



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

GEMS Dubai American Academy

Curriculum: US/IB

Overall rating: Outstanding

Read more about the school



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“The race for  
excellence has  
no finish line”



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

### General information



Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	1997
Website	www.gemsaa-dubai.com
Telephone	04-3479222
Address	PO Box 32762 Dubai UAE
Principal	Dr. James Hardin
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	18 to 21 January 2016

### Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-17
Grades or year groups	Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Number of students on roll	2,340
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	0
Number of Emirati students	30
Number of students with SEND	249
Largest nationality group of students	US

### Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	193
Largest nationality group of teachers	American
Number of teaching assistants	62
Teacher-student ratio	12 : 1
Number of guidance counsellors	8
Teacher turnover	25%

### Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	US
Main curriculum	US/IB / IB
External tests and examinations	IBDP, ISA, PSAT, SAT1 & 2, MAP
Accreditation	NEASC, CIS, IB.
National Agenda benchmark tests	ISA

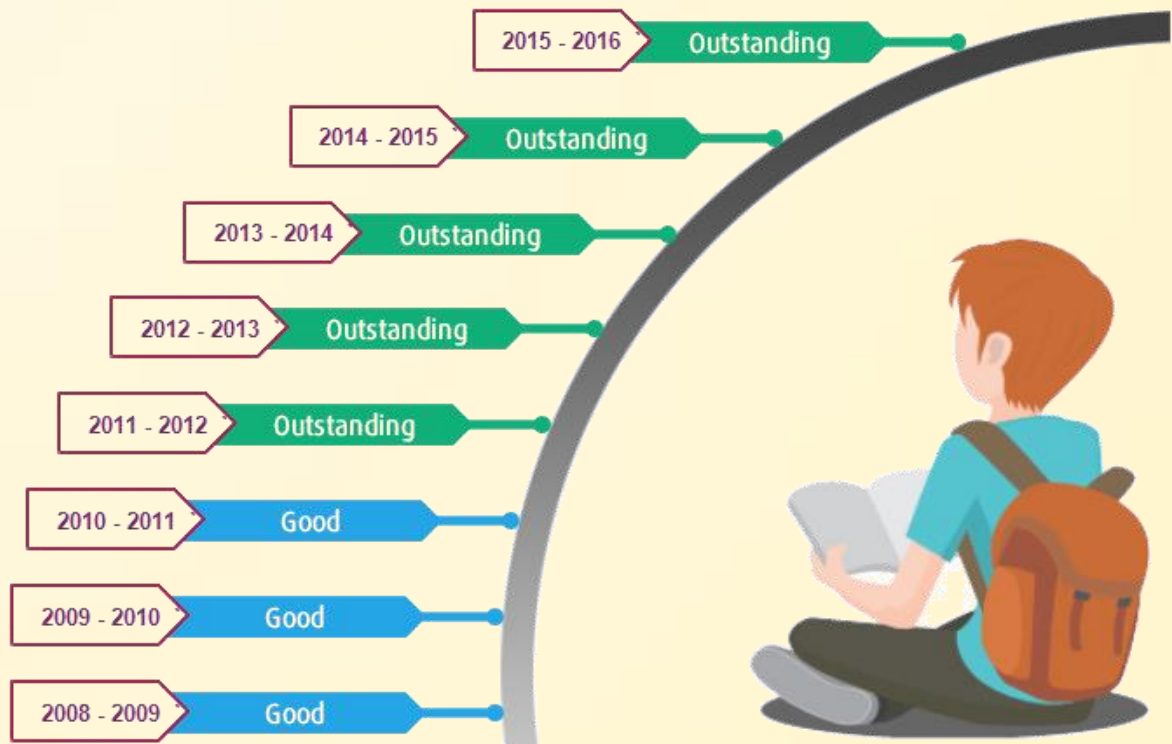


## Summary for parents and the community

**GEMS Dubai American Academy** was inspected by DSIB from 18 to 21 January 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **outstanding**.

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key standards of performance. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching and the assessment of learning were across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.

The inspection judgements were drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





### How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, **GEMS Dubai American Academy** provided an **outstanding** quality of education for its students.

- Attainment and progress in all core areas in kindergarten (KG) was outstanding. It was also at the highest levels in English, mathematics and science in the other three phases. Progress had also improved in Islamic education and the Arabic language for first language and additional language speakers in some higher phases in the school. The development of students' learning skills was a major strength of the school.
- Students' personal development, their understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati, cultures, their social and innovative skills had been sustained at a very high level.
- The quality of teaching in all phases was outstanding. This was complemented by excellent systems to accurately measure student performance as well as exceptional practice by teachers in using that data to better meet the needs of all groups of students.
- The school had designed a comprehension curriculum, which ensured, coherence, choice and challenge. It was effectively adapted to engage and meet the academic and personal needs of all groups of students. It prepared them well for their life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- The highest levels of safety for students, whilst learning, were the bedrock for all the planned and delivered experiences that were to follow. All school staff, teaching, support and administrative staff, provided the care and support that allowed students to make informed choices and perform at their best.
- Inspirational and innovative leadership continued to drive the school forward yet always mindful of its core beliefs and values. Leaders were outward looking. They were committed to external partnerships for further improvement; the parents, the student body, local schools and relevant agencies in the community.



