

INSPECTION REPORT

Arab Unity School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Arab Unity School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.arabunityschool.com
Telephone	04 288 6226
Address	P O Box 10563, Dubai
Principal	Mrs. Sunita T Budhwani
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-17 / Foundation Stage to Post-16 (Grade 12)
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3340
Largest nationality group of students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	100 (3%)
Date of the inspection	2nd to 6th March 2014

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The context of the school

Arab Unity School, in its fortieth year of operation, is located in Al Mizhar. It is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Post-16, aged three to 17 years. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 3,340 students, predominantly Pakistani; three per cent were Emiratis. The roll had increased by five per cent since the previous year, with 16 per cent of the students new to the school. Thirty-four nationalities were represented among the student population. Almost two per cent of students had been formally identified as having some form of special educational need (SEN).

The school followed the National Curriculum for England, based on the Cambridge International Programme. Students completed the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) in Grade 11 and Advanced Level (AS and A-Level) examinations in one year in Post-16 (Grade 12).

Students were grouped into 127 classes. Nearly half of all students were in the primary phase. Forty per cent of the 216 teachers held a teaching qualification. They were supported by a team of 11 teaching assistants. Around one quarter of the teachers had joined the school in the current academic year.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic in the primary phase;
- The good attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in the Foundation Stage and secondary phase;
- The good teaching in the Foundation Stage, and in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- The good personal and social development across all phases of the school;
- The good provision for health and safety across the school and the quality of support in the Foundation Stage.

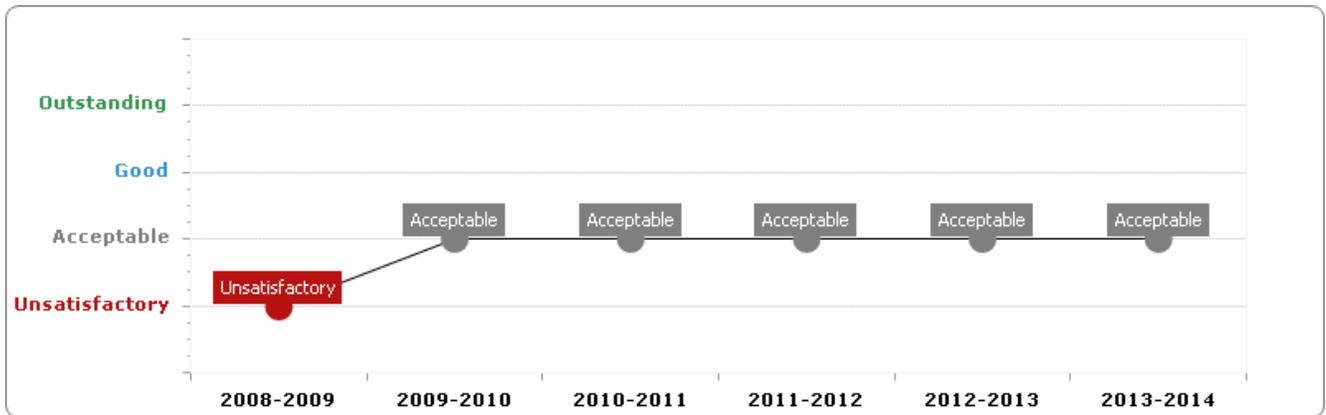
Recommendations

- Provide more effective teaching in the primary phase to improve attainment and progress through targeted support and challenge, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve opportunities for primary and secondary students to develop their learning skills by providing more opportunities in lessons for collaborative activity, independent learning, research and problem solving.
- Improve the accuracy of assessment by benchmarking it against curriculum and international standards, and use the resultant data more effectively to track students' progress and to inform lesson planning.
- Improve self-evaluation and the management of staff performance by analysing relevant school data more accurately to ensure a secure understanding of strengths and key areas for development.
- Modify the post-16 curriculum to ensure senior students have appropriate time to complete A level course requirements.
- Improve classroom provision for SEN students, including the gifted and talented, to accelerate their progress.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improved attainment in secondary Islamic Education and primary Arabic as a second language;
- Improved quality of teaching in the secondary phase;
- Improved provision for health and safety across all phases.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

