



دائرة التعليم والمعرفة
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND KNOWLEDGE

Inspection Report of Private School Merryland International School

Overall Effectiveness: Outstanding

Academic Year 2017 – 2018



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School Information

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------|
| General Information | Inspection date: | from | 12 Jumada Al-Awwal | to | 15 Jumada Al-Awwal |
| | | from | 29-Jan-18 | to | 01-Feb-18 |
| | School name | Merryland International School | | | |
| | School ID | 201 | | | |
| | School address | Plot 13, ME 9, Mussaffah, Abu Dhabi | | | |
| | School telephone | +971 (0)2 551 9626 | | | |
| | School official email | merryland.pvt@adec.ac.ae | | | |
| | School website | www.merryland.org | | | |
| | School curriculum | Cambridg International | | | |
| | School phases | Kindergarten (KG), Primary, Middle and High | | | |
| | Fee range and category | AED23,500 – AED41,100 (Middle - high) | | | |
| | Number of lessons observed | 147 | | | |
| Number of joint lessons observed | 16 | | | | |
| Staff Information | Total number of teachers | 159 | | | |
| | Turnover rate | 8% | | | |
| | Number of teaching assistants | 6 | | | |
| | Teacher- student ratio | 1: 16 | | | |
| Student Information | Total number of students | 2518 | | | |
| | % of Emirati Students | 11 % | | | |
| | % of Largest nationality groups | 1. Pakistani 27% | | | |
| | | 2. Indian 21% | | | |
| | | 3. Bangladeshi 10% | | | |
| | % of SEN students | 1% | | | |
| | % of students per phase | KG: 16% | Middle: 28% | | |
| Primary: 39% | | High: 17% | | | |
| Gender | Boys and girls | | | | |



The Performance of the School

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Performance Standard 1</p> <p>Students' Achievement</p> <p>Outstanding</p> | <p>Performance Standard 2</p> <p>Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills</p> <p>Outstanding</p> |
| <p>Performance Standard 3</p> <p>Teaching and Assessment</p> <p>Outstanding</p> | <p>Performance Standard 4</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <p>Outstanding</p> |
| <p>Performance Standard 5</p> <p>The protection, care, guidance and support of students</p> <p>Outstanding</p> | <p>Performance Standard 6</p> <p>Leadership and management</p> <p>Outstanding</p> |



Evaluation of the school's overall performance

- The overall performance of the school is outstanding. Since the last inspection, the number of students has remained stable, as has the composition of the senior leadership team. Teacher turnover is low.
- Students' achievement is outstanding, overall. It is outstanding in the KG, and in English, mathematics and science. Students' achievement is very good in Islamic education, good in social studies and Arabic as a first language. It remains acceptable for Arabic as a second language. Students' learning skills are outstanding..
- Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills are outstanding. Students enjoy learning and their attendance is outstanding. Their relationships with others are exemplary, as is their appreciation of Islamic values and UAE culture. Students are excellent ambassadors for the school. Leaderships skills in the KG are not as strongly developed as those of students in other phases of the school
- The overall quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Teachers expertly impart subject knowledge effectively and create highly engaging learning environments. In Arabic medium-subjects, teachers do not always provide work that fully challenges higher-order thinking.
- The school's curriculum is outstanding. It makes highly meaningful links to Emirati culture and UAE society. The curriculum promotes students' enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurial skills effectively. In almost all subjects, the curriculum is rigorously reviewed and modified regularly.
- The protection, care, guidance and support of students is outstanding. The school has rigorous procedures in place to keep students safe. Students with special educational needs (SEN) and those who are gifted and talented (G&T) are identified promptly and supported. Students' well-being is monitored closely, and older students are provided comprehensive career guidance.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The founder's vision and ethos are at the very heart of the school. Parents make an excellent contribution to school life. School leaders are inspirational and lead the school highly effectively. Staff new to leadership roles need more time to further raise achievement in Arabic..



Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve



- Seniors leaders have addressed each of the recommendations in the last inspection report. New leadership in the Arabic-medium subjects has provided targeted professional development for teachers. In these subjects, learning objectives are now displayed in most lessons and teachers are beginning to use a more varied range of teaching strategies. This has led to increased achievement in Islamic education and Arabic as a first language.
- School leaders have specifically worked to raise students' achievement in Arabic as a first language. They have shared and analysed good practice around the school and provided targeted Professional Development to raise achievement. In lessons, learning objectives are now displayed in most lessons in the Arabic medium subjects and teachers are using a more varied range of teaching strategies. The school now develops students' creative, critical-thinking and innovation skills successfully. Leaders have reviewed curriculum and lesson planning. Cross-curricular links are now firmly embedded features of learning. In most lessons, students collaborate, share ideas and challenge one another's understanding. Lessons use resources, including ICT, effectively to support learning. The school has introduced the 'question of the day' and 'a thought for the day' initiatives to deepen students' critical-thinking skills. Leaders focus on the development of these skills when observing lessons.
- Overall, the progress made in raising standards since the previous inspection indicates that leaders demonstrate outstanding capacity to further improve the school.