### What did the school do well?

- The school was an inclusive and welcoming educational community, which enabled strong academic learning and personal development. The major factor for this was the inspired and innovative leadership that was determined to improve the school further.
- Leaders had created a KG programme that provided an excellent platform for children to develop academically and personally.
- The school had sustained high provision and performance in English, mathematics and science in all phases.
- There was a strong focus and a clear direction towards the development of skills, attitudes and approaches in learning that was essential for the complex life and work environments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- All staff provided safe and nurturing environment in which students could explore their boundaries.





### What does the school need to do next?

- Raise students' attainment and progress in Arabic and Islamic education to exceed curriculum standards in all phases of the school by:
  - developing the teachers' capacity, particularly, but not exclusively, in the elementary phase
  - better deployment of teachers in the elementary phase to match their expertise
  - establishing a system for measuring attainment, especially in Arabic as an additional language
  - continuing to raise teachers' expectations of student performance above the expected curriculum standards
  - the appointment of permanent, high quality subject leaders to ensure a high consistency of provision.
- Share the school's best practice with other schools to improve the prospects of a greater number of students and teachers, consider alternative ways of achieving similarly high results and contribute to the development of the wider community.



### How well did the school provide for students with special educational needs and disabilities?

- Students with SEND made at least good progress in the majority of key subjects. In some subjects and phases it was very good or outstanding.
- Parents were full partners in the education of their SEND children including, but not limited to, the full participation in educational planning.
- The school went to considerable lengths to communicate effectively with parents on both formal and informal bases. The SEND handbook had been revised this school year.
- Parents had the opportunity and were encouraged to be involved in all aspects of planning and evaluating the progress of their children's education.
- All parents of students with SEND had access to and benefit from a range of high quality guidance, training and support services within the school.

### National Agenda Parameter



In 2014, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, launched the UAE National Agenda 2021, with education being a prime focus. The National Agenda includes two major objectives developed with the intent of placing the UAE among the most successful countries that provide world-class education. By 2021, it is expected that the UAE will feature in the top twenty countries in the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) test and in the top fifteen countries in the 'Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies' (TIMSS) test.

In response to this, each participating school was issued a report on their students' performance in these international assessments and in addition, they were provided with clear targets for improving their performance. This academic year, KHDA introduced the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments.

#### Main points:

- The school met the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter.
- No attainment data from the National Agenda Parameter was available at the time of the inspection to make a judgement on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- The National Agenda was not well disseminated to some school stakeholders. Students, parents and teachers were not fully versed in their understanding of either the National Agenda or the 2015 school targets in PISA/TIMSS.
- The school had modified their curriculum in science, mathematics and English to incorporate the weaker areas identified by PISA/TIMSS tests; for example, problem solving in mathematics. Training had since been incorporated into the mathematics curriculum, across all phases, to strengthen this area.
- Critical thinking was a strength across all phases of the school in most subject areas. Teachers showed great skill in posing questions and setting tasks, which promoted critical thinking. Students were also able to engage confidently in critical thinking especially in the middle and high school phases.
- The school was well resourced with regard to technology. Students were trained from an early age to use the technology and resources effectively and appropriately. They were very skilled in locating relevant information, extracting and critiquing it prior to using it for problem solving, projects, animations, presentations or research.

## Innovation in education

The *UAE Vision 2021* sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for 'innovation' and 'innovative leadership'. It provides a basis for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, to experiment and to test assumptions as well as questioning and challenging the status quo. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.



### Promoting a culture of innovation:


- The leadership team was committed to innovation as a national priority through the articulation of the school's vision in its 2014 to 2017 school improvement plan. An innovation coordinator had been appointed to facilitate a committee tasked to promote a school culture of innovation in teaching and learning. Teachers engaged in professional learning opportunities through collaborative weekly meetings, using the school's innovative continuum to increase innovation opportunities. Learning opportunities were used creatively in an effort to stimulate innovation, enterprise, research and critical thinking through the use of technology and online applications. The curriculum provided increased opportunities for students, teachers and school leaders to engage in innovative learning that encouraged and celebrated creativity, risk-taking and entrepreneurship.



