriculum in English and mathematics. It followed the California curriculum for science and the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic. It had introduced the opportunity for students to take external examinations at Grade 12, especially the US SAT test and TOEFL test.

The Principal had been in post for just over one year.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

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

The Dubai Arab American Private School provided an acceptable quality of education for students. It had improved many unsatisfactory aspects of its provision, although the school was aware that there was still work to be done. Most of the students' progress was acceptable although a legacy of underachievement meant that attainment in some key subjects was still below expectations. Teaching was generally acceptable. However, teaching was less effective in some of the middle school grades and in Arabic as an additional language. Students were courteous and mainly had good relations with staff. Their behaviour varied. Much of it was good, especially among the girls, but the behaviour of boys in the lower and higher grades was, at times, disrespectful.

The senior leaders had maintained a strong focus on school improvement. The appointment of the Principal was key to the strengthening of staff morale and the introduction of better systems to improve students' progress. A new curriculum had been introduced for English, mathematics and science. Staff training had been extended and more resources had been acquired. The school had established useful links with parents so that they could help their children more at home. However, the school did not have the expertise to cater for students with special educational needs. Its view of itself was too positive, not helped by attainment data that was not realistic enough. Nevertheless, the recent improvements to the school showed sufficient capacity to develop the school further.

## Key strengths

- The positive attitudes and behaviour of most students, particularly the girls, as well as the children in Kindergarten;
- The understanding of Islam and awareness of local traditions and culture by students, especially in the elementary phase;
- The commitment and determination of the staff, guided by the Principal, that have led to improvements in key aspects of the school.

## Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress by:
  - enabling all students to take responsibility for their own learning and to have more opportunities for critical thinking and research;
  - making more use of resources to enhance learning and to link it to real life;
  - improving classroom management so that little time is lost for learning;
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of assessment information by:
  - ensuring that students' performance is measured more accurately and more closely with UAE and international benchmarks;
  - making full use of all available data to provide challenging work that meets the needs of all groups of students;
  - providing clear and regular feedback to students on precisely how they can improve;
- Introduce effective procedures to identify students with special educational needs and provide them with informed and systematic support and guidance;
- Improve the quality and accuracy of self-evaluation, improvement plans and academic reports for parents through more detailed analyses, realistic comparisons and clearer references to the outcomes for students.

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

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

Attainment was acceptable in most subjects and in all key subjects in the Kindergarten. In Islamic Education, most students knew and understood key concepts and principles. Listening skills were the strongest feature of Arabic as a first language. In mathematics, students were able to apply their learning to real life situations. Listening skills were age-appropriate in English and Arabic as an additional language. However, students' speaking, reading and writing were unsatisfactory, because students acquired too

much vocabulary as single words and not in context. Therefore, their comprehension and expression were weak. Students had a satisfactory knowledge of the different aspects of science and had sufficient skills for carrying out investigations. These skills, though, were less secure in the middle phase. In Kindergarten, children's learning through practical experience ensured confidence in speaking, listening and number use, and a basic knowledge of science. Overall, girls' attainment was better than that of the boys.

Improvements in teaching meant that students' progress was acceptable in most subjects and phases. Progress was least effective in Arabic as an additional language and in the middle phase English and science because teaching was weaker. Progress in English overall was steady but the level of language in tasks was often too difficult. In science, when students were actively engaged with learning for themselves, their progress was stronger. In Arabic as a first language, most students made acceptable progress in applying grammatical rules when reading and writing. In mathematics, progress was steady but limited by students' abilities in English. Similarly, in Islamic Education, progress was tempered by limited opportunities for students to think through and analyse topics for themselves.

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

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

Most students had positive attitudes to one another, were self-disciplined and usually behaved well; this was particularly true for the older girls. Behaviour out of lessons was less disciplined and litter was a common problem in the boys' yard after break. Despite acceptable attendance, not all students arrived at school on time. Students had a reasonable understanding of healthy living and made sensible food



choices. In general, students had a basic understanding of Islam and its impact on the society. Their respect for local culture was matched by their awareness of the multi-cultural aspects of Dubai. Students in the elementary grades were the most aware for their age. Students understood their responsibilities as members of the school community. However, their various roles and duties, as part of the school council and with the local and wider community, were underdeveloped. Most students had a basic understanding of how Dubai had developed and the majority of students had an age-appropriate understanding of the economic success of Dubai and other emirates. Most students had acceptable understanding of environmental issues. They understood the impact of pollution, traffic and loss of habitat on the environment. However, students did not engage in environment projects in or outside the school to strengthen their understanding of ecological problems and solutions.

