



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

**Al Maaref Private School (LLC)**

Curriculum: US

Overall rating: Weak

[Read more about the school](#)



www.khda.gov.ae

‘Do we have to  
stand still to  
avoid the risk  
of falling...?  
...I have encountered  
several challenges.  
But I never bowed  
to them’



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

### General information



|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Location                | Al Qusais              |
| Type of school          | Private                |
| Opening year of school  | 1987                   |
| Website                 | www.almaaref.ae        |
| Telephone               | 04-2988881             |
| Address                 | Amman Street Al Qusais |
| Principal               | Jacobus Petrus Daffue  |
| Language of instruction | English, Arabic        |
| Inspection dates        | 11 to 14 January 2016  |

### Students



|                                        |                            |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gender of students                     | Boys and girls             |
| Age range                              | 4-18                       |
| Grades or year groups                  | Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12 |
| Number of students on roll             | 1,714                      |
| Number of children in pre-kindergarten | 0                          |
| Number of Emirati students             | 560                        |
| Number of students with SEND           | 30                         |
| Largest nationality group of students  | Arab                       |

### Teachers / Support staff



|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Number of teachers                    | 106      |
| Largest nationality group of teachers | Egyptian |
| Number of teaching assistants         | 14       |
| Teacher-student ratio                 | 1:16     |
| Number of guidance counsellors        | 1        |
| Teacher turnover                      | 20%      |

### Curriculum



|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Educational permit / License    | US         |
| Main curriculum                 | US         |
| External tests and examinations | IBT, CAT 4 |
| Accreditation                   | AdvancED   |
| National Agenda benchmark tests | IBT        |

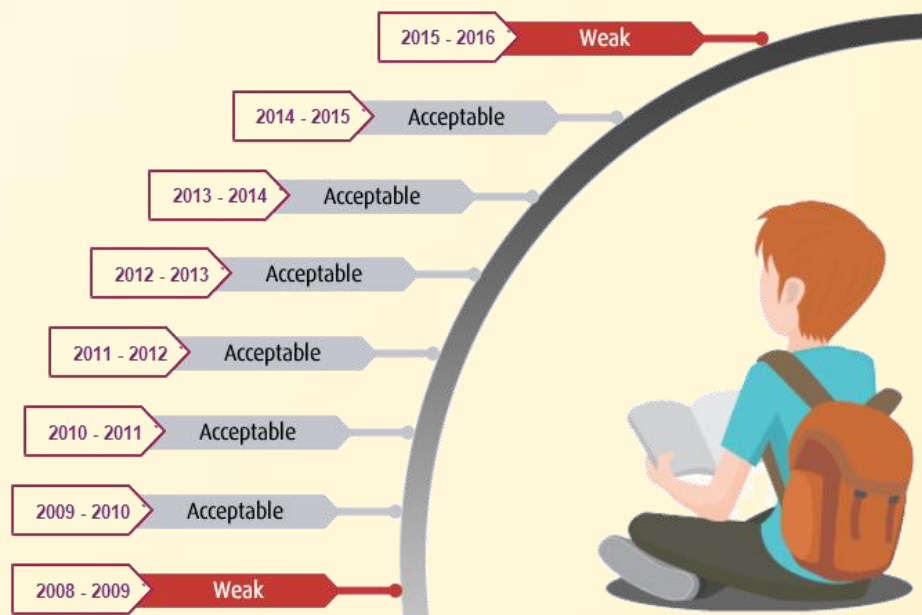


## Summary for parents and the community

**Al Maaref Private School (LLC)** was inspected by DSIB from 11 to 14 of January 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **weak**.

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key standards of performance. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching and the assessment of learning were across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, 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 evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





### How well did the school perform overall?

The school provided a **weak** quality of education to its students overall.

- Students' attainment and progress were mostly acceptable throughout all phases. Most were achieving at expected levels as measured against the school's curriculum standards. A majority engaged in learning. Students had few opportunities to undertake research, develop their critical thinking skills or use technology to enhance learning.
- Students' personal and social development was a strength. Relationships were generally respectful and almost all students were developing an awareness of healthy lifestyles. While attendance and punctuality were generally good, a small number of students regularly arrived late. Students demonstrated a good understanding of Islamic values and the importance of living in a culturally diverse community. Environmental awareness and conservation efforts were not actively promoted.
- Teachers had an acceptable subject knowledge. However, too many teachers across all phases did not have a secure knowledge of how students learned. Planning was well structured but it did not include a sufficiently broad range of strategies to meet the needs of different groups. Assessment information was not yet used effectively to meet the needs of most students.
- The school offered a US Common Core Curriculum Standards as well as the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Arabic and Islamic education. The curriculum was not well modified to meet the different needs of students, such as students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Only a few extra-curricular activities were available.
- The school provided a generally secure and safe environment. It did not take its responsibilities for health and safety seriously enough. Not all systems were effective or understood by the whole school community. A comprehensive child protection policy was in place, but staff training was not consistent. Not all staff understood all facets of the policy or the required procedures. Care of students with SEND was weak, especially in the provision of targeted support within and outside the classroom.
- Senior leaders were aware of the need to improve students' attainment and progress, but did not always prioritize their strategies. The strengths and weaknesses of the school were not clearly identified. Self-evaluation practices lacked coherence across the school. Parents expressed concerns about communication, the lack of technology and other resources, and the high staff turnover. There was no governing board. The chief executive officer (CEO) focused on financial rather than on educational matters. Staffing, facilities and resources were weak overall. There was a high staff turnover. Insufficient facilities and a lack of resources reduced the learning opportunities for students.