Overall school performance

**Outstanding**

1. Students' achievement

		KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic education</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑
<b>Arabic as a first language</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good ↑	Good ↑
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good ↑	Acceptable ↑
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good ↑
<b>English</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Science</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Learning skills</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

## 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

## 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum adaptation	Outstanding	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding

## 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Care and support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

## 6. Leadership and management

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding



## Main inspection report

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the standards reached by students and the quality of education provided in Dubai's private schools.

### Judgements are made on a six-point scale



Using this scale, the *Main inspection report* contains the judgements about the different aspects, phases and subjects that form the work of the school.

It provides the reasons for the answers to the questions in the *Summary for parents and the community*:

- How well did the school perform overall?
- What did the school do well?
- What does the school need to do next?

## 1. Students' achievement

### KG

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as a first language	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Standards attained in English were outstanding. Almost all children's English language skills, as measured against the school's curriculum, were consistently above age-related standards. Most children displayed strong recall of prior learning and could apply it to new challenges. Students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills were outstanding and almost all made better than expected progress in lessons. Progress over time was outstanding and the school had secured this pattern in the learning of different groups.
- As in English, attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding. Most children had mathematical skills above the curriculum standards. They were able to perform simple computation and most KG2 children were capable of simple addition and subtraction. Almost all children, were rapidly developing their abilities to identify triangles, squares, circles, rectangles, rhombus and trapezoid and give the correct identify line, angle and vertices. Progress was outstanding for all groups and the school was maintaining this pattern year-on-year.
- In science achievement followed the pattern in English and mathematics. Children exhibited a natural curiosity about their world and showed an eagerness to investigate. Almost all worked well with independent discovery tasks. As part of their studies, they viewed the tall towers in Dubai and then designed and built their own. Trial and error led most children to conclude that a solid base was needed before a building could go up very far. The progress of different groups of children was rapid.

## Elementary

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Most of the students, in Islamic education, attained levels that were in line with MOE curriculum standards, as was the case for the past three years. Most students recited short Surah using a few Tajweed rules and with some errors. They knew and understood the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) instructions (Sunnah) and their application to real life situations. They knew the Story of Prophet Ibrahim. Most students showed an understanding of the meaning of the prescribed Hadith. Internal test results showed that most of the students made acceptable progress and there was little difference in the performance between boys and girls.
- In school internal assessments, most students attained the levels in Arabic as a first language that were in line with national standards. Most of the students listening skills were good. They were less fluent when speaking and using colloquial language. Students' reading skills were more advanced than their writing. They knew a range of verbs and nouns and how to use them in a short sentences. Most of the students were making acceptable progress in lessons and there was no difference between boys and girls.
- In line with last year's inspection judgement in Arabic as an additional language, most students attained levels of knowledge and skills that were in line with the curriculum expectations. Some students, in Grade 3 for example, were able to read simple names of animals and link them to an adjective, such as deer with jumping. They could copy Arabic script and read back what they had written. Progress of students and groups in lessons and over time was at an acceptable level. There was little difference in the rates of progress for different groups of students.
- In English, reading skills were developing very well. Most students were able to gather information effectively from a variety of sources and were competent in the use of the internet for research. Students' writing showed a widening vocabulary, with increasing use of a variety of sentence structures to create different effects. They used punctuation, including commas, inverted commas and apostrophes, with increasing accuracy. Most demonstrated speaking and listening skills that were well above expectations for their age. When working in groups, they expressed their ideas clearly and listened intently when others were expressing their views. As in the past, students' performance in external tests was well above age-related expectations. Progress was outstanding in lessons and over time.
- Students enjoyed inquiry and the practical application of mathematics whilst exploring concepts. They demonstrated levels of knowledge and understanding that exceeded curriculum expectations. Most students were able to use accurate and advanced mathematical vocabulary. They enjoyed the problem solving elements of their studies with numbers, data and shapes. Most students were able to apply critical thinking to their work. There had been a consistently high level of attainment over a three-year period. Progress of students with SEND was also good.
- Grade 1 students continued with the science studies that they began in KG, where they had the first opportunity to learn to 'think like scientists.' They studied the five senses. By Grade 2, students were building their scientific vocabulary, making predictions and conducting age-appropriate experiments. Grade 5 students learned about matter and its properties. By the end of elementary school phase, students had a solid grounding in the vocabulary, concepts and ideas in science and were well prepared to move to middle school phase. Throughout the elementary grades, students developed their scientific skills through investigations.



