

INSPECTION REPORT

The Winchester School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Winchester School

Location	Jebel Ali
Type of school	Private
Website	www.thewinchesterschool.com
Telephone	04-882-0444
Address	P.O. Box 38058, Dubai
Principal	Ranju Anand
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3,516
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	69 (2%)
Date of the inspection	3rd to 7th March 2013

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The context of the school

The Winchester School is located in Jebel Ali. The school had 3,516 boys and girls on the roll, aged between three and 18 years. Students were enrolled in the Foundation Stage, primary (Years 1 to 6), secondary (Year 7 to 11) and post-16 (Years 12 to 13) phases. The school had students from over 90 different nations including India, Pakistan, Arab countries, Asian countries and The Philippines. About two per cent of the students were Emiratis. A similar percentage of students had been identified as having a special educational need (SEN). Approximately 20 per cent of the students studied Arabic as a first language.

The school's curriculum was based on the National Curriculum for England and Wales, and was adapted to ensure awareness of the UAE's local culture and traditions. Students were entered for external Cambridge, UK IGCSE, AS and A-Level examinations in the upper school phases.

At the time of the inspection, there were 196 teachers and 82 teaching assistants in the school. All were well qualified and suitably experienced.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- Students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour, as well as their community and environmental awareness, in the Foundation Stage and the post-16 phase;
- Students' excellent understanding of Islamic values and their appreciation of their own and others' cultures;
- The outstanding provision for students' health and safety and the good support for students with special educational needs;
- The strong and committed leadership of the Principal and her senior staff members;
- The outstanding links with parents, enabling them to support their children's learning.

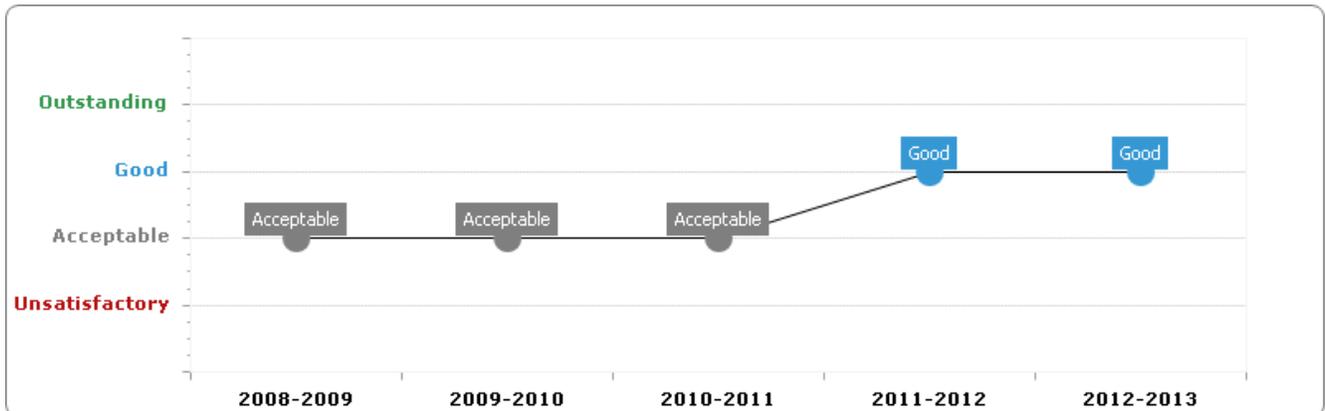
Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment and progress so that they are good in all key subjects;
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have good understanding of how students learn,
 - providing work that is challenging for the higher attaining students;
- Develop the skills of subject leaders in analyzing assessment data and taking effective action based up on it.

Progress since the last inspection

- There had been improvements in the attainment and progress by students in Islamic Education in the primary school, and improved progress by post-16 students in mathematics;
- Students' attitudes and behaviour, their understanding of Islamic values and their community and environmental awareness were more developed;
- The induction and professional development of teachers helped improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- Health and safety arrangements had improved to outstanding quality across the school;
- Students with special educational needs were very well supported.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment across the school was varied, although in English it was good across all phases. Students' attainment was generally better in the Foundation Stage and primary phase. Most Muslim students were able to explain the five pillars of Islam and had clear understanding of Islamic etiquette. In Arabic, students could read passages and use short sentences. Their independent writing skills were limited, as most writing was copied. In English, children made a good start in their early reading and, in the primary phase, could read with understanding and speak fluently. In the secondary phase, their reading was restricted. In mathematics there was good understanding of numbers, shapes and space throughout the school. Students' knowledge of algebra and statistics was secure. Students' skills of investigation and applying mathematics through solving real-life problems were less well developed. In science, in the Foundation Stage, most children were able to identify insects and spiders by counting their legs. By the post-16 phase the majority of students had a good scientific understanding but most were unable to extend their knowledge by critical thinking and independent learning. Students' skills in investigative work and solving real-life problems were less well developed.