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	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	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
Parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, attainment was good in the primary and secondary phases, and acceptable in post-16. In primary, students showed strong knowledge of the history of early Islam and migration of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and his companions from Makkah to Medina. Holy Qur'an recitation and memorisation skills were acceptable across the school. Attainment in Arabic as a first and additional language was good in the primary phase and acceptable elsewhere. In Arabic as a first language, primary students had good reading and writing skills. Listening skills were very well developed across all phases, but speaking skills varied widely. Many students in primary and secondary phases had weak skills in spelling and extended writing. In Arabic as an additional language, primary students had well-developed script shaping and decoding skills. Secondary students had good listening and pronunciation and had an adequate range of vocabulary. Primary students were better at using their vocabulary to construct sentences than secondary students. Attainment in Foundation Stage English was good because children could read and write simple sentences. In primary, it was acceptable with evidence of improvement in reading skills as a result of the recently introduced reading skills programme. In secondary and post-16, good attainment was reflected in the strong performance in IGCSE over the past three years. Attainment in mathematics was good in the Foundation Stage and secondary, and acceptable in primary and post-16 phases. Students in Grade 11 were achieving consistently high grades in IGCSE. Attainment in science was good in the Foundation Stage and secondary phase and acceptable in primary and post-16 phases. Foundation Stage children could describe and classify objects and animals. In primary, students found it challenging to link practical activities with theory. In secondary, students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of main concepts in science in their discussions, presentations and laboratory work. Attainment in examinations was consistently good at IGCSE but results in post-16 A level exams were disappointing last year in both science and mathematics.

The judgements for students' progress were almost exactly the same as for their attainment, except in post-16 mathematics and science, where progress was good. In Islamic Education, students in primary and secondary were able to develop strong links between what they learnt in lessons and their own life. They made good progress in the Holy Qur'an recitation. In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students made steady progress in listening. In primary, most students made good progress in developing their reading and basic writing skills. In secondary and post-16, most students made adequate progress in learning vocabulary and developing their understanding of literature. However, a significant proportion of students made limited progress in developing their basic writing skills and the ability to read and analyse texts independently. In Arabic as an additional language, secondary students made steady progress in listening and learning new vocabulary. However, they made limited progress in communicating their ideas. In the Foundation Stage, progress in English was good from low starting points. In primary, progress was no better

than acceptable because writing skills were not as developed as reading and speaking. In secondary and Post-16, there was evidence of well-developed English skills. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children were achieving above age expected levels from low attainment on entry. Across the school, students developed good skills in number and algebra but were less successful in developing data handling and measurement. In science, progress was strongest in Grades 8 to 9. Progress in post-16 mathematics and science was good.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good in the Foundation Stage and post-16, and acceptable in the primary and secondary phases. Students enjoyed learning and took responsibility for their own learning whenever they were offered the opportunity. In post-16, students took initiative, used information and communication technology (ICT) in science, and demonstrated high levels of thinking skills when debating in English. Foundation Stage children demonstrated an encouraging work ethic and were motivated to learn. Across all phases, most students collaborated well in a range of learning situations whenever they were given meaningful choices and involved in their learning as partners. However, students were not practised enough in solving problems. In some classes students were too dependent on the teacher and were not always able to think critically and apply their learning to everyday situations.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's personal and social development was good in all aspects. Most students had positive attitudes and behaviour, and were confident and self-reliant. Almost all were courteous to peers and adults alike and well behaved in and out of lessons. There was a general awareness of healthy living and lifestyles; in the Foundation Stage, lunch boxes were monitored regularly for healthy options. Overall attendance was good and was best in the Foundation Stage. Late arrival in the morning was a feature across the phases; this diminished opportunities to participate in the rich learning opportunities presented by their peers in assemblies.

Most students demonstrated a good level of understanding of Islamic values and local cultural and global awareness. Students, particularly in the secondary and post-16 phases, knew the relevance of Islamic influences on people's lifestyles in the UAE. Students across the school were aware of the UAE's history and development. UAE National Day was celebrated across the school with great pride and enthusiasm. Students had a good appreciation of their own culture and the variety of other cultures from around the world. They

