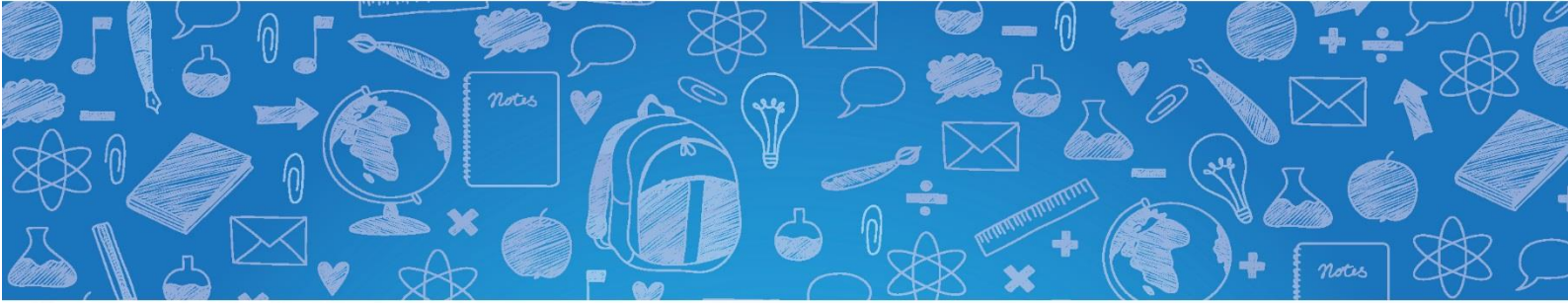


Inspection Report



The Kindergarten Starters 2014-2015



إكسبو 2020
دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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School information



General information

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	1990
Website	www.gemskgs.com
Telephone	04-2824090
Address	P.O. Box 4973, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Principal	Ms. Asha Alexander
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	13 th – 16 th October 2014



Students

Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age range	3 - 11
Grades or year groups	KG1 - Grade5
Number of students on roll	5489
Number of children in Pre-K	0
Number of Emirati students	0
Number of students with SEN	610
Largest nationality group of students	Indian



Teachers / Support staff

Number of teachers	220
Largest nationality group of teachers	Indian
Number of teacher assistants	38
Teacher-student ratio	1:25
Number of guidance counsellors	2
Teacher turnover	29%



Curriculum

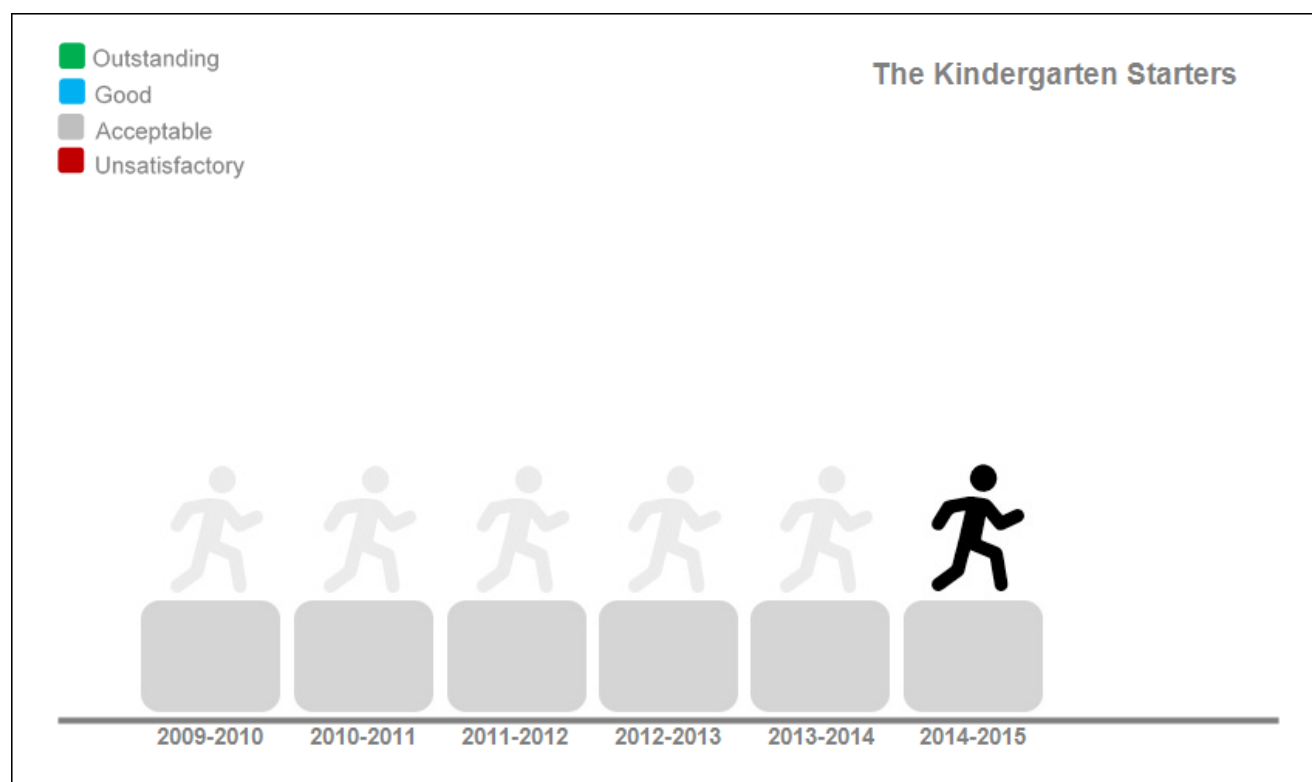
Educational Permit	Indian
Main Curriculum / Other	CBSE
Standardised tests / board exams	IBT/CBSE
Accreditation	N/A