**Middle**

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good ↑
Arabic as an additional language	Good ↑	Good
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The majority of the students were attaining above the curriculum expectations in Islamic education and this had been the trend for a number of years. They had good knowledge of Allah's wisdom and existence. In addition. They were able to understand and apply the Islamic concepts of the importance of miracles to Muslims. The majority of students were making good progress in understanding the concept that miracles were signs of the Allah's divinity and that Islamic beliefs gave good guidance to Muslims as to how to lead their lives. There were no significant differences between the rates of progress for boys and girls.
- Most students attained levels in Arabic as a first language that were in line with curriculum expectations as judged by internal school assessments. This was a continuing pattern in the phase. Most of the students listening skills were good but still in their speaking and reading they were using the colloquial language. Writing skills were generally limited though improving. Progress of students in lessons was good for both boys and girls and represents an improvement, in the phase, from last year.
- The majority of students attained levels of knowledge, skills and understanding above the standards of the curriculum for Arabic as an additional language. No externally benchmarked tests were available to set the standard internationally. In their project on designing a supermarket, students in Grade 7 were able to speak with a good level of fluency and understand what was being said. They successfully and independently created scripts, which they read with confidence. The majority of students made better than expected progress in relation to their starting points and curriculum standards.
- In English, almost all students were fluent, independent readers. They were able to extract information from a range of demanding texts and a variety of source material. The writing of most students was grammatically accurate. They were able to write extended pieces for different audiences and different purposes. Analytical writing was particularly strong. Almost all demonstrated high level speaking and listening skills and considerable self-confidence in expressing their ideas. Because teaching was particularly well adapted for students with SEND, their progress in English was comparable to that of other groups of students.
- Students had outstanding achievement in mathematics. They had developed excellent mathematical skills and were confident in their use of abstract algebraic manipulations. Their knowledge and understanding of mathematics exceeded curriculum standards, resulting in an enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject by most students. Problem solving was well developed and students discussed their mathematics confidently using accurate terminology. Assessment data over time showed that most students exceeded curriculum standards. Students with SEND made good progress and were well integrated into the mathematics classroom.
- In science, most students began to conduct more sophisticated investigations in this phase. They were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the scientific method and could apply its principles in a laboratory setting. In Grade 7, students studied plate tectonics and were able to connect this work to real life examples of earthquakes in Iran and the Middle East. In Grade 8, students studied reproduction in flowers and were able to explain and illustrate the process in their interactive science notebooks. Progress was rapid and students completed middle school phase fully prepared for high school science classes.

## High

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Good ↑
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good ↑
Arabic as an additional language	Good ↑	Good ↑
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In their studies of Islamic education, most students attained levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. This had been the trend for the past three years. Most students recited Surat Yassin fairly accurately. Most students knew, understood and could express the manners and morals of Muslims. The majority of students made good progress in internal assessments and there was little difference between the progress of boys and girls. This represented an improvement from last year.
- Over the past three years, most of student attained levels that were in line with curriculum standards in Arabic as a first language. This level of attainment had been continued. For most students, listening skills were above the expected level. In lessons, the majority of the students made better than expected progress in relation to starting points. This was an improvement from last year. No significant differences were observed between the progress of boys and girls.
- The majority of students were performing above the curriculum standards of Arabic as an additional language. Students in Grade 9 could speak and read with an adequate level of fluency. They could construct independent narratives as part of a project that involved sharing information about a country that they had visited. Over time, the majority of students made better progress in relation to their starting points and curriculum standards and this was an improvement from the previous year.
- In English, students' skills of literary analysis were exceptionally well developed. They were able to read and critically analyze extracts from a wide range of demanding texts. They were able to explain the use and intended effects of different literary features. Students' writing was reasoned and persuasive, conveying complex perspectives. They made relevant connections and references to contemporary events. Well-developed speaking and listening skills enabled students to engage in high quality, and well-informed, discussions on a range of topics. Outstanding progress continued the pattern of previous years.
- In mathematics, most students in this phase attained levels that were significantly above international benchmarks. In Grade 10, students modifying the parameters of a parabola using a calculator program on their laptops; an excellent application of information technology. This learning was then applied to a real life example such as the movement of a roller coaster. Performance data showed consistent outstanding attainment across the phase. Grade 12 students performed extremely well, with over 99 per cent exceeding international standards in their IB Diploma over a three-year period. Students with SEND also achieved well, making good progress.
- Students' performance in science, in this phase, continued the recent trend of outstanding attainment and progress. The use of technology was commonplace and very well embedded, allowing students to conduct research on-line, submit work electronically and view and conduct virtual experiments. Knowledge was gained through sophisticated scientific working processes. In Grade 9, students conducted experiments on negative ion pollution and eutrophication. By Grade 10 students could explain reaction rates. Grade 11 physics students had an excellent understanding of wave behavior. Progress was rapid and at the conclusion of high school, students were very well prepared to move to their next stages in education.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students were highly engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. In all phases, students were very skilled at taking responsibility for their own learning with minimal supervision. The use of 'think time' allowed students to reflect on their learning. They focused well and were able to evaluate their strengths and identify what they needed to do to improve.
- Across all grades, students were highly confident when collaborating and interacting with their peers. They were able to effectively work together for sustained periods of time, often with assigned roles. They enjoyed sharing their ideas and learning from each other. They listened carefully and showed respect for the views of others.
- Meaningful connections were made to the real world in most lessons. In Islamic in the high school phase, for example, students explained verses from 'Surat Mariam' in the Holy Qur'an and made connections to their personal lives. Students enjoyed solving problems that reflected real life situations and making connections with other subjects of the curriculum.
- Critical thinking and inquiry skills were strong features in almost all subjects. Students were innovative and enterprising. They were competent in the use of modern technologies to support their research and investigation. Inquiry and critical thinking skills were systematically developed, to a very high level, as students progressed through the school.

