

INSPECTION REPORT

Star International School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School

Location	Al Twar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolaltwar.com
Telephone	04-2638999
Address	P O Box 51008, Dubai
Principal	Durriya Goriawala
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-14 / Foundation Stage - Year 9
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	396
Largest nationality group of students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	53 (13%)
Date of the inspection	28th to 30th October 2013

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The context of the school

Star International School, located in Al Twar, provides education for boys and girls aged three to 14 years. The population of the school rose slightly from 376 to 396. The school had a highly multi-national population of over 50 nationalities. Arab and Indian students were the largest groups. 53 Emirati students comprised approximately 13% of the student population. There were 36 full-time teachers, supported by 15 teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage to Year 2. Ten teachers had been newly appointed during the past year. The principal was in her sixth year at the school; the Deputy had been in position for only two months. The Cambridge Curriculum had recently been introduced from the Foundation Stage to Year 9.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The shared responsibility for school improvement through a widely distributed leadership team;
- The quality of teaching and learning in all phases of the school;
- Students' positive and considerate behaviour, and their appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of their school;
- Innovation in the Foundation Stage that had resulted in an age-appropriate learning environment;
- The expertise and support provided for students identified with special needs and their parents and teachers by the special needs department.

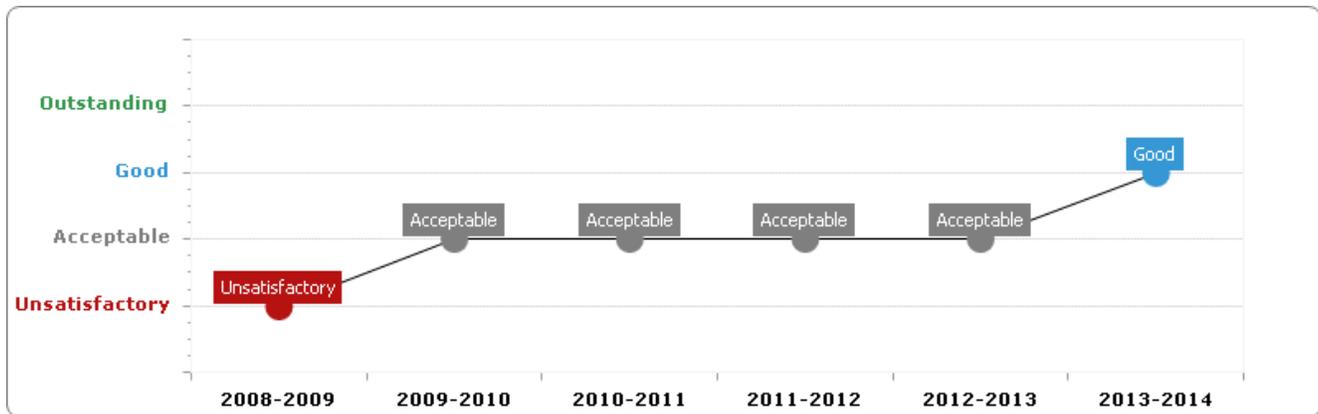
Recommendations

- Continue to improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic.
- Ensure that all teachers and assistants develop the expertise to expand students' vocabulary and develop language skills in all lessons.
- Provide all students with consistently challenging work, especially opportunities to think creatively and critically.
- Provide more staff time to accurately identify students who do not make consistent progress and provide support for students with special educational needs where appropriate.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had implemented the Cambridge curriculum as a means of providing more structured support for students studying English as a second language.
- Leadership positions for each of the phases of the school had been introduced.
- In the Foundation Stage, a dedicated leader had been appointed, staff had benefited from professional development and the indoor and outdoor learning spaces had been enhanced.
- The governance structure had been expanded to include teacher and staff members, a parent representative and an educational advisor from the wider community.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[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?

Attainment was good in the majority of subjects. It was acceptable in Islamic Education. Most students had clear knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts and worship. However, their Qur'an recitation skills were less well developed. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was also acceptable. Most primary students had appropriate listening, reading and writing skills. In secondary, most students spoke in fluent Standard Arabic. However, extended speaking skills were insecure for a significant minority of students. Most primary students of Arabic as an additional language knew and used a good range of words and phrases. Most secondary students could hold short conversations but their reading skills were weak. In English, most children in the Foundation Stage had a good awareness of initial letter sounds and initiated conversations with each other. Primary students could undertake research and make presentations. Most secondary students wrote using varied vocabulary, although rarely at great length. In the Foundation Stage, children could use mathematical vocabulary to talk about number and shape. Attainment in the element of number was a strength throughout the school. The skills needed to solve problems had improved but were not yet fully developed. In the Foundation Stage and primary, students had good scientific observational skills and used simple terminology to describe investigations. Secondary students were confident in the use of practical skills and thought creatively about the outcomes of their investigations.