Dear Parents,

The Kindergarten Starters was inspected by DSIB from 13th-6th October 2014, and the overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **Acceptable**

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key aspects of the school's performance and standards. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in five key subjects, their learning skills as well as their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching was across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside the classroom, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.



The inspection judgements were drawn from a range of evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents' and teachers' surveys.

The key strengths and areas for improvement to be made by the school leaders, governors and owners are:

Strengths

- Students' attainment and progress were mostly good in the primary phase.
- Students had made significant progress in mathematics and science in the primary phase in recent years.
- The integration of Arabic and Islamic Education into the kindergarten curriculum was effective.
- Students showed outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- Primary students could effectively apply their learning to real life situations and were outstanding in their community involvement and environmental awareness.
- Students' were proud about their own culture.
- Links with parents and the community were outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Improve children's attainment and progress in mathematics and science in the Kindergarten, and primary students' Arabic as an additional language.
- Analyse and compare students' assessment results with international standards and use this to plan the curriculum and lessons so that students achieve better.
- Ensure teachers in their planning take account of the different learning needs of all students.
- Ensure class sizes meet KHDA requirements.

We warmly encourage you to read the full school inspection report.

The school is required to submit to DSIB an action plan identifying the steps they will take to address the areas for improvement. We have advised your school leaders to share this with you.

We trust that the information provided will help you understand, and encourages you to support, your child's school.

Yours sincerely,

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

A closer look at The Kindergarten Starters



How well does the school perform overall?

The Kindergarten Starters provided an **Acceptable** education overall.

- There were developing strengths in the primary phase, with improvements in attainment in mathematics and attainment and progress in science.
- Personal responsibility was outstanding across both phases of the school. Students had a consistently good understanding of Islamic values and Emirati and world cultures.
- There had been improvements in the quality of students learning skills and teaching for effective learning in the primary phase. Both were now judged to be of a good quality.
- The quality of the curriculum was good in both phases; however, the curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable.
- The protection of students across both phases was of a good quality overall. However, the support, particularly for students with a special educational needs, was acceptable.
- Leaders at all levels were focused on improving learning for all children. The quality of leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning, governance, management, staffing, facilities and resources were judged to be good, while partnerships with parents and the community were judged to be outstanding.



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

- The school did not have a special education co-ordinator with appropriate qualifications and teaching experience and this significantly limited the quality of provision for students with special educational needs.
- The school could systematically identify students with special educational needs on enrolment to the school. A three-tiered system was being implemented by the special educational needs team which is aimed at improving the support provided to students as well as teachers.
- The large number of students in classes, in restricted spaces, limited their learning.
- Teachers did not differentiate activities well enough to meet the needs of students with special educational needs, and so their progress was only acceptable.

1. How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning Skills?

		KG	Primary
 Islamic Education	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good
 Arabic as a First Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Not applicable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Not applicable
 Arabic as an Additional Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
 English	Attainment	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good
 Mathematics	Attainment	Acceptable	Good ↑
	Progress	Acceptable	Good
 Science	Attainment	Acceptable	Good ↑
	Progress	Acceptable	Good ↑
		KG	Primary
Learning skills		Acceptable	Good ↑


↑ Improved from last inspection

↓ Declined from last inspection

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding 
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good 
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable




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

	KG	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary
Health and safety	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Good 
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Outstanding 
Governance	Acceptable 
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Good



School **Inspection** Report

Overall school judgement

Acceptable

Key strengths


- Attainment, progress and teaching of mathematics and science in the primary phase were good.
- Students had mature attitudes and showed outstanding behaviour.
- The understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and local cultural and global awareness were good in both phases.
- The Principal and senior leaders had a clear focus on improving educational outcomes.
- The partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding.