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students showed very positive attitudes to their school life and their learning. They showed appreciation, integrity, independence and respect for the school community. They were enthusiastic to share ideas and experiences and curious to learn from others. They were proud of learning with students from diverse background.
- All students demonstrated excellent self-discipline and maturity to resolve conflict. Students spoke about the harmony amongst their communities and how they appreciated a school culture that allowed students to work closely with each other.
- Students were caring, empathetic and supportive to the needs of others. There was a culture of respect among staff and students. Students explained how they try to help and what strategies they use when a fellow student who arrives with low levels of English language.
- Students were aware of healthy life style and safety issues. These reflected on the choices they had for healthy life meals and the varied sports activities in which they participated. Most students were involved in sports teams after school hours.
- Students demonstrated responsibility in their behavior towards attendance. They returned promptly to their classes after recess and from the various activities in the day. Students moved to their lessons promptly and quietly with little direct supervision.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students had an excellent understanding and appreciation of the values of Islam. Students in the elementary, middle and high phases shared detailed information about mosques and Islamic celebrations. They could give many examples of how Islamic values were integrated into the daily lives of all people in Dubai. Students' attitudes had been developed through their participation in many charity projects in the school; for example the establishment of the Help the Workers club in the high school phase
- Students showed excellent respect for the UAE, often quietly singing along to the national anthem in the morning. They demonstrated an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Dubai and UAE culture. Younger students could name the seven Emirates and talk about life in the past. Students in the high school phase detailed the economic movement of Dubai from oil to tourism.
- Students fully demonstrated and talked in detailed about their own culture and had a clear awareness and appreciation of the other cultures around them especially. This was especially strong in the middle and high school phases. They named many aspects of different cultures such as music, food and sports.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Social responsibility and innovation skills</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Most students took role of responsibilities in school life and the wider communities. With the school's encouragement, they led activities that affected the development of various projects and ideas. The students shared details about a project to distribute food supplies to all school support staff to show appreciation for their hard work.
- Student showed exemplary work ethics in planning, initiating and leading projects and enterprise activities. They had acquired life skills and spoke confidently about their role in the project. A good example was the projects of recycling plastic bottles to make balls to use in football games. Some spoke passionately about projects that were prompted from their learning in lessons.
- Students, across all the grades, initiated activities to improve the school environment. Some chose practical ideas that would have an impact on the sustainability and conservation in the local and global environment. In elementary, students came out with creative ideas how to keep shaded areas clean and to make sure the waste, paper and plastic was deposited into the right bins.



### 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In most subjects, teachers demonstrated strong subject knowledge and understanding of how students learn. They used this knowledge effectively to provide students with a range of stimulating and challenging work. As a result, students could grasp complex problems in science and mathematics, for example, as well engage in well-informed discussions in English. Subject knowledge was less secure in Arabic in the elementary school phase.
- Most lessons were exceptionally well planned and successfully taught in stimulating, learning environments. Attractive displays celebrated students' achievements and contributed well to the highly supportive atmosphere for learning. Full use was made of the available resources to make learning exciting and promote rapid progress. Very effective use was made of well-trained and briefed education assistants to support learning in classrooms.
- Excellent relationships were the basis of the outstanding class management seen in virtually all lessons. Skilled questioning was used effectively to challenge students' thinking and probe for deeper understanding. In English, for example, the need to find evidence to support a particular viewpoint was embedded in all lessons from an early age. Opportunities were planned for students to use their considerable skills to assess each other's work.
- Teachers used a variety of effective strategies to meet the needs of different groups of students. Most were aware of the diverse range of students' abilities in their classes and adjusted the work well to meet their individual needs. Teachers' expectations of students' progress and behavior were very high. Learning activities were carefully planned to challenge students to do their very best.
- The development of critical thinking was at the heart of teaching and learning in all grades. In most subjects, teachers were very successful in developing these skills. This was particularly evident in English, mathematics and science, but less so in Arabic and Islamic education. Teachers expected students to take responsibility for their own learning. This was particularly evident in the middle and high school phases.
- The teaching of Arabic as a first language across the school was better in the middle and high school phases. Teachers used appropriate strategies to enable independent learning. Teachers' subject knowledge was less secure in the elementary phase.
- Teaching of Arabic as an additional language was improving in the middle and high school phases. This was less evident in elementary phase where teaching was not challenging and did not allow sufficiently for critical thinking and independent learning.