### What did the school do well?

- There was improved provision for children in the kindergarten (KG) phase, leading to acceptable levels of attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Students across all phases had a good level of personal responsibility, a good understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures.
- The newly formed SEND team's exemplary planning was beginning to be embedded throughout the school.



### What does the school need to do next?

- The CEO and owners must resource and support the school so that it meets its promise to parents by:
  - developing a clear strategic plan which addresses the key concerns raised in this report and takes full account of the views of staff, parents and students;
  - employing a broad range of suitably qualified and experienced staff, capable of bringing about the required changes;
  - providing the required range of physical and material resources listed in this report; and
  - instigating urgently a representative governing board which effectively influences school performance, hold leaders to account for improved learning outcomes, resources the school adequately and supports leaders in the development of the school.
- The principal must improve the operational efficiency of the school by introducing appropriate policies and procedures to drive improvements in academic and pastoral provision for all students.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, in all subjects and phases, by increasing teachers' awareness of good student-centered teaching with critical thinking strategies, and ensuring that these features are present in all lessons.
- Improve the understanding of assessment practices by ensuring that all teachers analyze assessment data more thoughtfully and use it to modify their teaching and the curriculum.
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that all staff are trained in and knowledgeable about child protection procedures, and that senior students receive high quality guidance concerning their future educational and careers pathways.
- Resolve the issues around teacher deployment to ensure that all students of Arabic as a second language and Islamic education in English receive equal opportunity and sufficient time, in accordance with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) MoE requirements.



### How well did the school provide for students with special educational needs and disabilities?

- Information from students' work in their books indicated that students with SEND made acceptable gains in their academic development, but their progress over time was weak in most subjects. Students were not well prepared for their next steps in education and a focus on social, emotional and personal development was rarely evident.
- Feedback from parents was mostly negative, especially regarding the weak efforts made by teachers to support their children in the classroom and ensure better progress. Reporting by teachers was inconsistent. The school relied mostly on the SEND team to meet and inform parents.
- The role of parents in policy development was not defined. Detailed individual plans that involved parents had been developed by the SEND team. However, in almost all lessons teachers did not use the planning to inform their teaching. Curriculum modifications were under-developed. Expectations of students were not appropriate. Parents expressed concerns about the lack of challenge for students in the higher phases.
- The school's efforts to provide consistent advice and support were inadequate. Few information sessions for parents were held on suitable career paths for their children.

### National Agenda Parameter



In 2014, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, launched the UAE National Agenda 2021, with education being a prime focus. The National Agenda includes two major objectives developed with the intent of placing the UAE among the most successful countries that provide world-class education. By 2021, it is expected that the UAE will feature in the top twenty countries in the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) test and in the top fifteen countries in the 'Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies' (TIMSS) test.

In response to this, each participating school was issued a report on their students' performance in these international assessments and in addition, they were provided with clear targets for improving their performance. This academic year, KHDA introduced the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments.

#### Main points:

- The school did not meet the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter.
- Progress towards meeting National Agenda targets was not secure.
- The CEO and senior leaders did not effectively promote awareness of the National Agenda among parents, teachers or students. In assemblies, staff celebrated good performance by individual students in external tests, but the school did not inform parents about the school's overall performance in IBT, TIMSS or PISA tests.
- The established head of science had overseen changes in the science curriculum to ensure that students at certain grades were better prepared for external assessments, including TIMSS and PISA. For example, the study of some topics in chemistry had been brought forward to Grade 8 so that students were able to tackle chemistry questions in the tests. The heads of English and mathematics had been appointed more recently. The head of English was focusing on supporting his department to manage change, and was trying to improve the development of students' skills in reading for understanding.
- Heads of department were starting to encourage teachers to promote the development of students' critical thinking skills. Some good examples were evident. For example, an outdoors science lesson involved students in predicting and analyzing events through observation. A mathematics lesson involved students in classifying types of shapes. Overall, there had been little sustained impact on teachers' classroom practice.
- The provision of resources which would help students to find things out for themselves from books or from the internet was limited. As a result, students had few opportunities to develop research skills as outlined in the UAE National Agenda.



## Innovation in education

The *UAE Vision 2021* sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for 'innovation' and 'innovative leadership'. It provides a basis for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, to experiment and to test assumptions as well as questioning and challenging the status quo. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.



### Promoting a culture of innovation:

- The principal had a secure understanding of the innovation skills that students needed to develop, and had created opportunities for all students to participate in enrichment activities. The new initiatives did not consistently enhance students' critical thinking, research and enquiry skills. Teachers were attempting to be resourceful within limited space and with limited specialist equipment and learning technologies. Leaders had recently implemented a more comprehensive approach to the delivery of the US curriculum and had identified opportunities for innovation.