Students' progress was mostly good. However, in Islamic Education, whilst progress was good in primary, students in the secondary phase made only acceptable progress in their knowledge of concepts such as faith and worship. Effective discussions in most secondary lessons underpinned good progress in Arabic as a first language. Most primary students made good progress in Arabic as an additional language but progress was slower for older students in secondary because in lessons, too much time was spent speaking in English. Progress in English in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. Throughout the school, students made good progress in listening, speaking and reading of English, but their extended writing skills were less well developed because of limited opportunities to use their writing in other subjects. In both mathematics and science, students made good progress in applying theory to real-life situations.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were good throughout the school. Children in the Foundation Stage were enthusiastic learners. They followed classroom routines independently, explored collaboratively and developed imagination and language through their play. Elsewhere, most students took responsibility for their learning but rarely took the initiative to pose questions or extend their work further. Most enjoyed solving challenging problems when given the opportunity to do so, but this was not a feature of all lessons. Most students knew how to

improve their work, especially in secondary where assessing and improving work were more frequent aspects of learning. The good use of information and communication technology (ICT) enabled students to undertake research and make effective presentations. Occasionally, insufficient ability to understand and express themselves in English hampered students' rates of progress, and a slow pace of learning restricted progress of the more able students.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was outstanding. They demonstrated polite, friendly and considerate behaviour at all times. Behaviour was excellent both in and out of lessons. Adults knew students well and their obvious care for them promoted good relationships throughout the school. Strong personal values were developed through discussion and was integrated into the curricular programme. Students understood what represented healthy food and generally made wise choices. Physical education lessons helped them, through well-facilitated discussions, to understand the working of their bodies and the value of exercise. Attendance was outstanding and lateness rare, as it was so effectively dealt with.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and awareness of the wider world was good. Students showed respect and appreciation for each other's cultural backgrounds. They investigated their personal heritage and developed a good understanding of the UAE culture. Students understood the key values central to and Islamic society and UAE life.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in the Foundation Stage and Primary, and outstanding in Secondary. Students had a strong sense of responsibility towards the community and towards their learning. The Student Council had a voice in both school development and community projects. Projects for secondary students combined opportunities in community involvement, achievement of personal goals, volunteering and enterprise. Work experience for Year 9 students provided valuable awareness of the world of work.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good across the school. In most lessons, effective classroom management skills were combined with high expectations of students so that time was used productively. Teachers planned lessons well, with clearly specified objectives and good use of resources. Collaborative and independent learning, investigatory work and the use of ICT, including the use of on-line resources across the

curriculum, widened the horizons of students' learning. However, teachers did not provide enough opportunities for critical thinking or independent learning, or ensure that all students were consistently given challenging work. Teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic, particularly in Arabic as an additional language, was beginning to offer students more opportunities to be active in speaking and writing, and to relate their learning to real-life contexts that interested them.

While some lessons were excellent, there was less consistency in the non-key subjects. For example, ICT teaching did not always take into account the extent of students' prior learning. Music and art were taught as part of a sequence of projects and thematic units of work, but not skilfully enough to give students the opportunity to acquire skills progressively.

Assessment was good. The school had consistent and effective assessment policies and procedures which were fully integrated into the best teaching. The use of assessment to influence teaching and the curriculum for individual students strengthened learning in the school. Teachers made productive use of assessment data to plan further steps in teaching and learning. The school generally monitored and tracked students' attainment and progress well but not sufficiently in line with the newly-adopted Cambridge curriculum to ensure sufficient accuracy. Feedback gave both students and parents a clear understanding of competency and accomplishments.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good in all phases. New subject leaders had recently reviewed the curriculum and adopted the Cambridge curriculum. The Foundation Stage curriculum had improved since the last inspection to include activity-based learning in which children learned largely through exploration. This was enhanced by appropriate visits, special events and visitors. The school offered a good range of extra-curricular activities in music, art and sports. However, insufficient time was allocated during the school day to develop students' abilities in music or art. The increased focus on the development of reading skills and the acquisition of a wider range of good quality books had had a positive impact on students' literacy skills. However, there were too few opportunities for independent writing. The use of ICT contributed to improvements in students' research and presentation skills, with activities matched well to meet the needs of most learners.

Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in primary and secondary. The rich curriculum in the Foundation Stage was modified daily to meet the needs of individual children. In primary and secondary, the curriculum was planned to accommodate the different

groups of students. Lower attaining students accessed the curriculum well with the help of learning support assistants. Boys' reading was encouraged through the purchase of high interest books. Opportunities for Emiratis to study their own culture were embedded in the curriculum. The curriculum was modified especially well in withdrawal groups for students with specific difficulties.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all students were outstanding. All areas of the school were safe and secure. School transport arrangements and supervision were rigorous. The school was clean and well maintained. The medical team ensured that all students received required medical care. Healthy eating habits were actively supported. Students and adults practised emergency evacuation procedures. All staff were knowledgeable about the child protection policy and how to manage concerns about children's safety and welfare.