	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Assessment</b>	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The school was highly effective at analyzing assessment data, accurately linked to the school's standards, and presenting it in a variety of formats. Data for the core subjects were captured electronically onto dashboards and made available to administrators and teachers to plan, modify and align teaching as needed.
- Internal assessment processes were outstanding. A wide variety of both formative and summative assessments was used to measure student outcomes. These included the use of interactive notebooks and rubrics in the core subjects and regular peer and self-assessment across the school. The use of Cornerstone assessments, closely aligned to the curriculum standards, was highly effective in the teaching of Arabic and Islamic education.
- A number of external examinations were administered in order to benchmark student outcomes against national and international standards. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and both the SAT One and SAT Two subject tests provided data that were thoroughly analyzed and recorded for use by administrators and teachers to inform teaching.
- Student progress was monitored and tracked on an ongoing basis and assessment data were effectively used to plan and influence teaching. This was particularly true in English, mathematics and science classes but less so in Arabic and Islamic education, where the learning needs of groups of students were not always met. The use of assessments by teachers in KG to determine tasks and activities, this year, had measurably improved.
- Teachers knew their students well and were knowledgeable about their strengths and weaknesses. They used assessment data efficiently to plan and modify teaching to meet the needs of almost all groups of students. In many subjects, the marking of students' learning was very effective and provided direction for next steps; allowing students to improve and progress. In these instances, feedback was comprehensive, constructive and consistent.

#### 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Curriculum design and implementation</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The comprehensive curriculum had a clear rationale designed to develop a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding. All students had a rich selection of extra-curricular choices, especially in the middle and high school phases. The school's curriculum met all statutory requirements.
- The KG curriculum was based on New York's Common Core State Standards for Early Years. English and mathematics, in the elementary, middle and high school phases, reflected the U.S. Common Core State Standards, and the upper high school used the International Baccalaureate standards. It clearly defined continuity and progression promoting a smooth transition between phases while placing emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and creativity.

- An outstanding variety of curricular options provided all students with enrichment activities. It included art, music, physical education, drama and a wide array of opportunities to develop the whole child. Older students had the opportunity to follow courses designed to nurture and expand their talents. Extra-curricular options also engaged students in many community outreach activities.
- Cross-curricular links promoted meaningful and purposeful learning across all subjects and supported the students' learning, permitting exploration of their larger world. This was evident in all phases of the school but much more so in the middle and high school phases. Throughout the school, the curriculum was well managed and enhanced the students' transfer of learning.
- Curriculum review was ongoing and rigorous, with adjustments and modifications made as warranted by student outcomes. The school annually reviewed the curriculum to ensure compliance with requirements and to fully meet the needs of the learners.
- UAE social studies was integrated into the curriculum. Links were made in Arabic, Islamic education, science and social studies and English. Most of these links are made by subject teachers. Grade 3 students studied, in term one, a whole unit on UAE across all subjects.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum adaptation	Outstanding	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding

- Across all phases, the curriculum was modified to meet the needs of all groups of students. In the high and middle school phases, students studied a curriculum that was relevant to the UAE life and culture. In the elementary phase, the curriculum had been modified to make connections to real life.
- The curriculum was innovative and challenging offering students many extended learning opportunities. Activities, providing opportunities for social contribution and creativity activities, afforded students the chance to reach beyond their classrooms into the larger community. All of these extra-curricular offerings provided opportunities to enhance the students' academic and personal growth.
- Coherent learning experiences were embedded through many aspects of the curriculum enabling students to develop a broad understanding of the UAE's culture and society.
- The KG curriculum was enhanced by the provision for the teaching of Arabic. It was too early to measure the impact that this initiative will have on engagement and student performance in future years.

#### 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The school placed great emphasis on the care and safety of all students. This was supported by comprehensive safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, which were understood by all staff. The school made clear that any form of bullying or abuse, including through the internet, would not be tolerated.