Overall School performance

Weak ↓

1. Students' achievement

|                                                                                                                                |                   | KG             | Elementary | Middle       | High           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Islamic education</b><br>                  | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable     |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as a first language</b><br>         | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable     |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ↓ | Good           |
| <b>Arabic as an additional language</b><br> | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Not applicable |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ↑ | Not applicable |
| <b>English</b><br>                          | <b>Attainment</b> | Acceptable ↑   | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Acceptable ↑   | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |
| <b>Mathematics</b><br>                      | <b>Attainment</b> | Acceptable ↑   | Weak ↓     | Weak ↓       | Acceptable     |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Acceptable     | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |
| <b>Science</b><br>                          | <b>Attainment</b> | Acceptable     | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |
|                                                                                                                                | <b>Progress</b>   | Acceptable ↑   | Acceptable | Acceptable   | Acceptable     |

|                        | KG           | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Learning skills</b> | Acceptable ↑ | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

|                                                                             | KG         | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Personal development                                                        | Good       | Good       | Good       | Good       |
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Good       | Good       | Good       | Good       |
| Social responsibility and innovation skills                                 | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

## 3. Teaching and assessment

|                                 | KG                                                                                           | Elementary | Middle                                                                                   | High       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Acceptable  | Weak       | Acceptable                                                                               | Acceptable |
| Assessment                      | Weak                                                                                         | Weak       | Weak  | Weak       |

## 4. Curriculum

|                                      | KG                                                                                             | Elementary                                                                               | Middle                                                                                     | High       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Acceptable  | Acceptable                                                                               | Acceptable                                                                                 | Acceptable |
| Curriculum adaptation                | Weak                                                                                           | Weak  | Weak  | Weak       |

## 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

|                                                                               | KG                                                                                             | Elementary                                                                                      | Middle                                                                                           | High                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding | Acceptable  | Acceptable  | Acceptable  | Acceptable  |
| Care and support                                                              | Weak        | Weak         | Weak        | Weak        |

## 6. Leadership and management

|                                                 | All phases                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The effectiveness of leadership                 | Weak  |
| School self-evaluation and improvement planning | Weak                                                                                       |
| Parents and the community                       | Weak  |
| Governance                                      | Weak  |
| Management, staffing, facilities and resources  | Weak  |



## Main inspection report

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the standards reached by students and the quality of education provided in Dubai's private schools.

### Judgements are made on a six-point scale



Using this scale, the *Main inspection report* contains the judgements about the different aspects, phases and subjects that form the work of the school.

It provides the reasons for the answers to the questions in the *Summary for parents and the community*:

- How well did the school perform overall?
- What did the school do well?
- What does the school need to do next?

## 1. Students' achievement

### 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                          | Acceptable ↑   | Acceptable ↑   |
| Mathematics                      | Acceptable ↑   | Acceptable     |
| Science                          | Acceptable     | Acceptable ↑   |

- Overall, children were making acceptable progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding of English. For most, English was their second language. The older children were able to recognize a selection of high frequency words. They could blend some sounds to read short, three-letter words. Children listened attentively and followed basic instructions in class and during group activities. They were able to talk to their teachers and to one another, and explain their learning. They understood the meaning of some stories and talked about features such as the title and characters. Many were able to sequence a story. Their writing skills were developing appropriately. Different groups made similar progress but those with SEND made weak progress over time.
- Most children demonstrated age-appropriate understanding of mathematical concepts and skills that were in line with the US curriculum Common Core State Standards. Different groups made acceptable progress in relation to their assessed starting points and against class learning objectives. Most children counted and added numbers in play, and correctly used the language of more than and less than. Most could match numbers and objects using one-to-one correspondence. Many were able to sequence simple patterns and use numbers up to ten, up to 20 and above for the more able. They were able to identify shapes and colors using interesting, real objects. A minority was able to use number operations beyond international expectations.
- In science, most children made progress in their understanding of the world that was in line with expected US curriculum standards. For example, different groups understood age-appropriate earth and life science concepts. Progress over time was acceptable. Older children were studying the rainforest and used new vocabulary to identify how plants and animals live in this different environment. They used what they had learned to create dioramas, and could explain their learning to their classmates. They also understood their place in the world through recycling projects. Inquiry and investigative skills were in the early stages of development for all groups.



| Elementary                       |            |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Subjects                         | Attainment | Progress   |
| Islamic education                | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| English                          | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Mathematics                      | Weak ↓     | Acceptable |
| Science                          | Acceptable | Acceptable |

