

INSPECTION REPORT

North American International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT North American International School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.naischool.ae
Telephone	04 2884844
Address	P O Box 20315, Dubai
Principal	Mrs. Sonia Mahajan
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	313
Number of Emirati students	113 (36%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 12 th to 14 th December 2011

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The context of the school

The North American International School is situated in Al Mizhar. It was opened in 2007. The school roll had increased from 171 students in 2010 to 313 students at the time of the inspection. Fifty-five per cent of teachers were new to the school.

The school followed a United States Curriculum and provided education for students aged three to 18 years. Students from the elementary phase onwards sat internal school tests. In addition, students from Grades 3 to 9 sat international benchmark tests in English, mathematics and science. Grade 12 students participated in SAT tests.

There were 39 full-time teachers in addition to the Principal and a senior management team. Teachers were appropriately qualified and were supported by seven teaching assistants. Students were arranged into 19 classes: two in the Kindergarten 1 and Grades 7, 8 and 9, with single classes at the other grades. One hundred and thirteen students, 36 per cent, were Emirati. Thirty different nationalities were represented among the student population.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The North American International School provided an acceptable quality of education. The Principal had shown effective leadership skills in ensuring that the school maintained and improved key aspects of its work despite the pressures of developing an expanding school. Staff in all phases had worked collaboratively to ease the introduction of new students. The school's caring environment was evident in the excellent arrangements for students' health and safety and through good quality pastoral support.

The quality of teaching was good across the school with the exception of the elementary phase where it was acceptable. It was particularly strong in the high school. The school had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report. This included strengthening support services for students with special educational needs and improvements to assessment. Progress had also been made in the school's approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning, partnership with parents and governance of the school. Steps had been taken to induct the significant numbers of new

teachers and assist them in delivering the curriculum. However, the school was not yet fully effective in raising students' attainment and in ensuring consistent progress in their learning.

Key strengths

- The partnership with parents, and students' involvement in and enjoyment of school life;
- The collegiate school leadership and commitment of staff to continuous improvement;
- The outstanding provision for students' health and safety;
- The quality of care for students;
- The management of change in response to the significant school expansion.

Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment and improve their progress in key subjects;
- Improve teachers' management of behaviour in some classes in the elementary phase;
- Provide appropriate academic challenge to more able students;
- Develop the high school curriculum to better prepare students for the challenges of further education.

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

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

Attainment was acceptable in all key subject areas, except science where it was good in the Kindergarten and elementary phase. In Islamic Education, most students understood key principles of Islamic faith and worship but linked these insufficiently to their own lives. Students' listening and reading were stronger than their other language skills in Arabic, both as a first and second language learners, and in English. First language Arabic students' use of local dialects hindered their speaking skills. In English, Kindergarten 1

children had good phonic skills. In the other phases they had variable speaking skills and reading for understanding. Writing skills across the stages were limited in quality and quantity. In mathematics, students showed well-developed knowledge but were less confident in applying mathematical formulae to solve problems, predict outcomes and test findings. Students' understanding of scientific processes was good. They could recall factual information accurately. However, by the middle phase, students had insufficiently developed approaches to scientific experimentation and investigation.

Students were making acceptable progress across most key subjects and stages. High school students made good progress in Islamic Education. In science, Kindergarten, elementary and high school students were also making good progress. Students with special educational needs made good progress in their withdrawal groups but their progress was not sustained in the mainstream classes, except in science.

Overall, the attainment and progress of Emirati students were acceptable. Their knowledge and understanding across the school in the key subjects was in line with the other students in the school. Similarly, Emirati students were making good progress in Islamic Education at the high school stage. In science, Emirati students showed good levels of attainment in the Kindergarten and elementary phases. They were making good progress in science with the exception of the middle phase where progress was acceptable.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Students demonstrated positive attitudes in most parts of the school although, in the elementary phase, some disruptive behaviour affected the quality of learning. Students also showed positive attitudes towards healthy living, including the importance of exercise. Attendance was acceptable. Students' understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture were good across the school; most demonstrated a good understanding of their duties as Muslims. They were aware that Islam required them to respect and appreciate all people. Most students had good knowledge of the UAE's heritage and were proud of its achievements. Students in the high school understood their responsibilities as members of the school community and took on key roles and initiated school projects. However, this aspect was less developed in the elementary and middle schools. Students had age-appropriate knowledge about how Dubai had developed. Their knowledge about the reasons behind development and the impact of Dubai's economy on their own lives was limited. Most students cared for their school environment. Elementary students planted flowers in the school garden to keep the school green while older students planted some trees. Students had links with the Emirates Environment Group and were aware of the importance of keeping the environment clean and tidy. However, students had only a basic understanding of sustainable energy and other global environmental issues.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

Teaching for effective learning was good in most phases of the school, except in the elementary phase where it was acceptable. Most teachers planned interesting and well-constructed lessons. Almost all teachers showed good knowledge of their subjects and, in the best lessons, an enthusiasm for the topic they were teaching. This was a particular strength in some high school lessons. In Arabic and in Islamic Education, teachers did not always challenge more able students sufficiently, resulting in a variable pace and purpose. In almost all lessons, teachers and students interacted well. As a result, teachers engaged productively in mature discussions and in extended questioning sessions. This successfully identified how well students could recall earlier learning. It also encouraged students to think for themselves and to be independent learners. Teaching was particularly successful when lesson objectives and time expectations were clear because students worked with a sense of urgency. In the best lessons, information and communication technology (ICT) was well used to illustrate concepts and to hold students' interest. Where there were shortcomings, for example in the elementary phase, there was often insufficient stress on the importance of students co-operating or listening and following instructions.

