

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai Scholars Private School

Report published in April, 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Scholars Private School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaischolars.com
Telephone	04-2988892
Address	P.O. Box 2819, Al Qusais Dubai
Principal	APARNA YASHPAL VERMA
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1592
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	28th October to 31st October

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## The context of the school

The Dubai Scholars Private School is situated in Al Qusais, and caters for male and female students from Kindergarten through to Grade 13. The school had 1592 students on roll in 59 classes. A fifth of all students were in the kindergarten age range. Fourteen nationalities were represented with sixty-seven per cent being Indian. There were no Emiratis on roll.

The school followed the National Curriculum for England from Grade 1 through the primary and secondary phases leading to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examination at the end of the secondary phase. A few students entered the General Certificate of Secondary (GCE) Advanced level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum was followed in the Kindergarten.

The staff included 102 teachers and a senior leadership team, seven teaching assistants and a large administration and ancillary support team. The school had created a new position of Director of Academic Affairs and was actively seeking to recruit a Vice-principal, another new post. Almost all teachers held a first degree, and a majority held a recognised teaching qualification. Just over ten per cent of teachers had joined the school in the current academic year.

Less than 7 per cent of students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN). These were supported by a team of four specialist SEN members of staff.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Excellent encouragement of personal and social development within a supportive school ethos;
- Primary and secondary students' outstanding attainment and progress in English and mathematics;
- Good attainment and progress in Islamic Education;
- Students' excellent behaviour, self-assurance and good manners;
- The positive and supportive relationships both between students and students and staff.

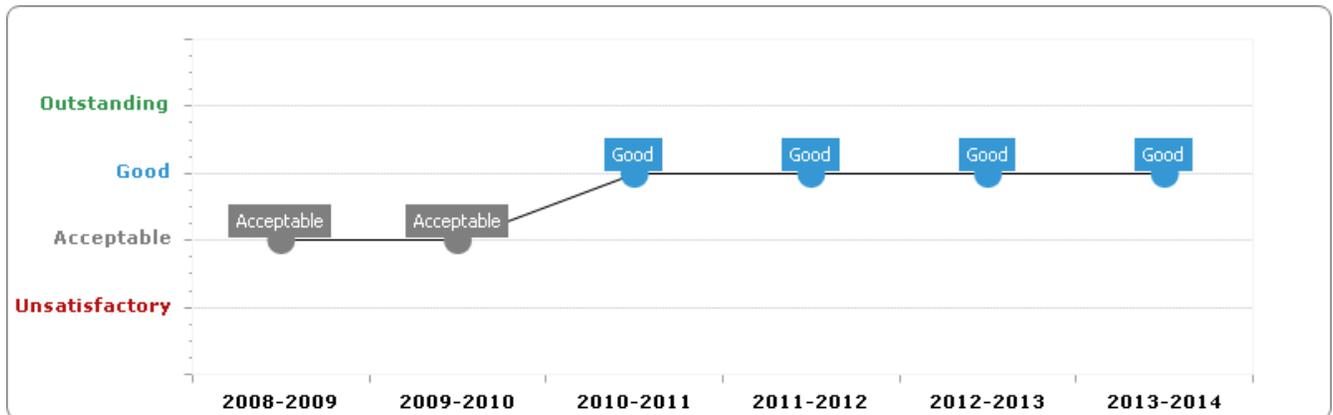
### Recommendations

- Improve students' speaking and writing skills in Arabic as an additional language, particularly in the primary phase;
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the Kindergarten by establishing a shared awareness and implementation of quality practice in the Early Years;
- Develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and relevant skills both in the classroom and specialist facility;
- Develop the teaching and learning strategies to provide further challenge for the more able, and improve the consistency of support for students with special educational needs (SEN).

## Progress since the last inspection

The post-16 timetable had been adapted to ensure that Grade 12 students studied Islamic Education and achieved good attainment and progress. The lessons took place outside the formal timetable periods. As a result of effective staff development and the implementation of new practices, the quality of assessment in the primary phase had improved. Students' results were compared internationally and against the expected levels of attainment according to the National Curriculum for England. The self-evaluation process had become more widely distributed among the school's middle leaders. They, along with members of their teams, were engaged in lesson observation activities and had a direct input into action planning. Focused professional development activities had started to impact positively on leaders' evaluative skills, for example lesson observations and work scrutiny.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, most students had a well-developed understanding of Islamic values and what it meant to be a Muslim. They had good understanding of how to apply this in their everyday lives. Recitation of The Holy Qur'an was variable in quality but overall acceptable. The development of speaking skills across the school varied and was limited to repeating familiar phrases. Listening skills were good as students responded appropriately to teachers' daily instructions and questions. Reading skills were also secure across most grades. Writing skills were less developed. In English, students' attainment in speaking and listening was exceptional in Primary and Secondary. Students engaged in lively and complex discussions, and written work was presented in a variety of genre with an increasing emphasis on creative writing. The students were avid readers, enjoying literature as diverse as Shakespeare and JK Rowling. Attainment in mathematics was overall acceptable in Kindergarten although the children were strong in number activities. It was outstanding in Primary and Secondary as students were able to develop a deeper understanding of concepts through investigation and problem solving. IGCSE results were consistently outstanding with almost all students achieving a Grade A\*/A at the end of Secondary. Kindergarten children could talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another for example the natural habitats of animals they had seen during a visit to the zoo. Post-16 students engaged in good practical analytical chemistry, demonstrating safe, competent and knowledgeable working. They moved on to a good understanding of gene mutation and its 'role' as the source of variation for evolution.

