

INSPECTION REPORT

Star International School - Al Twar

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School- Al Twar

Location	Al Twar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolaltwar.com
Telephone	04-2638999
Address	PO Box 51008, Dubai
Principal	Durriya Goriawala
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-14 / Foundation Stage to Year 9
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	399
Number of Emirati students	49 (12%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 21st Wednesday 23rd November 2011

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The context of the school

Star International School is situated in Al Twar, close to the Dubai airport. Currently, it has a roll of 397 students, aged three to 14 years. It provides education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage (FS) to Year 9 and follows the English National Curriculum.

There were 34 full-time teachers, including the Principal and other senior leaders. They were supported by 18 teaching assistants from Foundation Stage to Year 2. Students were grouped in 20 classes. Forty-nine students, approximately 12 per cent of the school roll, were Emiratis. Fifty-one nationalities were represented among the student population. At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in her fourth year at the school and 11 teachers were newly appointed.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Star International School Al Twar provided an acceptable quality of education, with some clear strengths. They included the quality of development of students' English, their personal and social development and the school's attention to their protection and support. Teaching and learning were broadly acceptable, although with some good and better practice observed. The school was making clear efforts to achieve consistency of high quality classroom experiences for students. The delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum required further development to focus on child-initiated learning. Parents' awareness of the school's improvement plans was limited.

The school had made acceptable progress towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Leaders at all levels had maintained a good focus on improving the quality of teaching. This had improved aspects of teachers' practice including, for example, strategies for meeting the needs of all students and better assessment. There were additional members on the governing board to broaden representation, but the scope of their involvement was still to be finalised. Senior leaders had not identified clearly enough which aspects of learning they wished to improve, and needed to manage the processes of change more systematically.

Key strengths

- The progressive development of spoken English;
- The improved student performance in Islamic Education and Arabic in the primary phase;
- Students' attainment and progress in secondary science;
- The personal and social development of students, including those with special educational needs;
- The high quality of protection and support given to students;
- The commitment of the Principal, senior leaders and the staff to school improvement.

Recommendations

- Improve the attainment and progress of students in key subjects, as indicated in the report;
- Continue to improve the consistency of quality of teaching and learning across the school;
- Improve the planning and delivery of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage by balancing adult-directed and child-initiated activities;
- Ensure the systematic management of whole-school improvement by senior leaders.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Islamic Education			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
English			
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Attainment in the Foundation Stage was good in English and acceptable in mathematics and science. In the primary years, it was good in Arabic and English and acceptable in the other key subjects. In the secondary phase, attainment was good in English and science, but acceptable in the three other subjects. In Islamic Education, the majority of students could read Qur'anic verses and their knowledge of Islam positively affected their lives. In Arabic as a first language, students showed good listening skills but their writing

was limited. In Arabic as an additional language, speaking and writing skills were less well developed. In English, the majority of students demonstrated speaking skills above curriculum standards for English as an additional language. Students' extended writing skills were developing effectively. In mathematics, students achieved national curriculum levels in line with international standards. Independent investigative skills in science were more evident in secondary than in primary classes.

At the Foundation Stage, progress was good in English and acceptable in the other subjects. In the primary years it was good in all subjects except mathematics and science, where it was acceptable. In secondary years progress was good in English and science and acceptable in the other three subjects. Most students of Islamic Education memorised verses of The Holy Qur'an but they had only limited understanding of the Prophet's life. In Arabic, both as a first and an additional language, the majority of students were not making sufficient progress in extending their speaking and writing skills. In English, students' high levels of spoken English allowed them access to most of the curriculum. In mathematics, sessions were organised to improve the progress of lower attaining students. In secondary science, students made good progress in developing independent investigative skills. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress overall and were well supported by staff members.

Overall, the attainment and progress of Emirati students were acceptable. Their knowledge of The Holy Qur'an and the application of it to their lives was appropriate to their ages. In Arabic, their extended writing skills were less developed, as was the case with their peers. Their overall attainment and progress in English over time was good. In the earlier years their writing in English was less developed. Their attainment and progress in mathematics and science were acceptable. A few Emirati boys in the later stages demonstrated good skills in investigative science.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

Students' personal and social development was good across the school. They were courteous to adults and each other. The school was inclusive and students had very positive attitudes to the cultural diversity with the school. Students formed good relationships, focused on respect and co-operation with their peers. All students were keen to do well in school. The younger students did not always show independent skills, or readily take initiative, for example in school council activities. All students knew about healthy lifestyles. Attendance was outstanding. Most students understood and respected Islamic culture. Students also knew about a range of the traditions and heritage of Dubai society. Students were ready and well-prepared to celebrate the National Day of the U.A.E. Almost all students knew how Dubai had developed and could discuss its place in the UAE and the world. Most students showed care for their school environment and older students could explain how they could take care of environmental resources and reduce pollution.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable throughout the school, but inconsistent. Teachers were very committed, relationships were positive in all classes and lessons were planned well. Most teachers had good subject knowledge. Teachers in Foundation Stage did not yet plan appropriately for child-initiated learning. Although students were often organised into ability groups, teachers often did not meet the learning needs of the higher and lower attaining students. Teachers shared objectives with students to introduce lessons, although they did not sufficiently emphasise skills development. The majority of teachers used questions well, although occasionally they became over extended. Teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) well across the curriculum, although it was not a sufficient part of students' hands-on learning. Students with special educational needs were well taught in withdrawal sessions. The new special educational needs co-ordinator supported teachers in planning for these students. Teaching in other subjects including music, physical education, swimming, French, history and geography was also acceptable. Teachers promoted skill development and collaborative learning.

