

# INSPECTION REPORT

## North American International School

Report published in April 2014

## 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 Mizhar, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Mrs. Sonia Mahajan
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 years/KG1 – Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	440
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	165 (38%)
Date of the inspection	18th November to 20th November

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## The context of the school

North American International School, located in Al Mizhar, provided education for 440 students aged from three to 18 years from more than 30 different nationalities. About 38% of students were Emirati.

The school offered a US-style curriculum following the Core Curriculum State Standards for English and mathematics. In other subjects the curriculum for North Carolina was used but the school did not use the associated assessments for the state curriculum. Most students completed IOWA assessments in Grades 1 to 12. Prior to high school graduation, all students took the SAT and TOEFL examinations.

The school was organised into four phases and, for the purpose of this report, these were Kindergarten, Elementary (Grades 1 to 5), Middle (Grades 6 to 8) and High (Grades 9 to 12). At the time of the inspection, approximately 30 per cent of the teachers were new to the school and had been teaching in North American International School for less than one year. Overall, thirty percent of the teachers had a recognised teaching qualification.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- The quality of the relationships between students and teachers;
- The attitudes and behaviour of students, their commitment to environmental issues and leadership in running sustainability projects;
- The clear rationale for the curriculum and its breadth and balance;
- The communication with and involvement of parents and other stakeholders in the work of the school;
- The school's facilities including its spacious, bright and positive learning environment.

### Recommendations

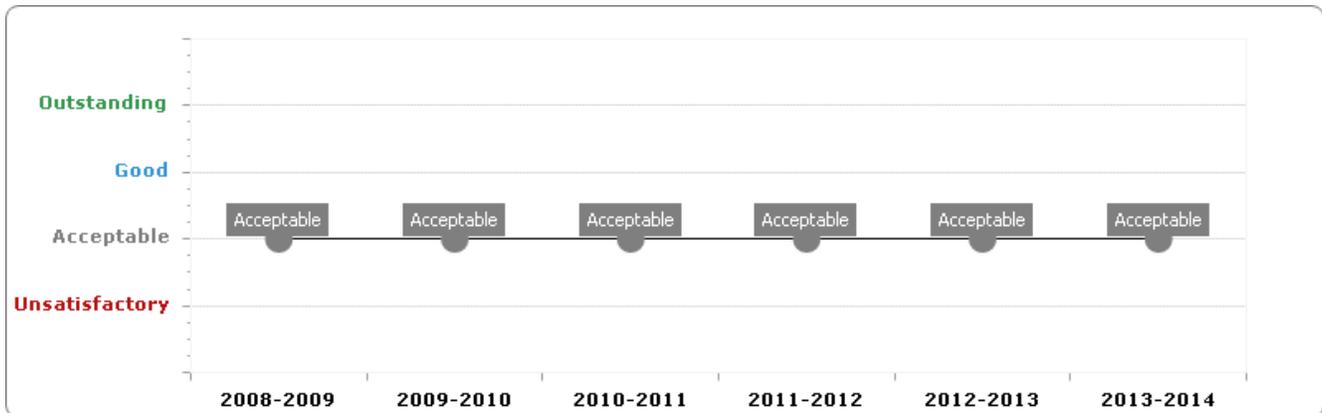
- Further develop the learning skills of students to enable them to take more responsibility for their own learning;
- Improve teaching in all phases to meet the differing learning needs of higher and lower attaining students more effectively;
- Continue to develop the use of standardised assessments for all students from Grades 1 to 12 to ensure that benchmarks are established against which attainment and progress can be measured with validity;
- Improve the initial assessment, planning, teaching resources and methods to meet the needs of students with special education needs;
- Improve the rigour of self-evaluation to ensure that its evaluations are accurate;
- The Advisory Board should hold the school more rigorously to account for its performance, including the progress it makes with its improvement plan.

## Progress since the last inspection

The school had taken steps to address the recommendations of the last inspection.

- It had tackled the need for teachers to meet more effectively the differing learning needs of students, but there had been little impact and more effective strategies were required;
- The school had introduced standardised assessments for most students in Grades 1 to 12 but it needed to include all students each year in order to provide a firm baseline from which future attainment and progress could be reliably judged;
- The quality of teaching had been improved in the Kindergarten and, as a consequence, children had more regular opportunities for active learning;
- Teachers had made some changes to programmes of work and teaching approaches. Students had been given more opportunities to work beyond the level of the lesson objectives but more needed to be done to develop students' higher order thinking skills;
- In the Kindergarten, the introduction of a new curriculum had provided a greater emphasis on the development of communication skills and this had improved the language skills of children.

