

Al Hikmah Kindergarten Inspection Report

Kindergarten

Report published May 2010

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Al Hikmah Kindergarten (KG) was inspected in January 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated children's achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on children's progress in Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Rashidiya, Al Hikmah Kindergarten is a public school providing education for boys and girls from KG1 to KG2 aged four to six years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 242 children on roll. Attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were pleased with the quality of teaching in the school. They stated that their children enjoyed school and felt they were treated fairly. They praised the school's welfare arrangements and the care staff took of their children. Parents felt welcome in the school, valued the good relationships it fostered and appreciated the high quality of its leadership and management. They felt that the school enjoyed a good reputation both locally and further afield. There were few concerns although parents wished that there was more support for children with specific difficulties.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Hikmah Kindergarten was a good, well-led and managed school which showed a strong capacity to further improve. Children's progress in Arabic, English, mathematics, science and learning basic Islamic principles was good although attainment in English was acceptable. Children had a good awareness of and respect for Islam and applied their learning well. Their behaviour was good. They enjoyed opportunities for taking responsibility and displayed initiative in speaking and performing before their peers. Civic understanding was good as was

environmental awareness. Children were developing a good knowledge of the diversity of Dubai and it's economy.

The teaching was good overall, with the majority of lessons judged as good or better and all lessons being at least acceptable. Children were enthusiastic about learning and enjoyed their lessons. Procedures for assessing the children's work were acceptable and some teachers were beginning to use results to help improve their teaching. Children occasionally engaged in small group learning activities. The curriculum was good, especially in the enhancements in outdoor areas. Teachers followed the Ministry of Education's program adapting it well to motivate children more. They knew their children well and reports to parents were regular and informative. Arrangements for children's health and safety were good. Support and guidance was of an acceptable quality although the school's behaviour policy was not applied consistently by all staff.

The quality of leadership and management was good, being caring, consultative, aspirational, well-organised and determined to improve the school further. Self-evaluation procedures were good, taking full account of the range of opinions from teachers, governors, parents and children. The school enjoyed good links with other schools, both public and private. The buildings and facilities were safe, secure, and well maintained. Overall, the school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report and had improved its overall performance from acceptable to good.

Key features of the school

- Children made good progress in the five key subjects.
- Teaching was good and a quarter of lessons observed had outstanding features.
- The school had a creative, innovative curriculum which promoted learning through play and practical activities.
- Leadership was involved, aspirational and committed.
- Improvement had been good since the last inspection.

Recommendations

- Raise standards of attainment in English.
- Continue to develop assessment systems to analyse and better inform planning and use strategies regularly during lessons to assess how well children understand.
- Ensure that the school's behaviour policy is clear, comprehensive and applied consistently by all staff.

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

Children's attainment and progress in Arabic was good. Across the school, children's listening and speaking skills improved. Most children were able to identify letters of the alphabet they had learnt and the majority were able to write them independently. The majority of children were successful in identifying the formation of these letters at the beginning, middle and end of words. A minority of children were able to correctly trace their names with the correct letter formation. Children were able to talk about events in a story they were learning and could express themselves well. Most children in KG2 engaged in meaningful talk and responded well to instructions.

In English, children's attainment was acceptable. Attainment in listening, speaking and reading were acceptable and in writing were unsatisfactory. Their overall progress was good given that all used English as an additional language. Many could read acceptably by local but not by international standards, understanding individual letters and basic words and making satisfactory progress in communication skills. They followed basic instructions and teaching points in English. Children had unsatisfactory writing skills. Children showed good skills in practical learning but were less confident in role-play.

Attainment and progress in mathematics was good and the school had made good progress since the last inspection. Almost all of the older children could count to ten in Arabic and English and recite the numbers in ascending and descending sequence. A significant number were able to count to twenty when supported by the teacher. Almost all recognised the basic shapes of circles and squares and the older children were beginning to apply their skills to addition and subtraction. A majority could add and subtract numbers to ten and a few could calculate simple problems accurately.

Attainment and progress in science was good. Almost all children had a clear understanding about plants, fruit, vegetables and animals studied and could categorise them. Many also knew the names of the plants, fruit, vegetables and animals in both Arabic and English and were making good progress in understanding how plants and animals grew and survived. Almost all of the older children were able to categorise different animals and knew the differences between, birds, domestic, farm and wild animals and how some were used to sustain life.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Children's personal and social development was good. Almost all responded well to adults and were respectful to each other. Most were well behaved, had good attitudes to learning and enjoyed the range of activities on offer. Attendance was good with almost all children arriving to school on time. Transition between activities during the day was prompt.

Children's civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture was good. They sang the National Anthem in morning assembly with pride and showed respect when The Holy Qur'an was recited. Most recited appropriate Islamic sayings and prayers before and after eating. Most could name the different rulers of the UAE, the colours of the UAE flag and places they had visited in Dubai. Few children were able to name the different animals that live in the desert; however they were able to talk about animals that were kept on local farms and in the Dubai Zoo.

The children's environmental understanding was good. Most kept their immediate surroundings clean and participated in projects such as "Clean Up the World". There were good opportunities for them to learn about recycling paper in art lessons and a minority could explain the need to re-use paper. There were limited opportunities for children to develop their economic understanding.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching overall was good with a significant minority of lessons observed having outstanding features. Methods were a good mixture of instruction, discussions on the carpet, practical activities and question and answer sessions. They all helped develop children's thinking. Often, teachers used various strategies, such as educational games, to capture children's interest. Children greatly enjoyed practical work. Most teachers shared the aims of lessons with children. They were appropriately qualified and most had a good knowledge of their subjects. A quarter of the teaching observed had outstanding features. Most lessons were usually structured well and developed systematically. Teachers did not employ computer equipment enough in the range of activities and learning. Teaching assistants were available in many lessons but they were often not deployed effectively.