Most students progressed well in their understanding of Islamic history. They developed their understanding of how the early history of Islamic is linked to some current events. In Arabic as additional language, most students made good progress in language development in the secondary phase. Primary phase students made only acceptable progress, particularly in speaking and writing. Most students developed an age appropriate range of Arabic vocabulary. From a broadly average entry point, progress in English was acceptable in Kindergarten and then rapid in Primary and Secondary. Students made substantial gains in their vocabulary and their understanding of grammar. They used and applied their increasing knowledge competently in their writing. Outstanding progress in mathematics throughout the primary and secondary phases resulted in commendable performances in external assessments. Although A-level results were disappointing, students made good progress at the post-16 stage. Progress in their understanding of science accelerated in the secondary school.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was acceptable in Kindergarten. Learners in this phase were cooperative and the majority could work independently when given opportunities to initiate activities or discussion. Elsewhere in the school, learning skills were good. In many subjects students researched and worked independently and in groups. They developed good interpersonal and learning skills, although this was less developed in Arabic lessons. Limited access to high quality ICT provision in the school hampered learning development. Most students were eager and respectful learners, confident and articulate in presenting their work. They asked questions to clarify and deepen their understanding. In the better lessons, learning was improved by an emphasis on enquiry and critical thinking skills.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were exemplary. Students demonstrated a high level of maturity and sense of personal responsibility. They were self-disciplined, considerate and showed care for each other as part of a wider 'family'. They were confident and enjoyed excellent relationships with each other and with staff, to whom they were very respectful. They enjoyed coming to school and this was reflected in their good attendance. Students were very knowledgeable of what they needed to do to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and regularly participated in activities to promote healthy living. Students demonstrated a strong understanding, appreciation of and respect for Islam and its values. They valued the local heritage and Emirati cultural identity, which was promoted through activities and trips. They celebrated events such as the National Day whilst fully appreciating their own cultural roots. Students had a mature understanding of cultural diversity and showed respect for each other's religious and cultural differences. They understood their responsibilities as members of the school community and took on key roles. The Student Council was enthusiastic and participated in community-related activities within the school. They developed projects very successfully to raise awareness about breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Students showed considerable care for their school and sought ways of improving the environment, for example through the re-cycling project. They had successfully taken initiatives to raise funds for various charitable causes including assistance for natural disaster victims, sponsored education for children in India and promoted the 'Make Poverty History' project. Almost all students had an excellent work ethic.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in all other phases. Most teachers showed good understanding of their subjects and appropriate understanding of how students learn. They shared learning objectives with students and used real world applications to add relevance. Better lessons were characterised by effective planning, and a challenging pace with good interactive behaviour management techniques. A range of activities to cater for different learning styles, and high expectations were a feature of the more effective teaching. A similar pattern was seen in humanities and ICT. Arabic teaching tended to be over directed, not targeted at the needs of varying groups of students in the classes. In Kindergarten classes the planning of purposeful activities to allow learning through play was underdeveloped.

Assessment was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in other phases where it was closely aligned to National Curriculum for England levels and exam course requirements. Assessment data were collected and was used effectively to monitor students' progress, set targets and report to parents. Analysis of assessment data informed curriculum planning and enabled teachers to plan effectively targeted work in lessons to meet students' needs across the ability ranges. In a majority of classrooms, probing open-ended questioning clarified learning and provided teachers with insights into their students' knowledge and understanding. In a minority of lessons, closed questioning and questions directed at the whole class did not provide sufficient challenge. In a minority of lessons self and peer review by students using rubrics enhanced their learning. A majority of teachers marked work and tests regularly and informed students of their levels of attainment. However written guidance to students on how to improve was under-developed.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten although it was unbalanced and lacked a structured, cross-curricular and practical approach. In other phases, the curriculum was good. Staff worked well together to review and improve various aspects of the curriculum in the light of students' outcomes, resulting in more opportunities for academic improvement. Recent innovations included more planned opportunities for critical thinking and a more cross-curricular approach within the planning. These improvements made learning more meaningful. Overall, effective planning ensured continuity and progression in the skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects. This prepared students for their next class or phase within the school. In Arabic in the primary phase there was insufficient progression planned and the time allocation was too short. Students visited hospitals, special schools and homes for the elderly to perform musical and dramatic productions. Enrichment opportunities, including sport, swimming, and creative arts were available at

weekends. Visits to local places of interest were planned throughout the year to enhance the curriculum and place learning in context.