showed tolerance and global commitment to promote harmonious relationships among students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Most students were responsible members of their school community. They made their voice heard at school through their active student council. They considered their school a pleasant and safe place to be in. They participated in projects that had a positive impact on the local community as they donated books, food items and money to the poor. They had a positive work ethic that had hard work at its heart and had no place for cheating or other unethical means. Students' knowledge and understanding of global environmental issues varied across the school, but many students were able to suggest methods that helped protect the environment such as car-pooling, using the metro and increasing dependence on renewable sources of energy.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and in the secondary and post-16 phases; it was acceptable in the primary phase. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge and structured their lessons well with clear lesson objectives which were shared with students. However, teachers did not always follow these plans closely enough, especially in the primary phase, and sometimes omitted good features, such as opportunities for enquiry and critical thinking. Most lessons had engaging starter activities with visually attractive, digitally-projected images and text. There was a strong emphasis on consolidating knowledge but too often at the expense of opportunities to extend students' understanding. In science, teachers planned lessons to cater for the different abilities of students, but this was not a common practice elsewhere. Apart from in English lessons, teachers' questioning skills were underdeveloped; teachers were too reliant on closed questions that did not encourage students to think and explain answers. Teachers, particularly in primary, did not always organise classrooms for effective group work and did not provide sufficient resources. In non-key subjects, the teaching seen was acceptable overall. Some good teaching was seen in post-16 ICT where students were encouraged to work independently on challenging tasks.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in primary, secondary and post-16 phases. A regular assessment programme was in place that enabled staff to know the strengths and weaknesses of their students. In the Foundation Stage, assessment was based on the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and children's development and progress were accurately monitored. Teachers used this information to support their lesson planning. School leaders had introduced a new tracking system with a three year record of attainment that made it possible to track the progress of individuals and groups, including Emiratis and those with special educational needs. However, school assessments were based on a combination of different measures most of which were not aligned with international and curriculum

standards. Expectations and challenge in these assessments were too low. There was little evidence of assessment data in the higher phases being used to modify the curriculum or support lesson planning. Recent assessment innovations had not had time to impact on the quality of teaching to improve students' learning and progress.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in other phases. The Foundation Stage planning covered all areas of learning experience well. In the rest of the school, although planning was intended to develop learning skills, to enhance links across subjects and to promote investigative and critical thinking skills, this was not sufficiently reflected in the lessons observed. There were many opportunities for students to extend their learning and interests through a broad range of extra-curricular activities. In the post-16 phase, some learning took place within local community settings, which developed students' skills of creativity and enterprise. The curriculum was not regularly reviewed as part of the school's self-evaluation processes. There was insufficient action to modify curriculum to better meet the needs of all students. Recent curriculum innovation had yet to have a consistent impact upon students' learning. The post-16 curriculum did not offer the breadth of learning experience and skills acquisition to support successful integration in higher education and employment.

The curriculum design was acceptable across all phases. It was planned so that most students were adequately engaged in learning. In some lessons, there were activities planned to cater for students' abilities, including those with special educational needs. However, at times these activities were not appropriately targeted and teachers did not provide the necessary resources to support learning. Students became over-dependent on the teacher. In withdrawal lessons for students with special educational needs, individual plans were used but progress was just acceptable because activities lacked practical application. There were very few challenging activities for gifted and talented students. The curriculum for post-16 students was largely science-based. This restricted opportunities for all students to have appropriate choices to meet their individual talents and needs.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The procedures for ensuring students' health and safety were good. Fire drills were held regularly and detailed records were kept of key health, safety and maintenance requirements. Campus security was sufficient and effective. School buses operated efficiently and met required standards. During the inspection,

arrangements for traffic management were effective. Access for students with physical disability was available through an elevator in Taher Hall and ramp access elsewhere. Comprehensive provision for healthy living was available, including regular health and weight checks through the school clinics and healthy food choices in the canteen. A child protection policy was supported by recent staff training and strong relationships between students, class teachers and counsellors. The surface of the outdoor playing area in the boys' section was a cause of concern.

The quality of support was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable elsewhere. Staff-student relationships were generally strong. Teachers were friendly, helpful and understanding. Staff knew students well and were generally aware of their individual needs. Behaviour rules were well adhered to except in the primary phase, particularly in Grade 5 boys classes. The school kept accurate records of attendance and parents were contacted immediately if a student failed to arrive when expected. The school had recently devised detailed procedures to identify students with special educational needs (SEN) on entry to the school. The SEN team, all with relevant expertise, led this process and informed teachers about individual needs. However, the support in lessons was not specific enough to address individual needs sufficiently. Consequently, SEN students made only acceptable progress. Members of staff were available to offer advice and guidance, in confidence, on a range of personal and academic matters.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was good. The school was purposefully led by the Principal, with strong support from a range of middle managers, who shared and actively promoted the school's vision. The school had achieved some initial success in improving its performance. Clear role descriptions supported those with delegated responsibilities. Professional relationships were strong. Senior leadership meetings were regular and agendas were suitably focused on school improvement. Almost all middle leaders demonstrated commitment to the school ethos, to improvement and they had a developing awareness of what was required of them. However, the leadership role in some curriculum areas was not clear enough to ensure consistent, effective practice.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. Self-evaluation processes included staff consultation and analysis of data; however, data often suffered from a lack of validity and reliability. This resulted in an over-optimistic view of students' attainment and progress. The school improvement plan was based upon the previous DSIB inspection report recommendations and provided pathways towards improvement goals. The school had made adequate progress in meeting the majority of the previous recommendations, but the recommended reading programme was in its early stages of development. Staff

performance management arrangements were comprehensive, but lacked the necessary links to students' learning outcomes.