Changes since the last inspection

- Aspirational targets had been set to achieve higher levels of attainment and progress in response to the United Arab Emirates national agenda.
- The teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language in the Kindergarten over the last few years was improving learning outcomes for these subjects in lower primary.
- The quality of teaching had improved in the primary phase to good.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities had increased.
- Leadership effectiveness had improved to good.
- The identification and provision for students with special educational needs were improved.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in mathematics and science in the kindergarten phase as well as Arabic as an additional language in the primary phase by improving the quality of teaching and through assessing and monitoring learning more accurately.
- Ensure leaders compare school assessment data with international benchmark data to improve the accuracy of assessment and levels of students' attainment in relation to these standards.
- Prioritise the embedding of modified learning opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs, so that their learning needs are fully met and they make good progress.
- Reduce classroom overcrowding to enable the provision of high quality education, particularly in the Kindergarten and for those students with a special educational needs, so these meet KHDA requirements.

 Improved from last inspection

 Declined from last inspection




1. How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning Skills?

KG

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable


- The majority of children had good levels of knowledge and understanding in English. In Kindergarten most children could listen to a story and respond to questions. By the end of the Kindergarten children could predict, question, infer and link ideas to their daily lives.
- Most children's understanding of mathematical concepts and skills were in line with curriculum and international standards. In Kindergarten 1, most children could match symbols to written numbers. In the upper Kindergarten classes children were using manipulatives to describe addition facts.
- In science, most children were able to carry out age appropriate investigations, such as dissolving solids in water and recording results. Most understood new associated vocabulary such as flowing, solids and dissolving. Investigation skills were limited by too few opportunities for recording and reflecting on their work.

Primary


Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Good	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good 	Good
Science	Good 	Good 

- In Islamic Education, the skills associated with the Holy Qur'an were well developed by almost all students. Almost all students had a good knowledge of the pillars of Islam and those of faith. This exceeded the age related expectations of the curriculum. Almost all students had a strong knowledge of certain acts of worship, such as ablution and praying.
- Most students in Arabic as an additional language demonstrated acceptable listening and responding skills, but they showed limited progress in conducting dialogue and writing in Arabic.
- In English, the majority of students could speak confidently and had well-developed vocabulary. By Grade 5, the majority of students were able to converse, compose their own poems and write their own imaginative and creative stories.

- In mathematics, most students in lower primary were working at the expected level, but as they progressed in their successive years of learning, their attainment levels were above expected standards. In Grade 1, they could count up to 100. In Grade 2, most students understood and recognised regular patterns and shapes. By Grade 3, most students had problem-solving skills above expected levels and by Grade 4, most students' demonstrated extended levels of critical thinking.
- In science, most students in Grade 1 could use a hand lens when investigating and could recognise a range of different types of seeds from home, such as chick peas and kidney beans. They were successfully extending their scientific vocabulary. Most Grade 5 students could investigate, observe, identify and define suspensions, solutions and colloids. They used prior knowledge to explain their observations. Most understood the scientific process needed to be followed in investigations.
- The majority of students showed considerable progress in international benchmark test results over the last 2 years in Grades 3 to 5 mathematics and science.

	KG	Primary
Learning skills	Acceptable	Good 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Kindergarten, children displayed positive attitudes to learning and worked for short periods without teacher intervention. In the primary phase, student engagement was very positive in most lessons. • Most students worked productively in groups. They developed their vocabulary across a range of subjects and, in many lessons, students made good connections to other learning and real life experiences. • Critical thinking was an emerging feature, especially where there was a more investigative approach. However, the majority of children in the Kindergarten did not extend their higher order thinking skills because there was insufficient variety of challenging learning experiences. There was also a lack of opportunity for students to use technology in lessons to support their learning. 		


2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of students in both phases was outstanding. All students demonstrated a positive, mature attitude to their learning. They were polite and courteous to staff and to their peers. • Across both phases, all students had an excellent understanding of healthy living and enthusiastically took part in whole school initiatives. • Attendance and punctuality to school and lessons were at the expected high levels. 		