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

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

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall but slightly weaker in the middle grades. More than a few lessons in this phase of the school were of unsatisfactory quality, often due to weak class management skills. Conversely, more than a few lessons in other parts of the school were of good quality, due to careful planning with a focus on students' active participation. Most teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and a majority knew how students learned them. Teachers' subject knowledge in a few English lessons was weak. Lesson planning was consistently completed, but the delivery of lessons was at times different from the written plans. Teachers' skills in time management were varied, as a few dominated lessons by talking for too long and losing their students' attention. A majority of lessons ended with the school bell rather than a summary of what had been learned. The best lessons had a balance of dialogue with and activities for students. Various resources were effectively used by teachers, but insufficient resources limited students learning in all key subjects. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to help engage students was observed in only a few lessons. Teachers' interactions with

students were usually positive, but there were notable exceptions to this. Only a minority of teachers asked questions in ways that required thinking rather than the recall of facts. The use of different teaching strategies to meet the needs of stronger and weaker students was observed infrequently. Overall, lessons were too often teacher-centred, leaving students too passive for too long. In addition to the five key subjects, teaching was observed in ICT, business studies, physical education, art and social studies lessons. The quality of teaching in these subjects was broadly acceptable.

The quality of learning was acceptable across the school. In a minority of lessons learning was good, but learning was also, too often, unsatisfactory. Students were compliant learners but their lessons often lacked opportunities to learn independently. When given such opportunities, most students worked well and made steady progress. Older students could explain their learning to others clearly but this skill was weak amongst younger students, due to their levels of fluency in English. Students' interactions were usually, but not always, respectful and appropriate. The application of learning to the real world was a part of learning in the better lessons, particularly in mathematics. Connections between areas of learning were observed but were not centrally planned. Students' inquiry and critical thinking skills were being developed in only a few lessons. Some independent research was done by older students outside of class time. Overall, the learning by a majority of students was too dependent upon teachers' directions.

The quality of assessment was acceptable over all four phases. The school collected data centrally for producing report cards, but purposeful analysis of assessment information to guide teaching was weak. There were a variety of assessment models at work in the different subjects. External benchmarks were not used to establish the attainment levels of students against international standards. Consequently, the school did not have accurate knowledge of attainment in the five key subjects. A majority of teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses but a few did not, which affected the quality of teaching and learning. Formative assessment was evident in some lessons and students were given support accordingly, but some teachers did not understand how to assess learning as lessons progressed. Only a few students assessed their own work or that of their peers. Overall, the use of assessment data had a limited effect upon the curriculum, teaching and support for students.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum had an adequate breadth and balance of subjects across the school. Although acceptable overall, it was not consistently adjusted to meet the needs of all groups of students, particularly the less

able. All key subjects had an annual plan which helped to ensure progression and continuity across transition points. Curriculum planning had too little regard for the needs of the different abilities of students. There was more variety of approach and opportunities for independent learning in mathematics and science, whilst the curriculum for English was more reliant on routine tasks. Departments regularly reviewed the quality of their own curricula. As a result, the Common Core State Standards had been introduced for English and mathematics across the school. New resources aligned with this have been provided for some grades. Although improvements were recently developed, they were beginning to have a positive impact on students' motivation and progress. The school has improved its provision of activities and visits to enhance the curriculum for students.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Health and safety aspects throughout the school were acceptable. Policies and procedures were in place to ensure a safe and secure environment for all students. These were generally well enforced, with the exception of students' access to the car parks within and in front of the school. Helpful lessons on healthy living based on the Dubai Health Authority manual were offered by the school doctor. Health and safety checks were conducted regularly by the doctor and nurse, and appropriate records were kept. Staff members were aware of their responsibilities for ensuring student safety. Child protection arrangements were explained by the Principal, but teachers were not sufficiently aware of these procedures. Routine safety drills and evacuations were conducted in co-ordination with Civil Defence and appropriate logs were kept. Buildings, grounds and transportation areas were managed to ensure compliance with the variety of regulatory agencies. Compliance files were available and up-to-date.