Learning was acceptable across all phases of the school, but again inconsistent. Students were enthusiastic learners and worked co-operatively. In a few classes, they took responsibility for learning and were actively involved in self and peer assessment. However, in the lower phases of the school, students learned less by discovery or by choice. When students were given opportunities for discovery in the lower grades and in science and mathematics in the higher grades, they demonstrated the skills and confidence to have greater control of their learning. Enquiry learning was particularly strong in secondary science lessons, but less well developed in mathematics. Generally, students' learning skills throughout the curriculum and across the phases were underdeveloped.

Assessment of learning was of acceptable quality overall. In Foundation Stage it was used by teachers to establish profile levels. Elsewhere in the school, teachers used a wide variety of assessment tools linked to national and other curriculum levels, but the school did not analyse the results sufficiently. The school identified students for group support and information on achievement was shared with parents. However, the school did not fully exploit their data to set more specific learning targets for individual students and thus increase learning opportunities. Teachers' marking of work was inconsistent and did not provide clear enough guidance to show students how to improve.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Good	Good

The curriculum was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the primary and secondary phases. The English National Curriculum ensured appropriate continuity and progression across the school and teachers paid good attention to points of transition. Foundation Stage teachers broadly applied curriculum standards but their delivery did not focus sufficiently on child-initiated activities. The curriculum was regularly reviewed and monitored at the whole-school and subject levels. The personal, social and health education programme offered a good range of appropriate topics to students. Across the curriculum, there were various special learning events, such as mathematics and science data days and Arabic week, which enriched students' learning experiences. Students had access to a good range of extra-curricular activities and trips to a variety of places. Community links also enhanced learning. The programmes for Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language lacked sufficient enrichment. The curriculum still lacked appropriately challenging work for higher attaining students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good

The arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. Detailed policies and procedures were in place and all staff members were very caring towards the students. There were well-established safety routines, especially for students using school transport services. The premises were safe and secure. Students were carefully supervised as they moved to lessons and at breaks. Health and hygiene were given a strong priority and thus the buildings and equipment were maintained in very good condition. Chemicals were securely stored in the science laboratory and safety equipment was available for students to wear. The few students with physical disabilities were very well cared for and supported. Fire drills were carried out monthly and fast evacuation times recorded. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely by the nurse in a well-organised clinic. She was supported by a visiting medical doctor. The nurse promoted healthy living, educating on a variety of topics throughout the school. Child protection was regarded as a high priority and the school held awareness-raising classes for students run by the police and an outside agency.

The quality of support given to students was good across the school. Relations between staff members and students were good. Teachers managed behaviour well and students responded positively to them. Older students received appropriate guidance on external examinations and career choices before moving on to other schools. The school provided good care to support all students' personal development. Students with special educational needs, including those with physical and sensory impairment, were well supported in the school. There were well organised systems for identifying and managing their support. Parents were fully involved in creating individual educational plans. Students were well integrated into mainstream classes and learned alongside their peers, with the help and support of teaching assistants. Students with physical or sensory disabilities were supported with appropriate equipment and class teachers received advice from the specially trained co-ordinator. Some students had intensive, individual help on a regular basis in a specialist room, which helped them to make more rapid progress. In classrooms, high attaining students and gifted and talented students were not always sufficiently challenged or guided and at times they underachieved. There were efficient systems for monitoring students' punctuality and attendance, and they resulted in excellent attendance.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was good. The Principal was highly committed to the school and its students and had earned the respect of teachers, students and parents. She and the senior leaders had a clear vision for the school, aiming to ensure that young people achieved their academic potential and developed as rounded individuals. The Principal was ably supported by two senior leaders who demonstrated high levels of skill. The capable Deputy Headteacher took the lead in a number of areas. Other managers and co-ordinators effectively played their parts in improving teaching and learning. The school had set a clear direction for improvement in certain areas, but a systematic approach to managing the processes of change was not evident. The school demonstrated a sound capacity for continuing improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had established a range of ways to evaluate its work and had produced a thorough self-evaluation report. Leaders monitored teachers' plans, evaluated classroom practices and analysed assessment results. These efforts were having a positive impact on the practices of individual teachers. The significant amount of information on hand did not inform next steps in whole-school improvement. The school regularly reviewed the improvement plan.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. There was effective communication between school and parents and they were well-informed about the school and their children's work. Reports on students' progress were regular and linked to opportunities for consultation with teachers. Parents were also well involved in the life of the school and a parents' group was active in a range of supportive ways. Community links were strong. Parents were not well-informed about plans for improvement.

Governance of the school was acceptable. There were clear opportunities for the school to present progress reports during the academic year and for the board to hold leaders accountable. The school was also well supported in a range of expected ways. The board had recently added two further members,

representing parents and outside interests. Their potential role in representing stakeholders was being explored.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school was very efficiently managed. Staff were well qualified and the school had ensured a sound focus on the induction of the significant number of new staff. The premises were well-maintained and provided an attractive learning environment. Resourcing was broadly appropriate. The school did not make full use of the ICT facilities. Teaching assistants did not benefit from appropriately focused training.

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	92	28%
	Last year	50	15%
Teachers	20		57%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

About one quarter of parents responded to the survey, almost twice the number as last year. Over half of the teachers from all sections of the school responded to their survey. Most parents indicated broad satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school. They included among its strengths their child's enjoyment of school, the quality of care, teachers' skills and the leadership of the school. Most teachers had a positive view of the school. Among its strengths, they identified the students' enjoyment of the school, students' attitudes and behaviour and the quality of leadership. A majority of parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, but about a quarter indicated that they did not know. Parents, teachers and students were broadly positive in their views of the school's provision across a range of aspects.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
inspection@khda.gov.ae

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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