Learning was good across the school except in the elementary phase where it was acceptable. Here a few students did not always show positive attitudes, particularly to their teachers and lost concentration easily. Mostly, though, students listened attentively to their teachers and were motivated to learn. Most engaged enthusiastically in individual and group learning activities. In science, a particular strength was the understanding many students had about how to apply scientific principles in everyday life.

Assessment was good across the school. Teachers planned assessment activities well and regularly checked students' progress. They used baseline tests to help track students' progress over time. Teachers increasingly involved students in assessing their own work and that of their peers. Most students,

particularly those who had been in the school for a long time, had a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers were less effective in using assessment to ensure a suitably challenging pace of learning for more able students or to provide students with information on how they might improve. Teachers' assessments were carefully analysed and helped provide an overview of the progress of individual students as well as class groups.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

The curriculum was good in all phases of the school except for the high school where it was acceptable. The curriculum was broad and balanced, and students benefited from a range of subjects outside the key requirements, such as social subjects, French, art, music and physical education. In the high school, students could opt to specialise in business or science subjects. The curriculum in the high school in particular did not always provide sufficient opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking to help students progress to the next stage of their learning. As a result of review and consultation with parents, the school had introduced additional classes for Arabic as a second language from Kindergarten 1 and Islamic Education from Kindergarten 2 onwards. In a number of subjects, it was not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of the highest ability students or those with additional learning needs. There was a strong focus on developing students' awareness of their environment. Extra-curricular activities included visits to the Sheikh Zayed Mosque, the Dubai Creek, university fairs and involvement in a 'Clean up Dubai' initiative. Students also benefited from visits by health experts that addressed issues related to physical development, obesity, smoking and child abuse. Visits from the local police alerted students to the dangers of narcotics.

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. All staff in the school took their duty of care seriously. All children felt safe and secure in the school. Clear expectations and very well established routines throughout the day and on the buses ensured the safety of students and staff. Arrangements for the health of the students were effective and monitored by the medical staff. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely. Teaching staff were fully aware of any special medical needs of particular students. Fire drills were carried out at appropriate intervals. Healthy living was reflected in the curriculum and promoted in lessons. The school had placed a special emphasis on ensuring students had an awareness about lifestyle issues such as obesity and fitness. All staff and students were fully aware of the arrangements for child protection.

The quality of support for students was good. Relationships between staff and students were positive. Whilst students' behaviour was of a generally good standard, the management of behaviour in some elementary classes was inconsistent. Students' well-being and personal circumstances were closely monitored and they received high quality individual guidance and support. Guidance on future education for older students was comprehensive and covered a wide range of options. There were rigorous systems in place to monitor attendance and punctuality. The monitoring of and provision for students with special educational needs was good. Individualised education plans were in place to ensure that the students made sufficient progress in their learning. However, there were a few students who had not had their needs fully identified.

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
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

Leadership of the school was good. The Principal, supported by her senior managers, had successfully led the school through the initial stages of its rapid expansion in student and teacher numbers. She had ensured that the equally challenging curriculum developments were being taken forward in a supportive and collegiate manner. Middle managers worked well with senior managers in ensuring appropriate continuity of education while successfully integrating the significant numbers of new students and staff into the school. As a result, staff were developing a sense of common purpose to deliver the school's vision of an American education within a global context. Leaders at all levels were aware of the on-going challenges facing the school to ensure continued improvements including raising students' attainment. The school had clarified roles and responsibilities regarding the management of Islamic Education for non-Arab students.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior managers had developed rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating a wide range of school improvement planning objectives. The school had introduced a range of assessment approaches to match more effectively students' attainment against international standards. Senior leaders had gathered the views of students, parents and teachers through questionnaires to inform school priorities. The school had introduced internationally recognised qualifications for senior students linked to the curriculum offered by the school. Classroom observation had a positive impact; identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning which had, in turn, led to improvements.

The partnership with parents and the community was good. Parents received regular and informative information on the school including reports on their children's progress. Staff effectively and promptly responded to any areas of parental concern. This included strategies to support their children's learning in daily diaries. The Parent Teacher Association provided good support to the school. Parents provided a

growing input into aspects of the curriculum such as art activities and fathers had helped develop students' understanding of the world-of-work. Links with the community were developing.

Governance was good. The governors worked well with their expanded Advisory Council to support the school. The Council included parental and academic representation. It was increasingly holding the school accountable through regular meetings and analysis of students' attainment and progress. Members were making a positive contribution to developing senior students' skills in preparing them for the next stage of their education.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was good. Senior and middle managers worked effectively to manage the work of the school. Staff were well qualified and teachers benefitted from regular opportunities for professional development. The school provided a large attractive environment for learning. Resources, including ICT, were well used to enhance students' learning.

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	12	6%
	Last year	53	47%
Teachers	11		30%
Students	6		17%

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey, far less than last year's questionnaire. A minority of teachers and a few senior students responded to their surveys. Parents were satisfied with the overall quality of education available at the school and indicated that their children were making good progress in the key subjects. Parents, teachers and students held mostly positive views about the school across a range of aspects.

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

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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