Relationships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents expressed a positive view of the school. There was an active Advisory Board comprising parents, staff, student leaders and members of the business and educational community. It included a school improvement team and a community engagement team and was beginning to support the development of the school. However, it had not played a role in the school's self-evaluation or improvement planning, nor did it have direct access to the Governors. Communication with parents had been strengthened by the inclusion of a portal for parental access to student's progress data, academic work and informative academic reports. The school's links within the wider community were beginning to be developed with a few additional school trips, visiting speakers, involvement in competitions and community volunteer work.

Governance was acceptable. The Governing Board included a small number of Directors, who had high expectations of the school. They had an active presence in the school, but were not involved its self-evaluation or improvement planning. They received regular reports about school performance from the Principal but there was insufficient rigour in holding the school to account for its results or actions. Governors had supported the purchase of new resources for the school, including additional ICT equipment and the development of a purpose-built canteen and hall.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was acceptable. There were efficient daily operations. Timetables made good use of space and time. The school community was adequately informed of developments and activities at the school. The turnover of staff hindered the school's efforts to provide continuity and to improve provision. The professional development of teachers did not have enough structure and was not based enough on evaluations of their classroom performance. The premises and the facilities provided a pleasant environment suited for most curricular and extra-curricular activities, but the new assembly building had yet to be fully utilised. The school library did not contain sufficient resources to support research or enough novels to foster reading for pleasure. There were insufficient ICT resources available to promote students' independent investigations.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were 100 Emirati students in the school at the time of the inspection. Their attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education and acceptable in Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Their reading skills were better developed than their writing skills. This was especially so in the primary phase. In science they were able to acquire knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts using hands-on activities. The

students had good attitudes and behaviour. The curriculum provided a sound basis for study of key subjects but there were limited opportunities for creative and physical activities. Emirati students were offered the opportunity to meet and speak with successful Emirati role models in business to emphasise the importance of education to career aspirations. The school had good links with the parents of Emirati students and met them regularly.

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

Progress for students with special educational needs (SEN) was acceptable across the school although the quality of provision was variable. The school identified these students within a few months of admission, and classified them using the DSIB criteria. A small number of parents were reluctant to acknowledge that their child had a specific learning difficulty and very few identified students were externally assessed. Assessments were analysed to help devise individual education plans for students. Parents were involved at all stages. Meetings were arranged regularly to discuss their child's progress and provide regular advice on practical ways to support their child. In school, SEN students had 'Brain Gym' each morning. In a few lessons, activities were planned that closely matched their individual learning needs, so they were able to work with limited support. However, this was not the case in most lessons throughout the school. Teachers overall did not modify the curriculum sufficiently to address their individual needs. There were limited resources to support SEN students in lessons. The school was just beginning to identify its gifted and talented students.

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

Most teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge. Their presentations in lessons were mostly clear and confident. In their lesson planning, they set learning objectives for students, but these were not always linked clearly to linguistic outcomes. Most teachers used an adequate range of resources, including ICT, to enhance learning. Primary teachers were more successful in engaging a large number of students in their learning and set work with appropriate levels of challenge for all students. The amount of independent reading and writing work given to students to do independently was variable. It was limited in secondary and post-16 phases where learners were mostly reliant on the teacher. The school curriculum was based on the Ministry of Education standards, but the planning was too strictly based on the content of the prescribed textbooks. There was excessive focus on curriculum coverage rather than matching work to meet the students' language needs. In the secondary and post-16 phases, the curriculum provided insufficient opportunities for students to develop their writing, spelling and vocabulary in standard Arabic.

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	367	20%
	Last year	601	29%
Teachers	51		24%
Students	122		22%

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

A minority of parents, teachers and students responded to their surveys this year. Almost all parents were happy with the quality of education provided in the school. Most felt their child was making good progress in English, mathematics and science, and enjoyed being at school. Most parents and students, and almost all teachers reported that students were safe and well looked after at school but not as many parents and students thought that buses were safe. Almost all parents considered that the school reports were regular and teachers' meetings helpful but students were less positive. A majority of parents reported that the school provided appropriate guidance in future educational and career choices, but a much smaller percentage of the students agreed with this view. Over half the students, a similar percentage to last year, did not agree that the school leaders listened to their opinions about the school. A majority of students agreed that teaching and learning in the school were good, with most teachers and parents reporting that they felt that the school was well led. Teachers were very positive about the operation of the school.

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

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