- In Islamic education, most students were working at levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. In lessons, most made acceptable progress as measured against the learning objectives. Students could explain the ideas conveyed in the Holy Qur'an, such as identifying the values of Sunna prayers. Most demonstrated knowledge of Islamic concepts and principles at an age-appropriate level. They could apply what they had learned to their own lives, for example by performing Eid prayer in the classroom. Internal assessment data was not analyzed in order to track the performance of different cohorts of students over time. Progress in lessons and over time was acceptable for most groups, but students with SEND made slow progress over time.
- By the end of the elementary phase, most students were performing in line with expectations in Arabic as a first language. In Grade 1, a majority of students was able to blend sounds and decode unfamiliar words. By Grade 5, students had developed more confidence in using their language skills, though they made minor grammatical and spelling mistakes. The school's internal assessment data suggested that students in the lower elementary were attaining at higher levels than those in the upper levels. Trends over three years showed that students' attainment levels were in line with expected curriculum standards. Students with SEND and low achievers made less progress than others.
- In Arabic as a second language, most students achieved in line with expectations. Students in their third year of learning Arabic were able to introduce themselves and respond to simple questions. Most had the ability to distinguish between past and future tenses, singular and plural nouns, and genders. They could decode text but their level of comprehension was less developed than their reading skills. The school did not provide data on individual students' starting points nor trends for the last three years. Most students made acceptable progress in developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. New students made remarkable progress within one year. There were no students with SEND studying this subject.
- In English, most students attained at expected standards and made acceptable progress. Younger students in Grade 1 were able to recognize and remember key elements in a story. By Grade 2, students accurately placed characters in a setting. By Grade 5, students used a range of appropriate vocabulary to record similarities and differences between Dubai and Texas. Most groups made good progress in developing their speaking and reading. However, they had insufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills. Students with SEND made acceptable progress in lessons but over time their progress was weak.
- Most students attained below expectations. They made appropriate progress from their starting points and in relation to learning objectives in mathematics, particularly in Grades 4 and 5. Students' progress in the development of higher-order skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, was slower. Girls made better progress than boys. By Grade 5, students had an acceptable level of attainment in sorting two-dimensional shapes according to their side and angle properties, and in calculation. Attainment in calculation in the lower grades was less acceptable. Over the last three years, the proportion of students attaining at levels in line with or above international standards had been consistently low.

- In science, most students were able to attain minimum curriculum standards. Opportunities to apply this knowledge or to practice the scientific method were limited, due to over-dependence on textbooks. The development of investigative skills were too limited as students were not given simple practical activities to stimulate enquiry. In only a few cases students used and developed critical thinking skills. Older students conducted an experiment on the leaves of a tree in the school garden. Most groups were beginning to make expected progress in science. Overall attainment in international benchmark testing was below expected levels.

### Middle

| Subjects                         | Attainment   | Progress     |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Islamic education                | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable   |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable   | Acceptable ↑ |
| English                          | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |
| Mathematics                      | Weak ↓       | Acceptable   |
| Science                          | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |

- In Islamic education, most students were able to attain levels in line with curriculum standards. They made expected progress in their understanding of Islamic Laws (Fiqh). Students could link what they had learned to the real world. They made slower progress in applying the rules of recitation (Tajweed). Information about student's progress was limited, especially for students with SEND. There was a significant difference in the level of attainment between boys and girls, which had impacted on overall attainment levels. Overall, students made acceptable progress in lessons.
- Most students were performing in line with grade level expectations in Arabic as a first language. By Grade 8, students were extending their spoken vocabulary and were able to extract information from texts, such as poems from the Omayyad era. However, a majority still relied on teachers' direction and guidance. Most students had developed age-appropriate writing skills and were able to produce work with an acceptable level of spelling and grammar. There was limited evidence of tracking students' progress from starting points and over time in all four language skills. Progress in lessons varied. Most teachers made sure that students were making progress towards the lesson objectives and acceptable progress over time. Low achievers, especially boys, made less progress than other students.
- Most students of Arabic as an additional language attained levels in line with curriculum standards for additional language speakers. New students were able to identify the sounds and shapes of letters to blend sounds and to read words and sentences. They could form short sentences in response to familiar questions. Students' listening and speaking were acceptable but their writing was less developed. The school did not provide data on individual students' starting points nor on trends for the last three years. Most students made sufficient progress in developing their listening, speaking and reading skills. New students made remarkable progress within one year. There were no students with SEND in the group.

- In English most students attained and made progress in line with curriculum expectations. Compared with international expectations they achieved below average, with girls scoring higher than boys. Students in Grade 6 used their vocabulary skills to interpret information from a text linked to a historic theme. They cooperated well in sharing resources and when asking questions. Grade 7 students had opportunities to develop their own creative ideas, for example on a subject of dreams, and as a result were enthusiastic learners. Many lessons did not give students the time or opportunity to use their literary skills in extended writing tasks. Most groups made similar progress, but boys and students with SEND made less progress than other groups of students.
- In mathematics, most students made expected progress in relation to learning objectives in mathematical knowledge and understanding about calculation, geometry and data handling. Progress in understanding numbers, for example in relation to factors and types of numbers, was steady. The same was true of calculation, for example in decimal addition and subtraction. Attainment in knowledge and understanding was significantly better than in critical thinking and problem-solving. Over the last three years, the proportion of students attaining levels in line with or above international standards had been consistently low. Girls' attainment and progress were better than those of boys.
- In science, students' attainment levels were inconsistent. Opportunities for students to apply knowledge or to practice scientific investigations were limited. There was an over-dependence on textbooks and insufficient laboratory capacity. In one class, students used sugar cubes and a paper model to create an investigation about cell surface area. Although most students made expected progress, most did not do well in external benchmark assessments. The majority of girls achieved significantly better results than boys.