- The premises were exceptionally clean and litter-free. This reflected students' high level of respect for the learning environment. Rigorous safety checks and emergency evacuation drills were carried out regularly. The supervision of students in the school and the supervision of school buses, at the start and end of the day, were highly effective.
- The premises were very well maintained. The school kept comprehensive records of maintenance, incidents and any subsequent actions. Policies and procedures for the administration of medicines were secure. Relevant medical information was shared systematically with classroom staff.
- The high quality, well-equipped buildings provided excellent facilities, which were suitable for the needs of students. Classrooms were sufficiently large to encourage active learning and the building was accessible to all. A thorough of risk assessment was an integral part of school visit planning by teachers.
- The school promoted safe and healthy living very effectively. Healthy living featured strongly throughout the curriculum and students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the requirements of a healthy lifestyle. A strong emphasis was placed on physical activity and almost all students participated in sport on a regular basis.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Care and support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Staff and students enjoyed highly supportive and productive relationships. These relationships underpinned the on-going management of behavior and care as well as in nurturing the confidence of students to ask for help, if and when needed.
- Highly effective systems supported the school to monitor attendance and punctuality. Unexplained absences were followed up very promptly, reasons recorded and parents contacted if school attendance was of concern.
- The school had very successful systems for the identification of students with SEND. There were clear policies and procedures for their admission, inclusion and learning support requirements.
- Students with SEND received personalized and well-targeted support for their emotional well-being. The level of academic and targeted support to meet their needs was highly effective in lessons in the 'writing centers' and had become more consistently applied by teachers in classrooms.
- Almost all students reported that they felt confident about asking for help and advice. Older students and their parents received good support in preparing them for their future schools as they progressed through the grades, in particularly, as they moved from the high school phase to further education. The number and quality of counselors employed was a major factor in the outstanding quality of support given.

#### Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities

Very good 

- Very effective leadership of the SEND program was instrumental in the continued improvement of that aspect of the school. The leadership, in collaboration with the strong cadre of talented SEND teachers, had made informed decisions that rapidly improved practices and procedures, resulting in a better provision for students with SEND.

- With the revision of the SEND handbook, the school has ensured that there was now a systematic, thoughtful and thorough approach to the identification of students with learning difficulties. These processes were clearly delineated and implemented.
- The school had made a consistent effort to include parents at every step of the process of identification of students and determination of their eligibility for receipt of SEND services. Parents praised the program. They believed that the school was committed to the well-being of their children educationally, socially and emotionally.
- Significant improvement in the area of modification and support was evident. Improved communication and a KG to 12 approach to SEND issues and programs had led to a more open discussion of student needs. The department was fully aware that there was still further coaching of staff required to ensure that all teachers were capable of meeting the full learning needs of students with SEND in their lessons.
- Overall, academic progress for students with SEND was very good. It was stronger in English, mathematics and science than it was in Islamic education and Arabic, although there had been notable improvement in the progress that students with SEND made in these two subjects, in the upper phases, since last year. Personal and social development of a wide range of students with SEND was at the highest level.

## 6. Leadership and management

### The effectiveness of leadership

Outstanding

- The school vision of a high achieving, fully inclusive school was created with the involvement of the school community and was at the heart of decision-making in the school. Committees had been created to define elements of the vision, for example innovation. The work of these committees was facilitating professional learning communities, fostering the teachers' capacities to deepen their understanding of central elements of the curriculum.
- Six members of the leadership team, including two senior leaders, were new. Leadership at all levels was highly knowledgeable about the systems and structures needed to deliver high academic standards. Leaders kept themselves up-to-date with recent research and confidently introduced innovative strategies in order to achieve their ambitious targets. New leaders for Arabic and Islamic education had been appointed for the next school year.
- A very effective system of delegated leadership was in operation. It was facilitated by unambiguous job descriptions that detailed lines of accountability and individualized, core responsibilities. The values of the school mission were embedded in these descriptions. Meeting agendas reflected the school's key improvement targets and the schedules enabled participation in discussions and optimized collaborative opportunities for informed decision-making.
- All leaders, whether appointed externally or promoted from within, had in-depth knowledge of the school's priorities. Collectively, they had a common understanding of their role in the strategies that they had created to improve the school. They made excellent use of partnerships with outside organisations, such as the 'Principals' Training Center' and 'Next Frontier Inclusion', in order to provide well-researched solutions.
- Leaders had continued to be highly successful in sustaining the high standards of student learning and personal development. This had been achieved through a combination of tried and tested strategies combined with far-sighted and innovative initiatives. School leaders continued to ensure that the school was fully compliant with statutory requirements.