Learning was good and showed the potential to be improved further given more opportunities for independent thinking and choosing. Children learned effectively because they were well-motivated, enthusiastic and remained on task throughout lessons. The range of practical and directed play activities suited the varied learning styles of children. Learning was motivational as activities and challenges stimulated the development of independent learning.

The quality of assessment was acceptable and there had been good progress since the last inspection. The procedures for assessment were in place and teachers had detailed data on each child. Teachers used this information to match activities to the varied learning needs of the children but this was not a consistent feature of teaching across the school. Reports to parents were of an acceptable quality.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good. The school implemented the units of work set out by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum was well balanced and ensured continuity from year to year. The school had recently reviewed the curriculum and made changes to the structure of the school day to better meet the needs of the children. The new structure allowed children in KG2 to have almost equal amounts of learning time in English and Arabic. The revised curriculum planned for more activities and provided a wider range of opportunities for children to learn through play outside the classroom. This included planned use of new resources and activity areas in the playground and the school farm. The curriculum was supported by various resource rooms, an art room and planned physical education sessions for all once a week. School visits to other schools in Dubai further enriched the curriculum. The school restaurant provided opportunities for children to learn good table manners and reinforced the importance of healthy eating by providing a well balanced snack daily. There were good planned opportunities for children to make links between what they were learning and their own lives. This was evident in cross-curricular features between what they learnt about Islam and science.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for health and safety in the school were good. The school provided a safe, secure and pleasant learning environment. Equipment in the school was clean and well maintained, however some of the bathroom floors were slippery after break. Children were monitored and supervised well at all times. There were good arrangements in place to ensure safety on buses. Bus supervisors and drivers ensured that children wore their seatbelts at all times. The school buildings and facilities were well maintained and clean. The school recently conducted two fire drills with good evacuation procedures in place. The school nurse had a very active role in monitoring children's health and kept accurate records. The quality of support was acceptable. Relationships were generally good and most teachers had created a learning environment of mutual respect. Children enjoyed talking and playing with their teachers and other staff, not only in the classrooms but also during break times and lunch. The school placed a high priority on children's care and security at all times and taught basic first aid, including how to use a mobile phone for an emergency. Children were also given the opportunity to role play being a doctor or a nurse and this helped their confidence and understanding of the world of work. The school had a behaviour policy but in a minority of lessons this was not adhered to consistently. The monitoring of children's academic progress was not fully embedded in teachers' planning.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was good with outstanding features in the leadership of the Principal. The school fulfilled its mission statement well and improvement since the last inspection had been good. The leadership ensured the school had a carefully considered educational direction with a strong emphasis on consultation and collective decision-making. The Principal provided particularly strong leadership and had achieved much in the short time she had been in post. She managed an effective leadership team with two Vice-Principals and several middle tier teacher-managers and this ensured that leadership responsibilities were distributed suitably. Leaders were very concerned to improve children's behaviour, learning and attainments. The school provided a good structure for improving teachers' skills by sharing best practice, mentoring, and training. Leaders developed an effective action plan based on recommendations from the last inspection report and other priorities so that steady progress was being made.

The Principal and her colleagues monitored and evaluated with care the performance of teachers and children, using systematic supervision of teaching to improve quality. The overall quality of self-evaluation was good with many stakeholders being involved. After the last inspection the school drew up a detailed strategic plan which clearly highlighted areas for development and focused sharply upon health, safety, improvement of accommodation and the raising of attainment in English and mathematics.

The school enjoyed good links with parents. Parents said that they were well-informed about school plans. Reports to parents were regular and informed them about children's academic and social progress. The school also communicated with parents in various other ways to good effect, including contact by electronic mail and telephone. Parents felt they were welcome at the school and they were consulted regularly. The parents on the Mothers' Council played an effective role in ensuring that their views were taken fully on board. They expressed a strong belief in the leadership to continue improvements. The school provided good opportunities to the children to get involved in the local community. Parents thought well of the governing body's new initiative to offer more opportunities for physical education.

The quality of governance was acceptable. A governing body had recently been appointed and this group contained people with experience and backgrounds useful to the school in its drive for improvement. Although there had been insufficient time for the governors to make an impact on student outcomes, they had already initiated improved provision for physical education. In addition, they had planned exchange visits with other schools and professional development training for staff. The Mothers' Council heard of new developments and expressed its views but links to the new governing body were, as yet, underdeveloped.

The quality of staffing, facilities and resources was good. Teaching staff had suitable qualifications and were deployed effectively. Many classrooms enjoyed extra support from teaching assistants or parents. Facilities were good. The accommodation was clean, well-maintained and attractively decorated. The school had many resources which were appropriate to the children's ages. The spacious site provided light, airy classrooms and good support areas such as a well-stocked library and a well resourced forum for staff training events. Books and other resources in the library were well-chosen and accessible to children. The specialist art room was used well to enhance children's creativity. Teachers had created an imaginative environment for learning and there was a colourful range of display materials and children's work on the walls. The playground was well-designed and effectively used. The use of Bedouin tents were visually stimulating and the school farm was well-maintained.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?	
Age group:	KG
Attainment	Good
Progress over time	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?	
Age group:	KG
Attainment	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?	
Age group:	KG
Attainment	Good
Progress over time	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?	
Age group:	KG
Attainment	Good
Progress over time	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?	
Age group:	KG
Attitudes and behaviour	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good

How good are teaching and learning?	
Age group:	KG
Teaching for effective learning	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good
Assessment	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	
Age group:	KG
Curriculum quality	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?	
Age group:	KG
Health and safety	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. 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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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