### High

| Subjects                         | Attainment     | Progress       |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Islamic education                | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable     | Good           |
| Arabic as an additional language | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| English                          | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Mathematics                      | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Science                          | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |

- In Islamic education, attainment against curriculum standards was acceptable. Most students made expected progress in gaining knowledge, skills and understanding about Islamic manner, morals and values as measured against the learning objectives. The recitation skills of most students were appropriate for their age. However, students' progress in acquiring knowledge of Islamic laws (Fiqh) was still developing, such as calculating Zakat.
- By the end of this phase, most students had developed skills in line with curriculum expectations in Arabic as a first language. In Grade 9, there was a significant difference between the girls' and boys' fluency in reading prose and poetry, in their writing, and in their ability to express their opinions. Throughout the phase, a majority made good progress to write independently and produce passages for varying purposes and in different styles, using appropriate techniques. Based on recent work by students and observations in lessons, the majority of students made better than expected progress in listening, speaking and reading skills. There was no data available regarding any students with SEND but progress in lessons for these students appeared similar to that of other groups.

- In English, students attained standards in line with the expected curriculum outcomes and made acceptable progress. The curriculum enabled students to develop their listening, speaking, and reading skills. They had fewer opportunities to write for a variety of different purposes. Students performed below average levels in a variety of international benchmark examinations, with girls performing better than boys. In Grade 9, students had an appropriate knowledge of aspects of grammar and used most punctuation accurately. They were able to interpret and predict story progression from a given text. Grade 12 students made perceptive suggestions as to why poets wrote romantic poetry during the Victorian industrial revolution. Their knowledge and understanding was enhanced by the use of video and focused questioning.
- Most students made expected progress from their starting points at the end of the middle phase in mathematics. Grade 10 students showed acceptable levels of proficiency in manipulating algebraic expressions. By Grade 12, most could carry out certain techniques in calculus to an expected level of accuracy. As in other phases, attainment in knowledge and understanding was better than in critical thinking and problem-solving. The proportion of students attaining levels in line with or above international standards had been consistently better than at other phases over the last three years, though still below expectations.
- In science, most students reached expected levels of attainment. However, opportunities for them to apply their knowledge or to practice scientific investigations were limited, due to the over-dependence on textbooks. Although most students made expected progress in science according to teachers' assessments, most did not attain well in external examinations, where a majority of the girls achieved significantly better results than boys.

|                 | KG           | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Learning skills | Acceptable ↑ | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

- While the majority of students demonstrated some ability to work independently without close supervision, others lacked motivation, were passive, easily distracted and disengaged from the learning process. Students who had a genuine interest in learning took some responsibility for completing a range of tasks. In KG, children were actively involved in group work based on topics that interested them.
- Students' skills of listening to the views of others and responding with an appropriate answer were under-developed. In some lessons, however, there was effective collaboration, with groups agreeing to complete a shared task efficiently. The more confident learners supported and led their fellow students. In a few KG and lower elementary classes, students shouted out answers to questions, restricting others from listening effectively.
- Students did not appreciate or demonstrate the importance of making meaningful connections between their learning and the world beyond school. As a key learning skill, they needed to be introduced to greater opportunities to make exciting, interesting links in their learning across all curricular areas. This key skill was more evident in KG, where children had sufficient time to explore materials used in mathematics and science.
- Students had no access to the internet in the classroom. They did not have any modern technology, digital media or new reference books so as to engage in meaningful research in the library. Opportunities for students to exhibit problem-solving skills, to draw inferences and to learn with greater confidence and independence were very weak features of the daily learning routine.



## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

|                      | KG   | Elementary | Middle | High |
|----------------------|------|------------|--------|------|
| Personal development | Good | Good       | Good   | Good |

- Most students had positive and responsible attitudes to school and to one another. Many, particularly older students, were self-reliant. They responded well to the oral and the minimal written feedback which they received.
- Students' behavior was generally positive. On some occasions when lessons failed to inspire them, the behavior of some, mainly younger boys, did not meet expected levels. Students were courteous to adults and to other students. They followed the school rules.
- Relationships between staff and students were good. Students respected the needs of others. Most collaborated well on tasks and supported one another in class and around the school.
- Many students had an understanding of what constituted a healthy lifestyle, but did not fully apply this to their own lives. There was no current whole-school health education programme for students.
- Levels of attendance were good. A majority of students arrived on time for the start of lessons. However, too many students, especially those who came to school by car, arrived too late to attend the daily assembly.

|                                                                             | KG   | Elementary | Middle | High |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------|--------|------|
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Good | Good       | Good   | Good |

- Students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic values and how these influence the culture of the UAE. Older students could discuss how tolerant and kind Islam was. Younger learners were able to explain the rationale behind the pillars of Islam, especially Zakat and fasting during Ramadan.
- Students showed an understanding and appreciation towards the culture and heritage of the UAE. Older students were able to discuss the nation's developmental journey. Those in high school were also aware of the UAE initiatives such as the 'Emirates Mars Mission' and 'Year of Reading'.
- Students knew about their own culture and appreciated world cultures. However, across all phases, students had a limited knowledge and understanding of the diversity of world cultures.

|                                                    | KG         | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Social responsibility and innovation skills</b> | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

- Students participated in activities to help keep the facilities clean, to recycle, and to volunteer as safety monitors and student representatives. When the option was provided, a number of students volunteered in a community clean-up activity. Nearly all students demonstrated a strong work ethic.
- Most were accustomed to having teachers tell them what to do next. They did not usually take the initiative in their own learning.
- When provided with the opportunity to care for the school's environment, most students responded positively. Many students could explain why conservation was important. Most participated in recycling efforts.