Progress across the school was varied. It was good in Arabic as an additional language, English, mathematics and science. Progress in understanding Islamic principles, values and morals was above expectations in the primary phase. Progress in developing recitation skills was inadequate in the secondary phase. Students' skills in reading improved through practice and repetition in Arabic but their skills in speaking and writing were developing slowly. Progress in English was outstanding in the Foundation Stage, where most children were not native speakers. Across the school, students responded with increasing confidence and accuracy in all aspects of language development. Progress in mathematics in the Foundation Stage was good because of the exciting activities which enabled children to investigate and develop their curiosity. In science, better progress was seen in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, where there was a stronger emphasis on investigations about the world. In the higher phases, students' progress was stronger when challenging application problems were presented to them.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment was acceptable. On entry, most students began school with low levels of English, mathematics and science knowledge. Their progress was generally good and was stronger for students who joined the school at an early age. Girls generally attained higher and made faster progress than boys, although a few boys made exceptional progress. Attendance and punctuality were good. Students' engagement in lessons was in line with that of their peers in all phases and subjects; the

engagement of a few boys in Islamic Education and Arabic was strong. Reports to parents were informative. Members of the Arabic department provided explanations and translations of any unfamiliar aspects of teaching and learning. Emirati parents were involved in school events and took advantage of the very frequent parents' information and educational events.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and in the post-16 phase, and good in the primary and secondary phases. Students showed genuine appreciation of the school's diversity and enjoyed trusting relationships with their teachers. Behaviour was excellent throughout the school, although self-discipline was occasionally lacking during lessons. Students usually made personal choices consistent with a healthy lifestyle. Attendance was good overall. Students' understanding of Islamic values and cultural awareness was outstanding across the school. They demonstrated mature and thoughtful understanding of the role of Islam in their everyday lives in Dubai. They knew how to behave in considerate ways. They put Islamic values into practice through charitable giving and support of humanitarian causes. Their pride in both the UAE and their personal heritage was evident. Community and environmental responsibility were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and in the post-16 phase, and good in the other phases. Children in the Foundation Stage were self-reliant in managing their personal routines and caring for their classrooms. Regular experiences in the school's garden helped them develop their understanding of natural materials and processes. Work ethics were especially strong in the Foundation Stage and in the post-16 phase. There were a variety of opportunities for older students to have their voices heard as leaders.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good in three phases, but acceptable in the secondary phase. Almost all teachers had good knowledge of their subjects and provided clear explanations. Lesson plans were comprehensive; they included intended learning outcomes and showed a range of learning activities, often different to meet the needs of different groups of students. When appropriate, lessons included consideration of moral issues, for example, in science. "Hot seating" and "mind mapping" were used effectively in the teaching of geography. However, in the secondary phase, the teaching of scientific enquiry and investigation skills was sometimes restricted. Closed questions often did not challenge students to think and thus deepen their understanding. Nevertheless, good questions by teachers in the Foundation Stage, often on a one-to-one basis, enabled children to develop their language skills well. The teaching of critical thinking skills was inconsistent across the school.

Learning was good in all phases, except in the secondary phase where it was acceptable. Most students were eager to learn and to participate in classroom activities. They worked well with others when given opportunities to do so. However, in the secondary phase, many students were not actively involved in their learning. They acquired facts but did not adequately exploit what they had learned, and the lack of challenge led to a loss of interest for many. In the post-16 phase, students were beginning to take responsibility for their own studies. They used information technology effectively, and in some cases imaginatively, to advance their learning.