The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of the majority of the students in classes and was acceptable across the school. Modifications to match the needs of students of differing abilities were referred to in planning documents but not always carried out in lessons. In better learning settings, there was recognition of differing abilities and some students were supported by classmates or by the teacher offering extra help. Those with above average abilities were given extra work but not at a more challenging level. There was some choice in subjects for older students, but this was generally dependent on the number of students opting for the same choice. Students could opt out of science in Grade 9 to 11.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's provision to ensure the health, safety and security of the students was good. Arrangements for fire drills, evacuation and incidents were documented with timely checks. Buildings and equipment were well-maintained and toilets were hygienic. Relevant medical records were in place. A range of physical activities, extra-curricular sport and the promotion of a healthy diet combined to enhance the students' overall physical well-being. Students were supervised throughout the day in all areas of the school. The arrival and departure of cars and buses at the beginning and end of the day was managed well. Child protection arrangements were in place.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Relationships between teachers and students were respectful. Behaviour was managed consistently throughout the school. Attendance and punctuality were valued at all levels and promoted adequately. Students with moderate special education needs had been accepted into the school, with support continuing to evolve at class teacher and specialist-teacher level. Information on the identified needs of the students had been shared with school personnel. Some Individualised Education Plans (IEPS) had been produced, and parents could share in reviews of their children's progress. A structured process for the identification of students with special educational needs, support, monitoring and review had started and was at its initial development stage. Students were supported by a variety of staff and had access to a counsellor as required.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership in the school was good. Senior and middle leaders demonstrated a good capacity to deliver further improvements. Roles and responsibilities were defined clearly and effective teams were developing. These contributed to on-going school review and improvement. The school was well managed and effective organisational systems meant that communication was good across the school. New website initiatives were aimed at improving liaison with parents and the broader community. Subject leaders increasingly led initiatives and managed these effectively, developing their detailed understanding and application of international standards.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior staff, middle leaders and coordinators carried out lesson observations to evaluate and help improve teaching. They identified common messages and developed new priorities within the school's overall development plan and detailed action plans. Reviews of lessons and work scrutiny increasingly focussed on the quality of attainment or progress of students, not just teaching. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnerships with parents were good. There were effective communication systems with parents, including reports. Parents were kept informed through home-school diaries, which were valued by parents as a regular means of communication. Some links with the community were established which supported the aspects of the curriculum. The Parents' Council provided a formal communication channel to the school leaders and governance. Parents commented that their views were listened to, but they were unclear about the impact they had achieved in terms of influencing the actions of senior leaders and governors.

Governance was good. The Governing Board comprised of stakeholders representing the interests of the parents, business community and ownership. The governors supported school events but did not have a formal arrangement for individual members to focus on key aspects of the school, for example the curriculum. They were keen supporters of professional development for the teaching staff. The board members held the school's leadership accountable. They had monitored examination results and participated in the introduction of a Development Plan. The governors had approved the appointment of the Director of Academic Affairs, from September 2013, to drive the school's improvement programmes.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were of good quality. The school's administration ensured smooth day to day operations. Almost all teaching staff were adequately qualified and, with the exception of the Arabic teachers, were deployed efficiently.

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The school facilities enabled coverage of the curriculum and offered large play areas for the youngest students. Access to the upper floors of the school building was limited for students with physical disabilities.

[View judgements](#)

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

Most students with moderate special educational needs were admitted into the school and received an acceptable level of support. Entry-level identification comprised of an interview with the Principal combined with informal observations by the Counsellor and Lead Teacher (SEN) once the students had joined the school. The school recently began a cycle of identification, assessment, programme planning, recording and review. The availability of psychological assessments was limited. Inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream classes was of a higher quality where differentiation and modification of the curriculum had been planned. Class and subject teachers were increasingly being made aware of the nature of specific individual needs. The provision of challenging extension activities for students identified as 'gifted and talented' was variable in terms of quality and impact on their learning. Collaboration with parents was ongoing and all decisions regarding support for the students with special educational needs were implemented in consultation with the parents.

## 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	585	61%
	Last year	587	52%
Teachers	86		78%
Students	140		88%

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

A minority of parents and most teachers and students responded to the surveys. A majority of written comments from parents focussed on fee increases and value for money with regard to the uniforms. Most parents and students expressed satisfaction with the quality of teaching. Almost a third of students received private tutoring, a large number engaging in Arabic language activities. A minority of parents felt that the school adequately dealt with incidents of bullying; almost all teachers believed incidents were dealt with effectively. Most student respondents did not agree that they used a wide range of technology to support their learning. A small minority of parents did not agree that the school offered a wide enough range of subjects and activities for students to choose from. This view was shared by students in their comments. Most parents thought that the school was led well but a minority thought the school leaders did not listen to their opinions about the school. Almost all teachers believed they participated meaningfully in reviewing the curriculum.

## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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