	KG	Primary
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across both phases, students' showed good understanding of the impact of Islamic values on life in Dubai. The Kindergarten children were aware of the seven Emirates and some local landmarks, such as Burj Khalifa. They knew most common plants and animals and could describe the national dress and the flag. They were confident when singing the UAE National Anthem. Many students could use traditional vocabulary, for example, to name the types of dress worn by UAE women and men and heritage games and competitions. Students had a sound understanding of Dubai's history. They visited mosques, museums and heritage sites and participated in UAE quizzes, which developed and reinforced their understanding. They had a good awareness of Emirati and world cultures 		

	KG	Primary
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community involvement was good in the Kindergarten and outstanding in the primary phase. Students were frequently involved in initiatives that impacted on the local community, for example, gift boxes for the support staff and the distribution of friendship bracelets during Friendship Week. The school had contributed funds to educate young people in Nepal. The Rice Bucket Challenge collected 6000 kilograms of rice in two days. The student voice had a significant impact on the school's development. SAVE (Start a Valuable Endeavour) and Sewa involved students visiting offices and reaching out through radio to educate people. For two consecutive years, The Kindergarten Starters had won the prestigious Sewa Pioneers Award at the House Commons in England, in recognition of the outstanding social service projects undertaken that created a positive impact on local communities and inspired selfless action in others. The Kindergarten children were aware of the importance of water and electricity conservation and were active in ensuring this had impact in the school. Primary phase students had initiated projects supporting sustainability and conservation in the local and wider environment. This included the Green Team's initiative to reduce, reuse and recycle materials. 		

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most teachers knew their subjects well and found interesting ways of helping students to understand and develop their skills effectively. Most kindergarten lessons had a vigorous pace. They were engaging, with teachers using a variety of resources to capture children's interest. Teachers had high expectations and provided a supportive learning environment to ensure students had meaningful and relevant experiences to support their learning. Lessons were well planned. There was a good balance of knowledge, understanding, and skill development, although the range of teaching strategies were not wide enough to meet the learning needs of all the children. Nevertheless, the application of learning to real life and differentiated learning for all students, including those with special educational needs, were developing features. Almost all teachers ensured that students understood what they had to do and engaged them actively and purposefully. Teachers used a good range of questions to evaluate students' understanding, to stimulate their thinking and to develop their reasoning skills. Teachers created opportunities for students to work in groups, which helped them build good communication skills and share ideas. Most teachers made creative use of available resources and organised activities to have a positive impact on learning. 		

	KG	Primary
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school had well-developed policies and practices to assess learning and communicated the results regularly to parents. Significant efforts had been made to collect performance data from internal and external assessments, although data was not yet used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school had not aligned its internal assessment information with that of external benchmark information. The tracking of students had started. However, this information was not used during lesson planning to ensure sufficient challenge for individuals and groups of students. Most students' books in different subject areas were marked regularly with ticks and short comments but these did not typically include guidance on next steps for learning. 		

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

	KG	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum had been mapped, overhauled and enriched to include key features of other international curricula. This ensured sufficient depth, balance and progression. Consequently, the majority of students in the primary phase were attaining above international standards in English, mathematics and science. Planning across the phases and levels, and at the points of entry and exit, was vertically and horizontally mapped. Both kindergarten and primary curricula were theme-based and driven by concepts and skills. The school promoted the holistic integrated approach involving the traditions of learning in languages, humanities, sciences, mathematics, PE and the visual and performing arts. Cross-curricular links were becoming embedded but technology was not used to its full effect. The curriculum was regularly reviewed to ensure good coverage of knowledge, skills and understanding. 		
	KG	Primary
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum design was modified to ensure provision for a range of different students, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented, the lower and higher achievers, and those with special interests. Curriculum provision was enriched by recent additional extra-curricular programmes. These included performing arts, the Tuesday Clubs which offered student choices regarding participation in STEM areas (Tech Mart, Robotics), and the introduction of physical sciences as part of the curriculum. 		

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary
Health and safety	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All appropriate policies and procedures were in place to support and protect students in both health and safety. Students were aware of the negative effects and consequences of bullying through assemblies and lessons. Appropriate behaviour towards each other was modelled daily by staff and students. Students were well supervised throughout the day. School transport was managed in a careful and highly efficient way. The environment was clean and safe. Detailed reports were kept on student health, immunizations, allergies and incidents/accidents. Maintenance records were up to date and ensured that the facilities and all equipment were checked regularly. All buildings, resources, equipment and furniture were in good repair. Students with special needs were cared for appropriately. Healthy living was a priority and a regular part of the curriculum. This was embedded into themes in the classroom lessons and modelled by staff. All students were encouraged to bring healthy snacks and lunches. They were provided with daily opportunities for exercise and physical development. 		