Assessment was good in all phases of the school. There was a good system for moderation of teachers' assessments. Tracking systems were in place to record attainment data, but the levels of progress being made by students were not clear. The school did not track the attainment of returning students to get a perspective on long-term progress. The tracking of attainment in the Foundation Stage, where there were strong links to the Early Years curriculum, was being introduced. Teachers' questions to students was too frequently used to affirm correct answers rather than assess their learning. Teachers occasionally answered their own questions before students had a chance to respond to them.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in all four phases. The provision of courses appropriate to the needs and interests of students had improved the breadth and balance of the curriculum. New vocationally orientated courses provided more choices for students of varying abilities. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provided active, enjoyable and purposeful learning experiences across all subject areas. In the primary phase, cross-curricular links brought coherence to students' learning. Good organisation and collaboration ensured a smooth transition between phases. A variety of enrichment activities, including plentiful extra-curricular options, contributed to students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning. The contribution of parents as partners who supported and enriched the curriculum was achieved through the innovative 'Aim High' programme. Opportunities for students to tackle challenging tasks, do investigative work, and to think critically and creatively were recognised as requiring further development.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for the health and safety of students was outstanding. The school maintained a fully safe, hygienic and secure environment. Students, including those with special educational needs, benefited from buildings and equipment that were well maintained and regularly inspected for repair, cleanliness, and safety. Students were well supervised throughout the day. Healthy living was successfully promoted through class work and presentations by the medical staff and some students. The canteen offered a healthy menu. Staff members and students were fully aware of child protection arrangements. Record keeping was thorough, including medical records, incident reports and details of evacuation drills. Medical doctors and nurses monitored and advised students. Safe practices prevailed on school transport and in the supervision of traffic and pedestrians during arrivals and departures.

The school was wholly inclusive. All students were valued and respected. The staff and older students were good role models and relationships were very strong throughout the school. Staff members showed high levels of care and concern for their students and provided effective support for their well-being and personal development. Post-16 students valued the guidance on study techniques and future career pathways that the school provided. There was effective support for students whose first language was not English. Behaviour was skillfully managed and students responded positively to their teacher's high expectations. There were rigorous systems in place to promote high levels of punctuality and attendance.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for students with special education needs was effective and resulted in their making good progress. The school had rigorous and clear procedures for identifying such students. Parents were active partners and they were supported through regular communication, reviews and workshops. Key staff members understood students' needs extremely well and provided effective support. They made good use of the individual education plans and lesson plans to ensure that teachers supported students in their next steps in learning. The school had identified students who were gifted and talented and provided challenge through a good range of extra-curricular activities such as the 'World Scholars Cup'. However, the provision for gifted and talented students in most lessons did not fully meet their needs.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was good. The Principal provided strong and purposeful leadership. The focus was on improving the quality of teaching and learning against a background of high staff turnover. Senior leaders provided committed support to subject leaders, were still developing their roles. They were learning how to analyse data and make effective responses to it. The Principal and the senior leadership team provided a clear strategic direction based on a shared vision. Professional and purposeful relationships existed between leaders at all levels and the learning community in the school. The capacity of leaders to improve the school further was strong.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school's self-evaluation was undertaken in collaboration with the staff, students and parents. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the classrooms had contributed to improvements, but there was insufficient high quality teaching seen at the time of the inspection. Senior staff members had clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their analyses accorded well with the findings of the inspection team. The focus on improvement was evident in the school's successful response to the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents were increasingly involved in the life of the school. They supported it in a variety of ways. Included were fund-raising, reading stories, the 'Parents teaching Parents' language course and organised special events that enabled the sharing of cultures and heritage. They appreciated the approachability of leaders and the regular communication. Workshops and information bulletins helped them to understand how their children were taught so that they could provide complementary support at home. Good community links such as those with the Rashid Paediatric Centre and orphanages in Nepal and Zambia enhanced students' learning.

Governance was good. School owners played a significant role in supporting the school. They held the school to account for its performance and ensured that the school met its commitments to parents. The school benefited from corporate arrangements and systems including staff training and induction. Although there was no direct representative of the parent body on the board, owners sought out parents' views through questionnaires and surveys.

The overall management of procedures and routines, staffing, facilities and resources was good. School leaders provided efficient and effective management. All staff members were qualified and benefited from the ongoing professional development provided by the school. The school offered an attractive learning environment with adequate classrooms and additional spaces for students with special educational needs.

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Resources for learning were generally of good quality. The library areas were spacious but held a limited range of literature. The school was sufficiently well equipped with textbooks, practical materials and equipment.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	469	19%
	Last year	372	16%
Teachers	74		37%
Students	133		47%

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

Approximately one fifth of the parents responded to the survey which was slightly higher than last year. Minorities of teachers and students responded to their surveys. Parents generally agreed that their children was making good progress in English. They were less positive about progress in Arabic for native speakers. Most agreed that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, mathematics, science and Arabic as an additional language. Almost all parents reported that their children enjoyed school, that they were looked after and felt safe in the school and on the buses. Parents agreed that students were respected, valued and treated fairly. Most parents thought that the school was well led. About one fifth of those responding were not involved in decision making. Almost all teachers confirmed that students were well looked after and kept safe. Senior students agreed. Almost all teachers believed that the school was well led and that they were involved in decision making. A minority of senior students thought that their opinions were not listened to and that they were involved in decision making.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

inspection@khda.gov.ae

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