## Trend of overall performance



## How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

The attainment of most students in each phase and in each of the core subjects was in line with the school's curriculum standards and international standards. In Islamic Education, most students showed an appropriate understanding of key Islamic concepts and values. In Arabic as a first language, most students' writing skills were less well developed than their other language skills. In Arabic as an additional language, students' speaking and reading skills were limited to a narrow range of words and phrases. In English, most students' listening and reading skills were at an age-appropriate level but their speaking skills were less well developed. In mathematics, most children in the Kindergarten could count objects. In the other phases students developed a secure knowledge of number and algebra, but their ability to apply this knowledge and solve problems was weaker. In science, children in the Kindergarten could carry out simple investigations. Students' knowledge and skills developed through the elementary and middle stages, and senior students could confidently predicted outcomes of investigations and practical work using scientific formulae.

In each phase and in each of the core subjects, students' progress was as expected for their phase. In Islamic education, most students were developing their understanding of Islam, their knowledge of Seerah and their recitation skills at an acceptable pace. In both Arabic streams students were steadily developing their reading and listening skills. However, their speaking and writing skills were not developing as well as a result of not gaining sufficient practice. Similarly in English, students required further opportunities to develop the four language skills, especially speaking. Children in the Kindergarten built steadily on their ability to count. By the elementary, middle and high school phases, students' knowledge of number had developed well and this enabled them to tackle increasingly difficult concepts. In science, senior students made better progress in developing their knowledge and skills than in the earlier stages as they were able to consolidate their understanding of scientific concepts with practical work.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Overall, the quality of students' learning was acceptable. In all phases students had a positive attitude to learning and they cooperated well with teachers and could work with each other in groups. In Kindergarten, children had gained from learning the key subjects in a more integrated and activity based setting. Learning was strongest in lessons that included effective and focussed group work and where critical thinking was promoted by teachers. Group activities in some elementary classes lacked focus and as a consequence the development of learning skills was inconsistent at this stage. In some classes there were few opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners. In the majority of English and science lessons,

students were able to achieve higher outcomes when they took some responsibility for their own learning. Students were able to see the value of some concepts and skills when teachers showed their application to the world beyond school. The use of ICT by students was inconsistent across the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' personal and social development was good. In all of the phases, students exhibited positive attitudes. They were respectful and very well behaved. Most students demonstrated behaviour that reflected tolerance, friendship and respect for all people. They were interested in making healthy choices. Students participated in Student Council elections. The Council represented students and provided opportunities for students to take part in community and charitable activities. Students participated in anti-bullying activities and in a leadership class, where they learned to make good decisions and to give peer support to other students. Students had a good understanding of how Islamic values influence individual actions and contemporary society in Dubai. Students appreciated living in the multi-cultural society of Dubai. They had a good understanding of the culture and heritage of the UAE and showed respect for other cultures. Students had a good environmental understanding and took the lead in a number of initiatives to promote sustainability. Business Studies students organised a business fair each year and they took part in the Young Entrepreneurs Competition held by the government. Attendance was good and most students were punctual.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in all phases. The teaching of English and science in the middle and high school phases was generally better than that in other key subjects. In the other subjects, teachers often did not challenge students sufficiently and many had low expectations of students. Some improvements had been made by teachers to deliver the curriculum in Kindergarten. However, in most classes the majority of teachers had not developed strategies to differentiate learning to meet the wide range of students' learning needs. Didactic styles of teaching were being used in the elementary phase and this had impacted negatively on the opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. A minority of teachers were effective at communicating clearly the lesson objectives to their students and then using them to check students' learning at the end of the lesson. In addition to the core subjects, some effective teaching was seen in other areas such as social subjects and ICT.

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The quality of assessment was acceptable across the school. Teachers used a range of different assessment instruments to evaluate students' progress and attainment. They obtained data from standardised international assessments such as TIMSS, IOWA and ACER. However, changes in school population made it difficult to establish reliable progress data. The school had no baseline information on the new students joining the school and did not have accurate information on their levels of achievement. This resulted in some teachers not being fully aware of individual students' strengths and areas for development. Nevertheless, most teachers were aware of individual students' strengths and weaknesses, but they did not either plan sufficiently well to meet their needs or implement their plans effectively. Few teachers encouraged peer- and self-assessment in lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good at each stage. It had a clear rationale, it was well balanced and it reflected the values of the school and the parents whose children attended the school. Its rationale, scope and sequence followed the United States of America's most commonly used set of curriculum standards for mathematics, English, and science. A good feature of the curriculum was the requirement for high school students to take part in 100 hours of community service and work experience activities prior to graduation. This was included to develop students' confidence and knowledge and skills of the world of work. The curriculum was reviewed frequently and it was used as a benchmark for each student's attainment and progress. It did allow teachers to provide opportunities for independent learning, research, and critical thinking activities, but these were not taken up sufficiently. It was also flexible enough to support cross-curricular learning experiences. The school had a variety of sports, music and cultural extra-curricular activities.