	KG	Primary
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's inclusive ethos was visible throughout the school. Relationships between staff and students were respectful and showed tolerance of individual differences. Behaviour was managed well. The school had acceptable systems for the management of attendance and punctuality. Students with special educational needs were identified, but differentiated learning opportunities were not well embedded in the curriculum or teaching and, therefore, not all students' learning needs were adequately met. 		

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


	Overall
The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs	Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Principal's inclusive approach and caring ethos permeated throughout the school, evidenced in day-to-day leadership and management of the school. There were clear guidelines and procedures for the identification of students with special educational needs throughout the school. The curriculum was modified across the phases but there were insufficient differentiated learning opportunities for all students and their learning needs were not fully met. 	


- The partnership between teachers and parents was very productive and of great support to parents in assisting them with their children's progress.
- The culture of the school, together with the support from the teachers, enabled students to make academic progress and develop personally, socially and emotionally.

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
The effectiveness of leadership	Good 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school was founded on an ethos of being mindful and kind to others. The Principal and senior leadership team had the aspirational vision for improvement through a multitude of means. This was well understood and embedded within the school and its community. • There had been proactive and shrewd internal capacity building, effective and efficient communication, improved facilities and resources and a few creative uses of technology. • Despite being constrained by restricted space, an ever increasing number of students and high staff turnover, school leaders maintained a drive for improvement. • There was a growing clarity of purpose and ability to plan for, demand and achieve improved student learning outcomes. Leaders had achieved some success in this respect, particularly in the primary phase, with its international benchmark testing. Internal assessment results indicated improved attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science, but more was required in kindergarten teaching and learning to improve attainment and progress. 	

	Overall
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation processes were becoming increasingly systematic, inclusive and robust. There had been in-depth interrogations of the results of the school's international testing of skills in mathematics and science. This was enabling the school to improve the quality of students' learning experiences. • The monitoring and managing of change was proficient. There had been increased rigour in evaluating data from comprehensive surveys of staff, parents and students. This had contributed to more reliable and valid evidence. However, the systematic tracking of students' attainment, and evaluation of their progress towards meeting agreed targets, was not developed enough. • Regular performance management of staff was a feature of self-evaluation, as was the provision of targeted professional development opportunities for staff. Key priorities for school development were appropriately identified. However, there remained a lack of precision in identifying measurable objectives. Not all were linked to improved student performance. • There had been progress in addressing almost all of the recommendations of the last report. 	




	Overall
Parents and the community	Outstanding 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All parents felt fully involved in the work and life of the school through very effective communication links. Parents felt fully informed about the attainment and progress of their children but expressed concerns about the large numbers of students in classes. The school engaged very well with the local community. 	

	Overall
Governance	Acceptable 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governing Board, including the owners, met regularly and communicated effectively to the community through a range of media. The Board was restricted in its composition, although it actively sought the views of its stakeholders through surveys and questionnaires. The Board maintained a constant overview of school performance and was regularly informed of students' academic outcomes. For the second year, the Board had not ensured compliance with KHDA requirements regarding class numbers. The school's oversubscribed roll was limiting its capacity to provide high quality education particularly to kindergarten children and those with special educational needs. 	

	Overall
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the school staffing, facilities and resources was good. Most staff were well qualified. Support staff were deployed effectively. The school facilities included a number of recent additions, for example, one science and four technology laboratories, various activity rooms, an auditorium, a traffic park and a new shaded sports area. There was sufficient technology and software in classes, but its use for independent study and the development of research skills was limited. Overcrowding of classrooms reduced students' opportunities to engage in group work and to develop enquiry, research and critical thinking skills. 	

What are the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection 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	940	19%
	Last year	1116	28%
 Teachers	43		19%
 Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

- A minority of parents responded to the KHDA survey, a similar percentage to the previous year. Few teachers did as well.
- Of those who did respond to the survey, most of the parents were very positive about the quality of education provided by the school.
- They were also very positive about the progress their children made in English and mathematics, and the majority thought progress was good in science.
- Almost all parents felt their children enjoyed school and that their children were safe at school and on school buses.
- Most felt their children developed good self-awareness, had good knowledge of other cultures and were developing a good range of skills.
- Most considered that teaching was good and that homework supported learning.
- The majority of parents of children with special educational needs felt their children were accurately identified and given good support and guidance. They believed they were well informed about their children’s education.
- Almost all teachers were positive about all of the school’s operations and the quality of education it offered to its children and students.

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

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This 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 school inspection will report on changes 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