### 3. Teaching and assessment

|                                        | KG           | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Teaching for effective learning</b> | Acceptable ↑ | Weak       | Acceptable | Acceptable |

- Most teachers had a secure knowledge of the subjects which they taught. They generally explained things clearly. Teachers in the KG phase also had a secure knowledge of how children learn. This knowledge was variable in the other phases. Teachers, particularly in the elementary phase, needed to adopt a wider range of approaches so that classroom activities matched more closely the ways in which students learn best.
- In all phases, teachers used appropriate planning formats. This encouraged them to set out key learning objectives, the resources needed in lessons, the learning activities which would take place, and how they would assess the learning of different groups of students. They did not always complete these formats well, nor did they implement the content effectively. Too often, the plans were based on textbooks, thus restricting lessons.
- In a majority of lessons, teachers engaged students' interest by asking questions to ensure that the students were attentive and to assess their learning. Open-ended questions to make students reflect and think for themselves were much less common.
- Teachers often set tasks which involved an increasing gradient of difficulty. This helped to match classwork to the needs of different groups of students. However, this was less than effective for the higher-attaining students, as they usually had to start on tasks which were not sufficiently challenging. Work in KG more closely matched the learning needs of different groups and teachers provided some choice in the activities.
- Teachers had started to think about how they could develop students' skills in critical thinking and in other higher-order skills, such as problem-solving and independent learning and research. This aspect was, on the whole, at a very early stage of development.
- The quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language varied considerably across phases, and between boys' and girls' sections. Most teachers demonstrated adequate subject knowledge, but their understanding of how students learn best was variable. Their questions were mainly about recall of knowledge, providing very few opportunities for critical thinking and reflection.



- In most lessons, teachers of Arabic as an additional language established positive relationships with their students. Teachers planned lessons which relied mainly on modelling language patterns and emphasized reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary building. They had no access to appropriate learning resources, which resulted in limited opportunities to make learning varied and enjoyable.

|            | KG   | Elementary | Middle | High |
|------------|------|------------|--------|------|
| Assessment | Weak | Weak       | Weak ↓ | Weak |

- Internal school formative and summative assessments were used inconsistently across all phases to track understanding and progress. Internal assessments were not always linked to the US curriculum standards, nor used to analyze learning and plan next steps for the students. While there were a few examples of on-going assessment, most assessments were summative in nature, providing only a grade or mark.
- The school had a satisfactory process for comparing the performance of students' attainment on external benchmark examinations in English and mathematics. The results of these comparisons were not used to full effect. They had yet to impact effectively on teaching and learning.
- Assessment information was not well organized to allow for the analysis that would monitor the progress of individuals or groups of students against their fellow students.
- Teachers and school leaders rarely used school assessment data to modify the curriculum or to adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of all groups of students.
- Teachers rarely provided feedback, either orally or in writing, to tell students what they needed to do to improve. Teachers' marking generally consisted of random ticks. Their comments were generally limited to one or two words of affirmation. There was no school-wide marking policy to ensure that teachers provided feedback to students. Self and peer assessments were not an embedded practice.

#### 4. Curriculum

|                                      | KG           | Elementary | Middle     | High       |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Acceptable ↑ | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

- The school used the California State standards. However, it had not implemented this programme for all subjects and was in a state of transition between its old curriculum and the California standards. Overall the curriculum had a clear rationale and a reasonable scope and sequence which was appropriate from KG through to Grade 12. Statutory requirements were not met in Islamic education or Arabic languages.
- Although the school had not yet fully aligned its curriculum with the California State Standards, it had provided students with a curriculum that had continuity and progression in all subject areas for all grades.
- Students were given many choices for learning in KG. However, from Grades 1 to 8, students' choice was limited. In the high school, students could choose from electives.
- From KG through to Grade 8, some teachers provided students with lessons which made connections between different curricular areas, and allowed students to transfer learning. The heads of department in mathematics and science in the secondary phase ensured that students had some jointly planned activities.

- The school leadership team had conducted regular curriculum audits. Leaders planned to implement all of the California State Standards by the second term of this academic year.
- The school implemented UAE social studies as a discrete subject from Grade 1 to Grade 9 for one period per week. Teachers used MoE textbooks including civic studies, history and geography. UAE social studies was effective in developing knowledge and understanding of the values and culture of the UAE.

|                       | KG   | Elementary | Middle | High |
|-----------------------|------|------------|--------|------|
| Curriculum adaptation | Weak | Weak ↓     | Weak ↓ | Weak |

- There was little recognition that almost all classes contained a range of abilities where modification of the curriculum content was essential. Students with SEND were most at risk, with few enabled to reach their potential due to weak adjustment of the curriculum.
- Links with local and wider communities had not been prioritized. Opportunities for older students to make a meaningful social contribution were very limited. There was no evaluation of uptake in the few extra-curricular activities provided. The promotion of a culture of innovation, enterprise and creativity was not an intrinsic feature of the curriculum.
- Apart from social studies, there was no consistent approach or curriculum planning to extend students' deeper understanding and experience of the culture and heritage of the UAE. Opportunities for the whole school community to celebrate and experience the core values and traditions of the Arab society that they lived in were often missed.
- Arabic was offered to all children enrolled in KG. For five periods a week, children had opportunities to develop the links between letters, words and sounds. Integration between Arabic and Islamic education enabled children to develop personal, social and critical skills, in addition to building vocabulary through listening and speaking.