Key areas of strength and area for improvement

Key areas of strength

1. Raised achievement in Islamic education, Arabic as a first language, English, mathematics, science and information technology (IT).
2. Students' understanding and appreciation of UAE culture and heritage, including other world cultures.
3. Student's creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
4. Teachers' well-imparted subject knowledge delivered through a rich and varied curriculum.
5. The school's vision and ethos and its impact on students' learning.
6. Partnerships with parents and the community.

Key areas for improvement

1. To further raise students' achievement in Arabic medium subjects by:
 - i. raising teachers' expectations of students' learning
 - ii. planning greater opportunities for students to speak, read and write in lessons
 - iii. asking questions to challenge and deepen learning
 - iv. setting more challenging work that is closely matched to students' needs, particularly for higher-achieving students.



Provision for Reading

- The school's library has a wide range of age-appropriate texts in Arabic and English. There is a selection of fiction and non-fiction books to support learning across the curriculum. Each class spends two periods a week in the library. Students are free to access the library during free study periods.
- The school has focused on developing students' reading skills in Arabic and English. Through comprehensive analysis of data, leaders have identified gaps in students' learning. This has resulted in the school purchasing Arabic and English reading schemes, with online services. Leaders have trained staff accordingly.
- Teachers foster a love of, and enjoyment for, reading. Students read regularly both at school and at home. Most classrooms have a reading corner. Reading is highly valued by the whole school community.
- To promote children's enjoyment of reading, the school participates in national reading challenges such as Abu Dhabi read.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

| Students' achievement Indicators | | KG | Primary | Middle | High |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Islamic Education | Attainment | N/A | Very Good | Very Good | Good |
| | Progress | N/A | Very Good | Very Good | Good |
| Arabic (as a First Language) | Attainment | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| | Progress | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Arabic (as additional Language) | Attainment | N/A | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| | Progress | N/A | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Social Studies | Attainment | Very Good | Good | Good | N/A |
| | Progress | Very Good | Good | Good | N/A |
| English | Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| | Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Mathematics | Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| | Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Science | Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| | Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Other subjects (Art, Music, PE) | Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| | Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Learning Skills | | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |



Overall achievement

- The overall quality of students' achievement is very good. It is outstanding in English, mathematics, science and other subjects overall. Achievement is very good in Islamic education. It is good in social studies and Arabic as a first language. It remains acceptable in Arabic as a second language. Children typically start school with skills that are broadly expected for their age. Almost all students do not speak English when they join the KG. School data and inspection evidences indicates that children make outstanding progress across this phase, overall.
- 2017 International General Certificate in Education (iGCSE) data shows that students' attainment is outstanding in all subjects, including in Arabic. Students' attainment in Advanced subsidiary (AS) levels is very good in mathematics, IT, biology, chemistry and physics. Advanced (A) level data also indicates that students attain at a very good level in these subjects, and outstanding in chemistry.
- 2017 External Measure of Achievement (EMSA) data for Arabic reading is good overall when benchmarked against national expectations for Grades 5, 7, 9, and 11. Students' Arabic writing results were graded as weak in these grades. Grade 12 Ministry of Education (MoE) exam results were outstanding in 2017.
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) data exceeds international averages in both subjects. Programme for International Students' Assessments (PISA) mock results for 2017 were above Abu Dhabi national averages in reading, mathematics and science.
- School's internal continuous assessment data indicates that students' achievement is outstanding in almost all subjects, and over time. This is not always borne out by students' coursework in lessons in the Arabic-medium subjects.
- In lessons and coursework, students with SEN and those who are G&T achieve at an outstanding level. There is no significant difference between the achievement of Emirati and non-Emirati students, or between boys and girls.

Subjects

- Students' achievement in **Islamic education** is very good overall. It is good in the high phase. The large majority of students are achieving above age-appropriate curriculum standards. Students' recitations from the Holy Qur'an are accurate and conveyed clearly. They make very good links with prayer and its meaning to their lives. Students demonstrate a secure understanding of Islamic concepts



and values, including the importance of cleanliness.

