

INSPECTION REPORT

International Academic School

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT International Academic School

Location	Al Warqaa 1
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ias-dubai.ae
Telephone	04 280 0993
Address	P. O. Box 262, Dubai
Principal	Miss Marah Qadourah
Curriculum	US/MoE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,076
Students' nationalities	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	581 (54%)
Date of the inspection	8th to 11th October 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	9
How good is the students' personal and social development?	9
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	10
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	11
How well does the school protect and support students?	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	12
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	14
What happens next?	15
How to contact us	15

The context of the school

The International Academic School is located in Al Warqaa. Most students spoke Arabic as a first language; just over half of the students were Emiratis. Most students were in the Kindergarten (KG) and elementary phases.

The school had two curricula. Predominantly, students followed a US curriculum; the new Common Core curriculum for English and mathematics had recently been adopted. For other subjects, the school used the California State curriculum. In five classes, from Grades 1 to 5, students followed the Ministry of Education curriculum; there were 88 students in these classes at the time of the inspection.

Children were able to start in pre-Kindergarten before the age of three, and there were two Kindergarten year groups with a total of 337 children. This represented an average of 24 children in each class. The class average was smaller elsewhere in the school with an average of 19 students per class in Grades 1 to 12. The school had a small minority of students with special educational needs (SEN), including some who were gifted and/or talented. The principal had been in her post for just over a year.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good progress of students in the middle school because of the improved teaching;
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of students in all grades, and their understanding of Islamic values and local culture;
- The improved quality of the assessment systems, including some exemplary procedures in mathematics;
- The cohesive and committed leadership which has a clear vision and was spearheading improvements to the school;
- The supportive and nurturing school climate.

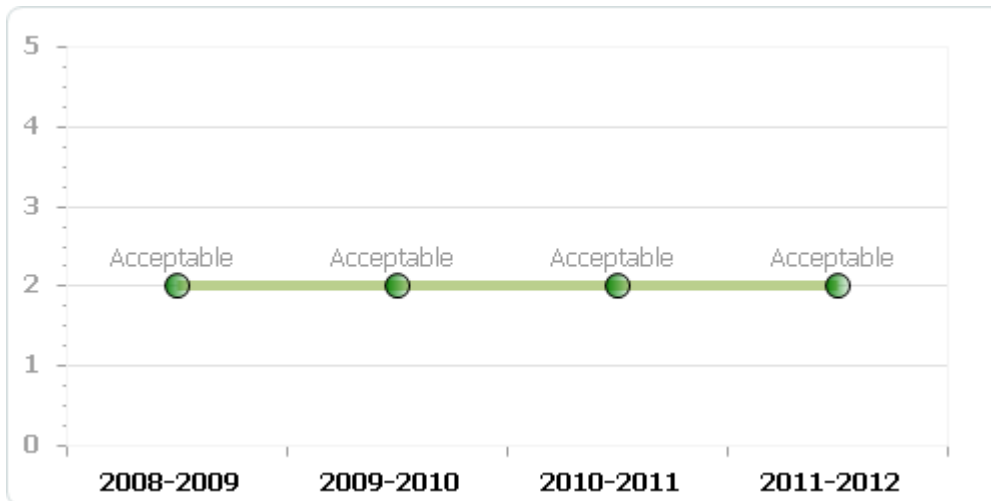
Recommendations

- Improve students' awareness of a healthy lifestyle, environmental issues and the community, and enable them to participate more proactively in sustained projects in and out of school;
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by using all available assessment data to ensure that all teachers have accurate information and high enough expectations of students;
- Enrich the curriculum through more creative and stimulating lessons, greater opportunities for investigative experiences and extra activities;
- Strengthen the procedures for identifying students with special educational needs so that their needs can be met more appropriately.

Progress since the last inspection

- The provision in the Kindergarten was not as consistent as it had been;
- The teaching in the middle school had improved and was having a beneficial impact on students' progress;
- Teachers had improved their assessment systems but only a minority were using the data to guide their lesson planning effectively;
- The senior leaders, ably led by the principal, were more effective in bringing change to the school;
- The school had improved its self-evaluation and had established a stronger agenda for improvement.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment was acceptable in most subjects. In Islamic Education, knowledge of etiquettes, morals and values were the least developed aspects. In Arabic and English, most students were better at reading and writing, than speaking and listening because teachers did not promote effective discussion enough in lessons. In mathematics, students had competent calculation and algebraic skills but, as in science, most were not confident enough at problem-solving and critical thinking. Indeed, students' learning skills were not well developed generally although they had sound factual knowledge of all subjects. Nevertheless, attainment was good in the Kindergarten in English, especially in reading and early writing, and also in science. Children knew about a range of matters from plant growth to forces. Attainment was also good in the middle phase in Islamic Education because of confident recitation skills, and in science because of good investigative skills.