The school made a few adjustments to its curriculum design to meet the individual learning needs of students. More needed to be done to provide appropriate opportunities for those students with special education needs and also to develop other students' talents, interests, and aspirations.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had good, comprehensive policies and procedures to promote the health and safety of students. Staff maintained medical records well and contributed effectively to promote healthy living. They regularly reviewed risk assessments and carried out audits and ensured that the school building was safe and secure. The school had clear child protection procedures for reporting and recording concerns but they were not consistently followed or widely promoted through systematic training of all staff. School transport

arrangements were safe and effective. Fire drills were successfully carried out at appropriate intervals. The school was exceptionally well maintained.

The quality of support for students was acceptable overall. Staff managed the behaviour of students well. Students received appropriate individual guidance and support for their personal development and well-being. The checking of attendance and punctuality was good and had led to improved levels of attendance and punctuality.

[View judgements](#)

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

Overall, the quality of leadership in the school was acceptable. The school was led by a hard-working and committed Principal and three senior managers. Together they had been very successful in developing a positive ethos in the school and forging strong relationships with parents and the wider community. The school had developed well-intentioned comprehensive policies and procedures but these were not always successful in bringing about the desired improvements to the school as they were not always implemented rigorously. Senior and middle managers did not provide sufficient guidance to teachers on how to improve teaching.

Self-evaluation was acceptable. The school had a very good range of processes to obtain information on its performance. They included stakeholder surveys, lesson observations and tracking students' performance. The information from these sources was used to inform the regular training of teachers and to focus the well-conceived improvement plan. However, the impact of this work was limited as overly positive evaluations were made by managers on the quality of teaching and learning across the school and the implementation of the improvement plan was not rigorously monitored.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Communication between the school and parents was very good and a wide range of channels was used. Parents were provided with regular reports on their children's progress. The reports were helpful, especially those provided by Kindergarten staff. Teachers successfully involved parents with the education of their children both at school and at home. The school had a range of community links which supported the education of students. Through these good links it was able to provide students with both work experience and community service.

Governance was acceptable. The Advisory Board had a very good, wide representation of stakeholders, which included the parent head of the PTA, a representative of the Board of Directors and other individuals. The Board supported the school well. It knew the views of parents and acted constructively on their concerns and suggestions. Board members were frequent visitors to the school and took steps to hold the Principal

to account for the school's performance. The Board provided the school with sufficient resources but did not have much impact on improving the school.

Overall, the quality of management, including staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school ran smoothly and there were effective operational procedures. Teachers were qualified in their subjects but only thirty percent had an additional teaching qualification. Few had qualifications in special education needs. The quality of the premises and facilities were good and included a lift for students and staff with restricted mobility. The premises were bright, spacious, clean and very well maintained. The school had good provision of ICT and other learning resources.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Around thirty eight per cent of students in the school were Emirati. In most lessons Emirati students were making similar progress to other students in the core subjects. The school tracked the progress and attainment of Emirati students in detail for each subject. These records showed that overall, the spread in Emirati students' attainment was similar to that of other groups of students. As a result of the school's policy on equality, staff made sure that all students and parents were treated with respect and this applied to Emirati students and families.

## How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The support for students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory. Systems to identify, accurately, students' individual needs were not robust. Staff employed to provide additional support in lessons were not well trained and did not have the skills needed to support students appropriately. Individual education plans were too general and did not provide staff with short-term measurable targets which could be used to plan learning. As a result, class teachers did not plan well enough to ensure that these students were fully included in learning and, consequently, their progress was unsatisfactory.

## How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Teachers of Arabic as a first language had a secure knowledge of their subject. They generally planned adequate lessons across the school. Some teachers shared clear lesson objectives with their students. In

most lessons however, teachers had low expectations of students. They frequently asked students unchallenging questions or did not provide students with sufficient thinking time. Teachers used an appropriate range of resources, including ICT, smart boards, flash cards, boards and textbooks. In some lessons, activities were differentiated to meet the needs of each group of students, but the level of challenge of this work did not always help students to progress towards achieving the expectations of the MoE Curriculum for each year group.

The school's curriculum was based on the MoE standards. In lessons, the curriculum provided insufficient opportunities for students to practise speaking and writing. In addition, the planned curriculum did not provide opportunity for progression in all skills for a significant proportion of students with different needs. There were, therefore, difficulties for many students when they progressed from one year to the next.

## 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	80	29%
	Last year	75	32%
Teachers	31		54%
Students	43		86%

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

Approximately a quarter of parents, the majority of teachers and most students responded to the surveys. Almost all teachers and most parents and students who responded to the surveys were satisfied with most aspects of the school. Almost all parents felt that their children were safe and well cared for at school. Most parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education provided. They thought that their children enjoyed school and this view was shared by students. Most parents considered that their children made good progress in Arabic as a second language, English, mathematics and science. The majority thought that their children made good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. Most students reported that they found school work stimulating and interesting. The majority of parents and only a minority of students thought that they used a wide range of technology in lessons. The majority of parents and students considered that there was a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Almost all teachers and most parents said that the school was well led.

## 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)

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