#### 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

|                                                                               | KG           | Elementary   | Middle       | High         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ |

- Child protection, anti-bullying and safeguarding policies were in place. Staff had not received regular training or information regarding procedures. The school was aware of the need to ensure cyber and other safety measures, and adequate support systems were in place.
- The school undertook thorough and regular checks to ensure that the premises were clean, hygienic and secure. Students were properly supervised in school and when on school transport. The school met most requirements for health and safety, including emergency evacuation. However, regular safety audits should be part of the school's regular monitoring programme.
- Records of health and safety were up to date. Appropriate risk assessments were in place. The clinic was safe and well-staffed. It provided good support for a range of student needs, including regular health checks and advice.

- The school premises, equipment and resources provided a generally safe and broadly adequate learning environment.
- The school provided some curriculum opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle. They were not consistently planned throughout the school. Meals and snacks were generally healthy. Posters promoting healthy eating were on display. Students received some guidance from the clinic where relevant. A whole school programme to address the provision of advice about diet and exercise had not been implemented.

|                  | KG     | Elementary | Middle | High   |
|------------------|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| Care and support | Weak ↓ | Weak ↓     | Weak ↓ | Weak ↓ |

- Teachers and students were, in general, respectful of one another. A more effective approach to managing behavior was required, with more systematic planning and a greater focus on the social and emotional needs of a wider range of students. Parents were not always clear about how teachers reported misbehavior, followed up on sanctions or dealt with more serious issues.
- Arrangements to promote punctuality and record unexcused absences were ineffective, especially on entry to school each morning. Good attendance and punctuality were not rewarded. It was unclear what decisive actions the school took to ensure high levels of attendance.
- The school had improved systems to identify students with SEND. Some teachers were unfamiliar with the referral procedures. They also needed to provide a better range of classroom observational data to strengthen the identification process. A number of students with behavioral issues were not monitored, closely enough for the school to plan a range of interventions to meet students' specific learning needs.
- The range of support for students was managed to good effect by the SEND team. Though support was still limited, there was a commitment to improve and to provide better accommodation, facilities and resources. Specialist support to meet the specific language, communication and sensory needs of a number of students was not sufficient, thereby inhibiting their progress in almost all lessons.
- Personal and academic guidance did not have the priority expected in a US curriculum. Students were mostly left to find information and advice on personal matters and guidance about career pathways for themselves. For SEND students, personalized advice was not prioritized in the senior phases.

#### Provide for students with special educational needs and disabilities

|                                                                                                     | Overall |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities | Weak    |

- The SEND team was highly qualified. The team's vision for and commitment to a high-quality model of provision was not supported or implemented by the majority of teachers. Heads of department and other school leaders demonstrated little commitment to supporting the SEND team.
- The identification of a wider range of students was improving slowly. The referral process by individual class teachers was erratic, inconsistent and unstructured. It was evident that several students in the school required a formal diagnosis.
- Partnerships with parents were limited. School policy clarifying parents' actual roles and the review of planning for their children's outcomes remained unclear. This hindered acceptable being achieved

- Different groups of students experienced little or no differentiated learning. Those with special gifts and talents remained unchallenged in almost all lessons. Progress for almost all of the school's identified students with SEND was weak overall.

## 6. Leadership and management

|                                 | Overall |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| The effectiveness of leadership | Weak ↓  |

- The school had a recently developed shared vision which focused on student-centered education. The vice-principal had articulated three priority areas: high academic standards, teaching, learning and curriculum auditing, and students' community involvement. However, leadership at all levels and teachers had not yet embraced this strategic direction. Leaders were committed to the UAE national educational agenda and Emirati priorities. There was not total alignment with the Californian state standards for all subjects.
- The school had a small group of senior leaders who had some knowledge of the US curriculum, as well as a genuine desire to improve the school. While improvements were evident in KG, across the remainder of the school the learning culture remained variable. A greater number of experienced senior and middle leaders was required to ensure that the school achieved its aims.
- Relationships and communication channels were becoming clearer. Issues of inequitable remuneration had had a negative effect on staff morale. The senior leadership team was endeavoring to formulate strategies to ensure that all teachers focused on improved teaching. They shared their knowledge and modelled best practice, but not all had a secure understanding of pedagogy and how to develop consistently good quality teaching throughout the school.
- Almost all senior leaders showed the necessary capacity to devise strategies to secure sustained improvement. Their overall effectiveness was diminished due to insufficient numbers of experienced senior and middle managers. The CEO and the owners needed to support the employment of additional high-quality teachers, as well as the provision of an improved range of teaching resources such as computer technology.
- School leaders had had success in improving a small number of some aspects of the school. Leaders had sought strategies and methods to enhance best practice. They exhibited some commitment to the UAE National Agenda priorities. They were now using International Benchmark Tests (IBT) to gain a deeper understanding of students' attainment. They were hampered due to insufficient resourcing, support and guidance from the CEO and owners.

|                                                 | Overall |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|
| School self-evaluation and improvement planning | Weak    |

- Processes to improve school self-evaluation were developing. The school had a range of systems to monitor and evaluate students' learning outcomes and the quality of teaching. The views of parents and students had not been sought. The school had accurately assessed a number of its key performance indicators.