School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All members of the school community were involved, at the outset, in the creation of the school improvement plan. Audits were made, surveys taken and an abundance of data, both internal and external, collected before the core priorities were identified and agreed. One common element of all the intended developments was a constant reference to the guiding principles of the school mission statement.</li> <li>The leadership team monitored the teachers' planning and performance rigorously. Leaders and teachers used learning walks; 'Power Walkthroughs'. These supported a rich, educational process, whilst cumulatively gathering useful data to inform decision-making. The plan was sufficiently flexible to include revisions to strategies and timescales. A revised appraisal system, built on the extensive school's performance data, was successfully designed to meet school and individual needs.</li> <li>The school improvement plan priorities had associated, layered details of appropriate actions, timescales and responsibilities. They represented the key aspects for improving learning and developing critical elements, such as innovation and international mindedness. School leaders were in the process of creating appropriate and innovative measures, other than test scores, in order to accurately evaluate the successes of planned initiatives.</li> <li>The school had sustained its high levels of performance. It had successfully begun to improve students' key skills in Arabic and Islamic education. A resource bank of assignments coupled with assessment rubrics closely linked to the Ministry of Education's standards had been created. Teachers in the KG phase were making better use of assessments to plan future learning that would meet the needs of all children.</li> </ul>	

Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents had a large and valuable role in the daily life of the school. All parents were members of the schools' 'Parents Association', volunteering to organize social events. In the school's primary phase, parents visited classes to learn with their child. The school sought systematic feedback from parents through annual surveys and groups were formed to guide developments.</li> <li>The school used a wide range of very effective ways with which to communicate with parents. For example, informative coffee mornings were held regularly by each phase with the explicit purpose of providing opportunities to learn more about educational and social development of children. Many teachers wrote blogs informing parents of the students' learning and future plans.</li> <li>Regular, informative reports were only one way in which parents received information about their children's academic progress. Parents and their children could access current information about student assignments and academic performance through an on-line management system. Many assessments were available for parents to see at home. Information about students' academic targets and personal and social development was reported to a lesser extent.</li> <li>Students were fully involved in the local and national communities through educational visits, sporting competitions, fund raising competitions and cultural events. For example, high school students had created Help the Workers club to support local laborers. There were enriching partnerships with other schools, for example to improve the IB provision and to further develop student leadership programs.</li> </ul>	






Governance	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The governing body contained representatives from most of the school's stakeholders. Through its regular, detailed surveys, the governors gathered data from the parents about aspects of the school's performance. Informal feedback was welcomed by governors, through the open channels of communication with school leaders. As yet, there was no systematized procedure for the school community to contribute their views to inform the decision-making of governors.</li> <li>• Through its structured meeting and detailed reporting procedures, the governing body had an extensive and accurate picture of the school's performance. School leaders were held to account through the governors' close monitoring of key performance indicators and ambitious targets were set to develop opportunities for students even further.</li> <li>• The governing body had access to a wide range of resources to benefit the school. This included facilitating collaboration with other schools on common projects. It was also able, through its economies of scale, to provide cost effective solutions to meet the school's needs. A recent example of this was the provision of a new synthetic surface for the sports field.</li> </ul>	

Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very effective day-to-day management ensured the smooth running of the school. The timetable was carefully constructed to make sure that the best use was made of the time and space available. The school maintained close links with parents, who were kept well informed about school developments and activities.</li> <li>• There were sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to provide a high quality curriculum. They were effectively deployed and ably supported by well-trained education assistants. All teachers and education assistants had access to a suitable range of further professional development opportunities. Staff members, who were new to the school, were provided with a very effective induction program.</li> <li>• The premises were spacious and provided a safe, pleasant place for study and relaxation. However, the school recognised that there were not enough shaded areas for students use at break times. Exceptionally well maintained classrooms, corridors and general spaces, together with high quality facilities for sport and the performing arts, contributed to the stimulating and supportive learning environment.</li> <li>• The school was exceptionally well equipped with high quality specialist teaching rooms, well stocked libraries and other resources, including modern technology. Very effective use was made of these resources to support teaching and learning, and meet the needs of students in all subjects.</li> </ul>	

## The views of the parents, teachers and students

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

Responses to the surveys		
Responses received	Number	
<b>Parents*</b> 	2015-2016	86
	2014-2015	219
<b>Teachers</b> 	118	
<b>Students</b> 	148	

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

- Similar to last year, relatively few parents took part in the survey.
- Of those who responded to the survey, there were very high levels of satisfaction from members of the school community and a high degree of agreement on most of the positive elements of the survey.
- Safety, at school and on the buses, was highly endorsed by all members of the school community. Most students and parents felt that behavior was good, that students were treated fairly and well looked after.
- Most students believed that teaching was good, that teachers used a wide range of resources; including technology and that the curriculum was broad. They were similarly positive about how well they were doing in their curriculum subjects, except for in Arabic as an additional language where only a minority felt that they were making good progress.
- Most parents and student felt very positive about the school leadership and most parents felt that the school listened to their individual views.
- Nearly all teachers agreed they had the DSIB report shared with them and were subsequently involved in school review and evaluation.

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)