- Students' achievement in **Arabic as a first language** is good. Achievement is acceptable in Arabic as a second language. Students can read texts and understand their meaning. They can write sentences using a limited vocabulary when learning Arabic as a second language. Students' speaking skills are generally less well developed.
- Students' achievement in **social studies** is good overall. It is very good in the KG. The majority of students are achieving above age-appropriate curriculum standards. They demonstrate a good understanding of UAE geography, its history and the role key leaders play in its success.
- Students achievement in **English** is outstanding. Most students attain levels that are well above curriculum standards. Students can speak fluently in English and hold conversations confidently, articulating their views with clarity. Almost all students read to a very high level demonstrating a deep understanding of texts read. Students in all phases can write with clarity, conveying opinions thoughtfully and using grammatically correct conventions of English.
- Students' achievement in **mathematics** is outstanding. Students attain levels that are well above expected curriculum standards. Their mental mathematics skills are developed to an exceptionally high level. Students demonstrate an excellent knowledge of number. Their calculation and problem-solving skills are exemplary.
- Students' achievement in **science** is outstanding. Most students achieve levels that exceed expected curriculum standards. Students' use scientific language competently and demonstrate an excellent level of skill in scientific enquiry and investigation. Students are able to hypothesise, plan and carry out investigations to an exceptionally high level in all phases.
- Students' achievement in **other subjects** is outstanding overall. Most students achieve above age-related curriculum standards in art, music and IT. In art, students use different mediums confidently. In music, students of all ages can sing very well and play instruments to create or accompany a melody. Students achieve a very good level in Urdu, physical education (PE) and business studies. In IT, students learn about robotics and drones. They can programme and code competently from a very young age.



Learning skills

- Students' learning skills are outstanding. Students are keen and enthusiastic learners. They work and collaborate effectively. In almost all subjects, students make clear connections between areas for learning. Students are innovative learners. They use enquiry, research skills and ICT effectively to problem solve and develop critical-thinking skills.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students' achievement in the KG.
- Raised achievement in Islamic education, Arabic as a first language, English, mathematics and science.
- Innovation, critical-thinking and use of ICT.

Areas for Improvement:

- Students' achievement in Arabic as a second language.



Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

| Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators | KG | Primary | Middle | High |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Personal development | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Social responsibility and innovation skills | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills are outstanding. All students display a thirst for knowledge and a love for learning. They welcome feedback and critically evaluate their work
- Students' impeccable behaviour contributes greatly to all areas of school life. They are self-disciplined and confident learners. Incidents of bullying are rare. Students' pride in their school is shown in their excellent conduct and respect for others. Exemplary relationships with staff and amongst one another enables students to thrive.
- Students demonstrate a deep understanding of safe and healthy living. They are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. Almost all students eat healthily and take part in PE regularly.
- Students attendance is outstanding at 98%. Almost all students are punctual to school and to lessons.
- Through assemblies and cross-curricular links in learning, students develop a deep knowledge and respect for the UAE and Islamic values. Students fully respect and appreciate Emirati culture and heritage. They sing the UAE anthem proudly and recite from the Holy Quran respectfully. Students show a very deep understanding of their own and other cultures
- Students are responsible members of the school community. They have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills as class captains and members of the school council in the primary, middle and high phases. This is not as well developed in the KG. Students are proactive in school and within the local community. Teachers and students have forged strong links with international



Universities, the police and local businesses.

- Students are innovative and creative thinkers. They undertake entrepreneurial projects such as the Farmers' Market which generates profits that are donated to The Red Crescent. Students have instigated environmental initiatives such as anti-littering campaigns, reducing the use of plastic in school.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students' thirst for knowledge and their love of learning.
- Students' respect for Islamic values, UAE heritage and other cultures.
- Students' innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills.

Areas for Improvement:

- Children's leadership skills in KG.



Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

| Teaching and Assessment Indicators | KG | Primary | Middle | High |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Assessment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding.
- Almost all teachers expertly apply very good knowledge of their subject and of how students learn, and plan purposeful lessons. Teachers' caring relationships with students promotes their active engagement in lessons at a level that challenges them to achieve their potential.
- Teachers' skilful use of questioning assesses students' understanding but, in Arabic medium-subjects, does not always promote higher-order thinking. Almost all lessons cater effectively for students with SEN.
- Teachers develop students' creativity and innovation skills very effectively. In almost all subjects, students lead their own learning, particularly in the English-medium subjects. They research confidently and find creative solutions to problems.
- The school's internal assessment processes are highly efficient. Academic outcomes are benchmarked accurately against national and international expectations. In Arabic-medium plans, progress data is not always utilised well to meet the needs of different groups. Teachers have systems for monitoring progress routinely, but evaluations of the impact of teaching interventions is less well developed.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of students' capabilities. They provide effective support and guidance to enable them to improve. Students are involved frequently in assessing their own learning, setting targets and reviewing their own progress in lessons.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Teachers' well-imparted subject knowledge.
- Relationships and the positive climate for learning.
- Effective internal assessment processes.
- Students' engagement in self-assessment.