Students generally made acceptable and, often good, progress. Children quickly acquired English in the Kindergarten through effective phonics teaching and because it was the language of instruction. The level of science work was high and children responded well. In the elementary phase, progress in all subjects was acceptable because the quality of teaching varied. Progress in the middle phase had improved and was mostly good. There, teaching was more challenging and students acquired better skills. In the high school, progress had also improved in English and mathematics. Students developed good technical and creative writing skills in English, and they acquired good thinking skills in mathematics. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across all phases of the school. They behaved well in lessons and around school. They showed a quiet self-confidence and sensible attitudes to their work and to life in general. Their relationships with teachers were courteous and respectful. Students were aware of the school's healthy living policy but not all were motivated enough to take exercise regularly and eat healthily. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable. Students had a good understanding of Islamic values, local and global issues. They appreciated the heritage and local traditions of the UAE and could explain their relevance to people in Dubai.

Students knew about a variety of cultures and could refer to distinctive features of them. They were aware of their responsibilities in the school community and some had taken part in activities such as fund-raising for charity.

Students demonstrated acceptable community and environmental responsibility across all grades. The School Council was beginning to give the students a voice in the school's development but was not fully effective. There were limited opportunities for more sustained involvement in community projects. Students' ecological awareness and involvement in environmental projects were limited.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good in the middle phase and Kindergarten. It was acceptable elsewhere, although there was good practice in all phases. Most teachers had good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers ensured good pace and timing to learning. Lesson plans were detailed, with clear objectives. Teachers tended to know their students well and so set suitably challenging work. As a result, students participated eagerly. In the less effective lessons, teachers did not allow students enough scope to explore, experiment and work independently. Teachers did not routinely use assessment data to influence their planning and fine-tune their expectations of students. At times, teachers dominated the lessons too much, activities were poorly planned and individual learning was stifled. Opportunities for developing thinking skills were too inconsistent. Teachers often adhered too closely to the textbooks and relied a lot on worksheets. In the best lessons, imaginative activities and resources, including technology, excited the students and motivated them to learn energetically. The quality of teaching seen in non-key subjects was acceptable. Those teachers also knew their subjects well and there was a positive atmosphere in their classrooms. Although there were group and independent activities, some teaching was too formal and did not allow students to express themselves and learn in their own ways.

Students' learning mirrored the quality of teaching. In good lessons, students benefited from a good rapport with teachers, which encouraged them to discuss their learning and engage readily in activities. In most subjects students developed good problem-solving skills and could relate learning to real life. However, learning skills were often underdeveloped. In over-directed lessons, students were too passive and were not enabled to manage their own learning. Most students worked happily together in groups but collaboration was not productive for all students. Too often, the more able students led the way, while less able students played little part.

Assessment of learning had improved markedly since the last inspection and was acceptable in all phases. There were some examples of high quality assessment, especially in mathematics, where effective diagnostic tests and in-depth analyses clearly highlighted students' strengths and weaknesses. This analysis then informed teachers' planning. However, such practice was not consistent in all subjects. Regular testing took place through quizzes, projects and end-of-term tests, and the school had done well to introduce standardised testing from the US. The tracking of students' progress, though, had yet to be fully established. Most teachers gave students useful advice about how to improve their work, although marking in students' workbooks was not usually very constructive.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in all phases. Overall, it was well planned. The adoption of the US Common Core standards enhanced the coverage in English and mathematics, and ensured continuity and progression. In other subjects, a suitable framework was provided by both the California State and Ministry of Education curricula. In the Kindergarten, the curriculum was well structured to develop language and science, in particular, although it lacked enough opportunities for experiential learning, differentiation and the choice of activities necessary for young learners.