The support for students was good across the school and some aspects were outstanding. Adults knew all the students well. Relationships were respectful and friendly; students of all nationalities supported each other happily. There were outstanding procedures to promote outstanding attendance and punctuality. Students understood school routines and what was expected of them at all times. In primary classes, support was effectively given to almost all students who needed extra help. Secondary classes were very small and the support for individuals in these classes was outstanding. Good guidance about future education was given to older students. The support given to students with special educational needs was highly effective as there were excellent systems to identify their needs and set targets. Effective communication systems between the special needs co-ordinator, teachers and learning support assistants ensured that support was targeted well. However, in a few classes, not all children received enough support.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. Additional leadership positions had been created. Leaders were committed and knowledgeable about their roles and worked together as an enthusiastic team. The new leadership structure had improved communication within the staff and to parents. Further development of the school benefited from the input of a wide range of stakeholders, including students. Professional development for new leaders and teachers had had a clear impact on the quality of teaching across the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Many viewpoints had been considered in evaluating the school's performance. Leaders generally had a realistic and accurate overview of their school and correctly identified areas for development. Issues raised in the previous inspection report were treated seriously and had been addressed. Other key improvements had been made. A comprehensive performance evaluation system provided detailed feedback to teachers. However, leaders did not ensure that all teachers associated their actions with students' learning.

Partnerships with parents were good. Parents were well informed about the life in the school and the progress of their children. The open-door policy gave them access to teachers and leaders, and they appreciated the school's action in contacting them at an early stage about any concerns relating to their children. Parents reported that the new curriculum gave them clearer information about their children's achievement and how they could help them to improve. Links with the local community supported learning opportunities such as community service and a work experience week for Year 9 students.

Governance was good. The governing body had been expanded to include representatives of teachers, other staff and parents, and an education advisor. There were ongoing moves to expand participation still further with more community representatives. Board members supported the improvement plan through the provision of resources, notably a new curriculum and ICT resources. The Board monitored work of the school by questioning reports by the principal and by visiting the school to see classes in action. However, board members were not rigorous enough in linking the impact of the action plan on students' attainment and progress.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was good. Roles and responsibilities were clear; well-functioning systems guided daily routines. Staff, students and parents were well informed about events through multiple means of communication. The school was staffed with well-qualified teachers and an internship programme provided an ongoing source of newly qualified teachers. A well-stocked resource room provided access to shared resources across the school.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment of Emirati students was good in English and science, and acceptable in Islamic Education, Arabic and mathematics. Their progress was good in Islamic Education, English and science, and acceptable in Arabic and mathematics. Students' competency in English was generally lower than other students on entry to the school, but they were able to make good progress with additional English language support.

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

Students with special educational needs made good progress in English, mathematics and Islamic Education, and acceptable progress in Arabic and science. Provision was very ably led and managed by the co-ordinator, who had a qualification in special educational needs. The identification of these students was good and appropriate support was given by teachers and learning support assistants in class, and by the special needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants, working under her direction, in specific withdrawal groups. This support met these students' individual needs very well. Generally there was very good two-way communication between teachers and the special needs co-ordinator. The weekly reports from teachers influenced the content of students' support for the following week.0

The involvement of students with special educational needs and their parents in the writing of individual education plans and in setting targets was excellent. Students identified their own needs using Goal Maker. Individual education plans, together with the curriculum levels the students had reached, were shared with parents. The school was inclusive and accepted students with a wide range of needs. Students who were gifted or talented had advanced learning plans and were encouraged to join weekly enrichment clubs, were given more challenging work in class and, where appropriate, worked with an older age group in a specific subject.

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

The quality of teaching was improving across the school. In primary, lessons were mostly well planned and included a variety of activities that integrated the four skills of the language although teachers did not place enough emphasis on developing speaking skills. Teachers used ICT, visual cards and different worksheets to enhance students' learning although the degree of effectiveness varied throughout the school. In secondary, teaching was frequently too reliant on textbooks. On the other hand, effective discussions enhanced learning particularly for the secondary students.

Long- and short-term curriculum plans included activities that focused on developing most areas of skills in Arabic as a first language. In lessons, teachers also focused on providing contexts and appropriate opportunities for progression with grammar. However, opportunities for developing deeper and independent reading comprehension skills were rare. Opportunities for writing were frequent but did not always lead to the desired outcomes in developing extended and creative writing skills.

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	84	23%
	Last year	118	38%
Teachers	30		77%
Students	0There were no senior students in the school0		

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

Although fewer parents than previously responded to this year's survey, most were appreciative of the education their children were receiving. Most believed that their children were making better progress in English, mathematics and science than in Islamic Education and Arabic. However, almost all were confident that their children enjoyed school, were well looked after and safe. Parents found the new curriculum helpful because it provided them with clearly understandable information on the skills their children had mastered and those that next needed to be addressed. As a result, they were better able to support their children at home. The open-door policy was popular with parents as was the very rapid response to their questions or concerns. Teachers also appreciated the greater openness of communication across the school. Most were positive about the opportunities for professional development but a few wished to see these opportunities offered more widely for all teachers. No students were of an appropriate age to complete the survey.

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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