Staff-student relationships were acceptable. Most teachers showed respect for students. They mostly managed behaviour appropriately, but a minority of teachers struggled to keep students attentive in some classrooms and this hampered learning. There were no processes and procedures in place for identifying students with special educational needs or for developing and monitoring plans to meet these needs. The school actively promoted attendance, but the school's systems for recording absence was flawed and inaccurate. Data regarding students' punctuality was not available.

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

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

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Most leaders were hard-working, well-intentioned and committed to the school's improvement. The Principal provided enthusiastic and influential leadership, and ensured an appropriate vision for the school. Leaders were not complacent. Most were well involved in the decision-making of the school and knew their opinions mattered. The quality of leadership was variable, though; it was more effective, for example, in elementary science and Kindergarten. However, there were too few senior leaders and the role of the Academic Adviser was underdeveloped. Despite some inconsistencies between and within departments, communication was sufficient to ensure a cohesive approach.

The school's system for self-evaluation involved key staff well but not all stakeholders. There was no formal, systematic process to be able to draw accurate judgements based on shrewd analyses and comparisons with local and international standards. As a result, the school's views were too positive. The school knew the main areas to develop and created well-structured action plans. Leaders regularly monitored teachers and provided useful feedback. These actions had a positive impact, for example on teaching methods, but they were not focused enough on the outcomes for students. Other improvements included students' progress, their behaviour and the breadth of the curriculum.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents were supportive of their children's learning at home. The school had provided useful workshops to help them to understand how to help their children learn Arabic. Academic reports to parents were uninformative about the progress their children were making and what they needed to do to improve. However, parents did discuss these reports with teachers and received more detailed information. Parents appreciated the open-door policy of the school and approachability of the staff. There were limited links with the local community and businesses, but the school had introduced a programme of visits to places of interest and encouraged visitors to the school.

Governance was acceptable. The governing body was comprised of a small committee of professionals, but with no representation from key stakeholders, notably parents, teachers and students. Nevertheless, governors valued and responded to concerns. Their knowledge of the school was acceptable but based too much on information from the Principal and contact by individual parents. Governors held the school to account for its decisions. They supported the school in its drive for improvement but not proactively enough. Too much was left for the Principal to do.

Management, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school ran satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis. Timetabling was not wholly reliable but little time was lost during the school day. Staff and students were familiar with the school routines. The school had a good number of teachers, adequately qualified in all subjects. The premises had plenty of space and adequate facilities for ICT, science and sport, although it lacked a proper sports field. Displays in the corridors enhanced the ethos of the school, but they were much less inspiring in classrooms and did little to promote students' learning. Learning resources were satisfactory but not plentiful. The library had too few books overall, although ample Arabic books. Although ICT resources had improved, there was still too little technology in the classrooms; there were limited resources for mathematics and English. Resourcing lacked a strategic overview.

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

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	61	21%
	Last year	The school was part of the Follow – Through inspection cycle in 2010 - 2011	
Teachers	40		63%
Students	48		52%

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

A minority of parents responded to the questionnaire. Of these, most were supportive of the school and valued some aspects, such as the teaching of Arabic as a first language and Islamic Education. They mostly felt that students also did well in other subjects, but a significant minority disagreed. In fact, about one

fifth of parents expressed concerns about many aspects of the school. These included the standards of behaviour, the teaching of English, the range and variety of the curriculum, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and environmental awareness and the provision for students with special educational needs. They thought that they were not involved enough in the school. Generally, the views of students in Grades 10 to 12 reflected those of the parents, especially with regard to behaviour, as well as personal responsibility. A quarter of the students said that they did not enjoy school. Teachers also referred to problems of behaviour and had a similar view to the parents. Almost a quarter had a poor opinion of the school's leadership and felt that their professional development was not good enough. They also believed that many students did not enjoy school.

## What happens next?

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

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

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

**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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