Older students benefited from occasional field trips but there was limited scope for students to apply their learning practically, especially in the wider community. Similarly, the planned curriculum was not innovative and exciting enough and, at times, was too based on text books. There were not enough opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking for all groups of students. The curriculum had some good extra-curricular activities such as an environmental competition, camping, art exhibitions, a science fair and Mathematics Olympics. The breadth of the curriculum was enhanced with art, French and music.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all students were acceptable. All areas of the school were secure and well supervised, including the transport procedures. The school had organised regular fire drills for all phases except the Kindergarten, which had not taken place. The school was clean and well maintained; repairs were carried out quickly. The medical team kept detailed records on the medical needs of all students and ensured that students received appropriate care. The school had recently taken steps to improve the wholesomeness of food on sale at the canteen, but was not sufficiently rigorous in monitoring students' choices of food. A detailed child protection policy and reporting system was in place and all staff members were aware of reporting requirements.

The support for students was acceptable. The good rapport between teachers and students created a positive ethos around the school. Students appreciated that staff cared for their well-being. New students were well supported in settling into school routines. The social worker maintained positive links with parents to ensure continuity of care from home to school. All behaviour concerns were quickly resolved with parents. The school promoted attendance satisfactorily but had not succeeded in raising it. Guidance to prepare students for life after school was limited.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had developed appropriate systems to support students with special educational needs. It had appointed new staff and set up a committee structure to oversee its work. It had provisionally identified a number of students with learning issues but, as identification procedures of such students were underdeveloped, it was unclear whether all these students had special educational needs. As a result, provision in lessons and in special withdrawal lessons was variable and not as sharply focused as it should have been. It was a similar picture for students with particular gifts and talents. Nevertheless, students with special educational needs generally made acceptable progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The overall leadership of the school was good. The principal provided firm and clear-sighted leadership and a good vision that was shared by all senior leaders. Leaders were keen to embrace change and worked well together to develop the school. Leadership was well delegated so that leaders at all levels had greater autonomy and, as a result, were having a positive impact on their areas of responsibility. The school valued and acted upon the opinions of stakeholders in its development, although it was not always overtly receptive. Senior leaders proved, through various improvements to the school, that they had good capacity to improve the school further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. The school had an honest and balanced view of itself. Self-evaluation procedures were not fully established but all senior leaders were involved and most judgments were well reasoned. The school's priorities were focused and realistic but the supporting action plans were too broad to guarantee success. Nevertheless, all the recommendations from the last report had been tackled earnestly, with some good progress. International tests had already been introduced but the procedures for special educational needs were not properly or fully operational. Links with parents and the community were good. Parents were supportive of the school. The school kept parents well aware of its activities through its helpful website and open-door policy. Parents felt that teachers were very approachable. In regular meetings, teachers provided good information to parents about their children's progress, although the termly reports lacked detail. There were useful links with the local community, such as the Islamic Centre and local charities, which contributed to students' awareness of the world. However, such links were underdeveloped. The governance of the school was acceptable. A new board of trustees provided valuable advice and expertise to support the school. The trustees were fully committed to school improvement. They had already sanctioned key changes and, in conjunction with senior leaders, were drawing up action plans. The board was not representative of the school's stakeholders but it was mindful of their opinions; elections for a new parent advisory group were imminent. The trustees understood their roles in monitoring the school's progress but were not proactive in holding the school to account for its performance.

The management of the school was acceptable. It ran smoothly on a day-to-day basis; timetabling was efficient, so that little time was lost during the school day. The school had a good ratio of teachers to students and most teachers were suitably qualified. Staff training was a priority, and had improved the middle phase teaching, although it had not yet overcome the inconsistency of teaching overall. There were sufficient classrooms, specialist rooms and learning resources. New technology was supporting learning in classrooms, but learning in some subjects was limited by the resources available. Displays did little to enhance the learning environment. The swimming pool remained unavailable to students.

[View judgments](#)

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	38	5%
	Last year	71	13%
Teachers	9		10%
Students	29		44%

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey. Their general view was that the school was making acceptable provision in most areas. They expressed most satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning, their children's progress in English, the school's care for their children and their own involvement in the school. They had some concerns about the limited involvement of their children in community projects and their progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost half of the senior students responded to their survey and they showed more negative views than their parents. They did not share their parents' concerns about Islamic Education and Arabic, but they did praise teaching quality. Their main areas of concern included the school's respect for their opinions, career guidance, preparation for university, the use of technology, curriculum enrichment and community involvement. The small number of teachers who responded expressed similar views to those of the students.

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

Copyright © 2013

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.