Areas for Improvement:



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- Questioning to further deepen learning in Arabic medium subjects.
- Work that consistently meets the needs of higher-achieving students in Arabic medium-subjects.



Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

| Curriculum Indicators | KG | Primary | Middle | High |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Curriculum adaptation | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- The overall quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum is very well-planned and highly effective in promoting innovation and challenge. The content is relevant and comprehensive. At each phase, learning is well structured and builds on prior learning to prepare students for their next stage in learning.
- There is an exceptionally wide range of curricular choices to enrich and enhance the curriculum both during and after school. These are very well attended by students across all phases.
- Cross-curricular links are innovative and planned purposefully in all subjects. These support students in making meaningful links between the different areas of learning.
- Leaders and teachers review the curriculum rigorously to ensure that it is relevant and provides challenge and support. Thorough modification of the curriculum ensures that the needs of all groups students are met in almost all subjects. Further modifications of the curriculum in Arabic medium subjects is needed to ensure higher-achieving students are consistently well challenged.
- There are rich opportunities for children to develop their enterprise, innovation and creative skills through a comprehensive range of activities.
- Students of all ages engage enthusiastically in projects that help them to develop excellent understanding of UAE culture and society.
- Moral education is planned for very effectively and taught across the school. Lessons promote positive moral values which underpin all aspects of the curriculum and school life. These are upheld by students and staff during assemblies and in their behaviour around the school.

Areas of Relative Strength

- Respect for, and understanding of, UAE culture and heritage.
- Students enterprise, innovation and creativity.

Areas for Improvement:



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- Further modifications of the curriculum in the Arabic medium subjects for higher achieving students.



Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

| The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators | KG | Primary | Middle | High |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/safeguarding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Care and support | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- The overall quality of protection, care, guidance and support for students is outstanding. There are robust procedures in place to safeguard students. Parents, students and staff adhere to the school's child protection policy.
- The quality of maintenance and record keeping is outstanding. The health and safety committee members carry out rigorous safety checks. When required, policies are reviewed and updated. Students are supervised around the school and on buses very effectively. They benefit from an excellent physical environment which meets the learning needs of almost all students.
- The school's promotion of safe and healthy living is very successful and clearly influences all aspects of school life.
- Relationships with students are always very courteous and respectful. Behaviour is managed positively in class.
- Attendance is promoted very effectively. Students receive certificates and medals for excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Students with SEN and those who are gifted and talented (G&T) are identified promptly. Students are given highly effective support in lessons and after school. This enables them to make excellent progress in both their learning and personal development.
- Students' well-being is important and closely monitored by the school. Older students receive comprehensive advice about career choices.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Systems and procedures for keeping students safe.
- Identification and support for students with SEN, and G&T students.

Areas for Improvement:

- Further promotion of students' attendance and punctuality.



Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

| Leadership and management Indicators | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The effectiveness of leadership | Outstanding |
| Self-evaluation and improvement planning | Outstanding |
| Partnerships with parents and the community | Outstanding |
| Governance | Outstanding |
| Management, staffing, facilities and resources | Outstanding |

- The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding. All staff passionately embrace the ethos of the school and are committed to promoting the founder's vision.
- The school's approach to self-evaluation is outstanding. Staff at all levels are actively involved in systematic and rigorous self-evaluation. This helps leaders to highlight best practices in teaching and assessment to promote further improvement. The school development plan, which is underpinned by the school's self-evaluation, is focussed on raising student achievement.
- A few middle leaders are new to the school this year. They are building effectively on the high-quality work of previous heads of departments and monitor teaching and learning. All leaders train staff regularly in areas where practice is less strong and monitor individual teachers' progress towards targets set.
- Partnerships with parents and the community is outstanding. Parents make an excellent contribution by supporting school events and reinforcing students' learning at home. They are kept very well informed about students' progress and are enabled to meet monthly with teachers to understand how to support their learning at home.
- The governance of the school is outstanding. Trustees seek the views of parents and students regularly, and use this when planning. They have a very good understanding of the school's data and know how well students are achieving, including in their personal development.
- Almost all aspects of the management of the school are outstanding. Staff benefit from highly effective professional development relevant to their needs. The school is very well resourced and has a range of specialist facilities including a robotics laboratory, a library and specialist play areas.
- The school is highly effective at promoting international assessments. The



'question a day' initiative is implemented. TIMSS and PISA results are analysed, and challenging targets set for future cohorts of students. Leaders compare themselves rigorously to international standards when benchmarking iGCSE, AS and A level results. Through a detailed analysis, leaders know where students find learning challenging and modify curriculum plans accordingly.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- The school's vision and ethos.
- Partnership with parent.
- Management of the school.

Areas for Improvement:

- Impact of new middle leaders on students' achievement.