

INSPECTION REPORT

Arab Unity School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Arab Unity School

Location	Al Mizhar 1
Type of school	Private
Website	www.arabunityschool.com
Telephone	04-2886226/7
Address	PO Box 10563, Rashidiya, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Mrs. Sunita T. Budhwani
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	3,222
Number of Emirati students	120 (4%)
Date of the inspection	18th to 22nd March 2012

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The context of the school

The Arab Unity School, located in Al Mizhar 1, is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage (FS) to Post-16, aged three to 17 years. The school serves a multi-national community of students, predominantly Asian students. The school follows the English National Curriculum, leading to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations in Year 11 and Advanced Level (GCE) examinations in Year 12. The Principal had been in post for just over one year at the time of inspection.

At the time of the inspection there were 185 teachers, of whom approximately 40 per cent had a teaching qualification. The school had a high turnover of teachers, with high numbers of recently appointed and recently qualified teachers on staff. At the time of the inspection, there were 3,222 students on roll. Approximately four per cent of the students were Emirati. Student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Arab Unity School provided an acceptable level of education to students. The school aspired “to provide quality education at an affordable price through progressive teaching methods and advanced technology,” but teaching methods were not progressive and technology was under-used in spite of classrooms having projectors and teachers having laptops. Parents and students reported high levels of teacher turnover, which had affected the quality of teaching especially in the primary and secondary phases. Nonetheless, the school had improved in a number of areas as a result of the determined and dedicated leadership of the Principal and the senior supervisors.

There had been improvements in the attainment and progress of students in English, mathematics and science in the post-16 phase. Students’ attitudes and behaviour were better than reported at the last inspection. Teaching and learning had improved in the Foundation Stage and post-16 phase, although it remained of acceptable quality in the primary and secondary phases. The Foundation Stage was a

particular strength of the school, with a significant number of good features as a result of strong leadership and a focus on teaching and assessment. Overall, the quality of leadership was good and school leaders showed a commitment to, and the capacity for, further improvement.

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress by students in English, mathematics and science in the Foundation Stage and in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- Students' positive attitudes to learning and their good personal and social development;
- The good quality of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum in the Foundation Stage;
- The committed and determined leadership of the Principal and the senior supervisors.

Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Ensure that teaching meets the needs of all students by:
 - Using assessment accurately and effectively;
 - Identifying and meeting the needs of students with special education needs;
 - Providing appropriate challenge for all students in their learning;
 - Improving the recruitment, retention and training of teachers;
- Ensure the safety of all students at the end of the school day;
- Ensure that self-evaluation is accurate and focuses on the priorities for improvement;
- Allow parents, teachers and students to have a greater say in the development of the school.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

Students' attainment was acceptable overall in the key subjects. It was good in the Foundation Stage and post-16, and acceptable in the Primary and Secondary phases. Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable as the majority of students memorised short sections of the Surat. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable, but good for learners of Arabic as a first language, wherein students' speaking and listening skills were well-developed. Attainment in Arabic as a first language in the primary phase was good as children could read common words and simple sentences. In mathematics, young children could use comparative language for shape, space and measures. Attainment in English was good and had improved across all areas of language since the last inspection. Attainment in mathematics and science were good except in the primary phase, where it was acceptable as a result of insufficient practical, investigative and enquiry work. It was good in the post-16 phase, where these skills were given a greater priority.

Students' overall progress in the key subjects was good in the Foundation Stage and post-16, and acceptable in the primary and secondary grades. Progress in Islamic Education was good but students' recitation skills remained weak. In Arabic, students made acceptable progress although this was good in Primary especially in listening and the use of extended vocabulary. Children entered the school with very limited English skills but, by the Foundation Stage, most had a simple command of English and a good range of vocabulary. As their communication skills improved, so did their understanding of numerical and scientific skills. There were insufficient opportunities to develop problem-solving in mathematics and inconsistencies in the curriculum in science, which impeded progress. In English, progress was good across all areas of language. The progress of students with special educational needs was acceptable overall, but good in English.

The attainment of Emirati students was generally in line with those of their peers, with decreasing proportions of students present in the higher grades. The progress of Emirati students was good and they said that they benefitted from the disciplined learning environment in the school.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners and enjoyed positive and productive relationships with their teachers. Most understood the need to keep healthy and showed a commitment to healthy eating, including the importance of physical activities. Students' attendance during the last full term was acceptable. Most students across the school had a clear understanding of Islam and its impact on their lives and on society. The majority of students had good understanding of the traditions and culture of Dubai. They could describe some of its main sporting activities, local food and traditions. Students valued and respected the multicultural nature of Dubai. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding were good. Students understood that Dubai had developed very rapidly and older students were able to articulate the reasons for this. Almost all students showed an awareness of the school community but they were less engaged with the local community and their understanding of environmental issues was not sufficiently developed.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was good in the Foundation Stage and post-16 phase, but acceptable in the primary and secondary phases. In the Foundation Stage, teaching facilitated active and collaborative learning. In the Primary and Secondary lessons, the focus on building knowledge limited students' opportunities to develop skills and deeper understanding of concepts. Teaching in the primary and secondary phases was dominated by the use of textbooks and lectures so that students had few opportunities to work collaboratively, share their thinking and discuss challenging questions. When students were given different tasks they were sometimes not matched to their needs; either the task was too difficult or else it offered too little challenge. In the higher grades, teachers had good knowledge of the requirements of external exams and planned their teaching to rapidly build students' confidence and knowledge. This meant that students made good progress. The quality of teaching in subjects other than key subjects was acceptable overall.