- Teachers were regularly observed and the quality of their teaching was evaluated against a comprehensive range of quality indicators. While overall ratings were promptly provided, teachers did not receive sufficient information on what they needed to do to improve. Leaders were yet to identify patterns of school-wide weaknesses in teaching. They had not yet differentiated or personalized the professional development programmes.
- The school's improvement planning consisted of a school-wide master plan with a range of targets. Not all targets had measurable outcomes. This reduced the effectiveness of the plan. It was not a sound foundation for future school development.
- The principal and senior leaders had undertaken a broad range of initiatives over recent months. Regular professional development, a range of new policies and procedures, a focus on UAE National Agenda items and the appointment of some key staff all had the possibility of enhancing opportunities for improved student learning. Most of the initiatives were not yet fully embedded, thus reducing their overall impact.

|                                             | Overall |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| Partnerships with parents and the community | Weak ↓  |

- There were inconsistencies in the school's approach to engaging parents. In general parents with children in the KG appreciated regular opportunities to support their children's homework and engage with teachers. In higher phases, homework was often too difficult for students or not timely. Parents were impeded from communicating with teachers. The Parents Association was no longer functional. Parents did not have a voice in school developments
- Lines of communication were variable. The school's web site was informative. However, regular updates from the school about events and activities were often not forthcoming. Parental concerns or complaints were not handled effectively or efficiently.
- Procedures for reporting to parents on the progress of their children were irregular. The reports contained too little information on required next steps in learning. This resulted in parents having a confused picture of how well their children were performing at school.
- There were few links with the local community. Children's learning in KG benefited from trips beyond the school walls. More senior students were involved in a few sporting and academic competitions.

|            | Overall |
|------------|---------|
| Governance | Weak ↓  |

- The school did not have a board of governors. Parents and other community stakeholders were denied a voice in the operation of the school. The school's CEO was the conduit between the owners and the principal. His CEO's role was financially based rather than educational.
- The CEO had a limited knowledge of the day-to-day management of the school, and only a cursory knowledge of its overall operations. Poor staff retention had yet to be addressed. Many resources requested by the principal to support the school's US curriculum and the UAE National Agenda had not been provided. The school's leaders were not effectively held to account for the low levels of performance.



- The CEO had not supported the school effectively to ensure that it met its commitment to parents. He had not been active in shaping the school's further development. Statutory requirements were not met in Islamic education or Arabic languages. The CEO had not ensured the school was compliant with requirements. He needed to guarantee that sufficient resources were provided to ensure improved academic outcomes.

|                                                | Overall |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Management, staffing, facilities and resources | Weak ↓  |

- The effectiveness and efficiency of the day-to-day management of the school was generally adequate. However, the significantly high staff turnover had impacted on the ability of the school to provide a consistent timetable for students in all phases. This inhibited students' attainment. Some of the school's procedures and routines were not supportive of high quality provision.
- Staff turnover had had a negative impact on the school's provision of a broad and challenging curriculum. Most students with SEND did not have sufficient classroom learning opportunities to support expected progress. Throughout the school, the learning needs of boys were not always adequately met. There was no dedicated careers counsellor to provide advice for senior students. The employment of well qualified teachers was urgently required.
- The premises and facilities were well maintained, with adequate displays of students' work. Many classrooms were small, restricting opportunities for group work. There were not enough science laboratories to support the curriculum and the UAE National Agenda requirements. Some classroom furniture was inadequate and inappropriate. Students with a physical disability could not independently access the higher floor classrooms, as there was no lift.
- Resources did not match the learning needs of all students. The library had insufficient Arabic texts, fiction and information technology resources to support student research programmes. The use of computers within classrooms and across the school was limited. There were too few portable computers. The Wi-Fi system was not fit for purpose.

## The views of the parents, teachers and students

Before the inspection, the views of the 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    |    |
| <b>Parents*</b><br>  | 2015-2016 | 81 |
|                                                                                                       | 2014-2015 | 90 |
| <b>Teachers</b><br>  | 51        |    |
| <b>Students</b><br> | 174       |    |

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

- Most parents, who responded to the survey, were satisfied overall with the quality of education available to their children.
- Most parents felt that their children made at least good progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding in Islamic education, Arabic, English and science. A large majority thought that their children were making good progress in mathematics.
- Most parents agreed that their children enjoyed school and were safe there. A majority felt that their children were safe on school buses. A majority agreed that their children were well prepared for the next stage of their life or learning and that the school provided appropriate careers education.
- A large majority of parents agreed that the school was well led and that their views were acted upon.
- Only half of the students who completed their surveys agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of education which they received.
- A minority felt that their progress in English, mathematics and science was not of a good standard. A large minority of students reported that they were not developing a good range of learning skills, that overall students were not well behaved, that the teachers did not help them to learn and they were not treated fairly around the school.
- A large majority of teachers did not consider that students were well behaved. A few did not believe that the school was well led. Most teachers indicated that the principal had shared the National Agenda targets with staff.

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)