The quality of students' learning was good in the Foundation Stage and post-16, but acceptable in the primary and secondary phases. Students across the school were keen to learn. They were well organised, they listened carefully and they completed their work on time. They cooperated respectfully with their teachers and worked well together. When given opportunities they were eager to ask questions and share their own experiences, ideas and opinions. These skills were stronger in the upper part of the school. Independent learning, as well as critical and creative thinking skills were not sufficiently developed, because teachers did not plan time for activities that promoted them.

Similarly, the assessment of learning was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the rest of the school. Assessment in the Foundation Stage was consistent and effective, ensuring that children's progress was carefully tracked and information was used well to plan for the range of learners' needs. Notes were

made during or after lessons and were used by the teachers to record children's progress against identified objectives. Teachers knew individual children very well and so provided good support to facilitate good learning. Assessment in the rest of the school was acceptable and teachers had secure knowledge of student's strengths and weaknesses, which they were beginning to use to plan for learning. However, assessment was inconsistent and many students did not routinely receive information about their work or how to improve it. Marking was irregular and brief. Teachers did not consistently use assessment data to check the attainment and progress of individuals and groups.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was based on the English National curriculum model, supplemented by Arabic and Islamic Education provision which exceeded the UAE Ministry of Education requirements. The curriculum was planned in detail to ensure steady progression across all areas. The Foundation Stage curriculum was good because it was rich in relevant experiences. This curriculum had been adapted in response to children's changing needs following regular staff evaluations. Elsewhere, the curriculum did not cater sufficiently for students of all abilities, including students with special educational needs. Transition between the Foundation Stage and Primary lacked continuity and this slowed students' progress in the lower grades. An appropriate range of subjects was offered, with some choice for older students. Students' personal and social development were promoted well through the curriculum. Links between subjects continued to develop, for example, the students' application of numeracy skills within economics. A few opportunities were offered for research, enquiry and critical thinking but these were not consistent across subjects. Students had access to extra-curricular activities and out-of-school visits, including voluntary community service at the Post-16 phase.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Provision for students' health and safety was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the other phases. Maintenance issues were well documented and acted upon. Fire evacuation procedures were comprehensive. Students' physical and emotional health was effectively monitored by the school doctor, nurses and the counsellor. The medical staff rigorously monitored the hygiene in food storage areas and the cleanliness of the building and toilets. A focus on healthy lifestyles was a positive feature of the school, with fruit and salad available for sale at break time. The procedures for students using school transport were well managed. The private car collection arrangements at the end of the school day for most students were ineffective and potentially hazardous.

The quality of support for students was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. Relationships between teachers and students were positive and respectful, especially in the Foundation Stage where children's well-being was a high priority. Behaviour was carefully monitored and those with behavioural needs were well supported by the counsellor in liaison with parents. Counsellors were also responsible for special needs support and careers advice. Students with special educational needs were admitted to the school but their specific needs were not always known to teachers. In the Foundation Stage, special educational needs arrangements were well managed. Staff members had received basic training about different types of learning needs but strategies to support such students were not sufficiently well developed. The school had adequate systems in place to support attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good overall. The Principal provided committed and determined leadership, which was clearly focused on raising students' attainment. She had a clear vision for the school which was shared by competent supervisors and whose work was clearly focused on improving teaching. The leadership and direction provided by middle managers was less effective, as they did not understand their roles or were recently appointed. Teachers showed commitment to the ethos of the school but turnover was high and a significant minority of teachers was dissatisfied with the conditions of service. Leadership and management in the school were not complacent about the need for further improvements, as evidenced in their response to the recommendations of the last inspection report. The school demonstrated good capacity for further improvements.

Self-evaluation of and by the school was acceptable. The Principal and her senior team had a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. In particular, leaders were aware of the quality of teaching and their views were confirmed by the inspection team. Action plans and improvement plans were extensive, but they failed to focus sufficiently on priorities. The school had made significant progress addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

The quality of partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. There were some established links with parents through the Parents Forum, but their engagement in decision making was limited and they did not have formal representation on the Advisory Board. Links with the wider community were under-developed.

Governance of the school was acceptable. There was a governing body comprising the owners of the school and a separate advisory board, comprising members representing a range of professions and expertise. The advisory board included representation from a range of stakeholders but did not seek or act

upon the views of parents, teachers and students. The governing body and advisory board ensured that statutory requirements were met. The school was accountable for its performance but not for ensuring that it met its commitment to parents.

The management of the school's procedures and practices were acceptable and the school ran effectively. Almost all teachers were suitably qualified but turnover was high, affecting teaching quality and the effectiveness of training. Classrooms were wireless-enabled and equipped with data projectors. All teachers had been issued with laptop computers but they were under-used. The premises were adequate, although teaching resources were limited, particularly in the primary phase.

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 judgments. 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	690	34%
	Last year	758	35%
Teachers	85		45%
Students	166		32%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey; slightly fewer responses this year than last year. Most agreed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, with the exception of Arabic. Almost all parents said their children enjoyed schools, enjoyed lessons, were well looked after and safe in school and on the buses. They agreed that the school was well led and kept them informed. Almost all parents agreed that reports and parent-teacher meetings were regular and helpful. A minority of teachers responded to their survey. Their views were broadly supportive of the school although a few written responses raised issues over the school's concern for their welfare and well-being. About a third of the senior secondary students responded to their survey. Most said that their lessons were good but a minority disagreed. They agreed that the school had improved since last year.

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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