

Dubai Infants School Inspection Report Kindergarten 1 and 2

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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.

Dubai Infants School was inspected in November 2009 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 students' 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 students' progress in English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Oud Metha, Dubai Infants School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten 1 (KG1) to Kindergarten 2 (KG2), ages three to five years. At the time of the inspection, all three teachers were new to the school and had only been in post for a few weeks. There were 35 students on roll. The school was unable to provide reliable evidence regarding student attendance. During the inspection attendance levels were acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most parents expressed satisfaction with the work of the school. Almost all stated that their child enjoyed school. They felt that their children made good progress in English and in mathematics. Most felt comfortable approaching the school if they had a concern. All parents believed that children's behaviour in school was good. Around half of the parents stated that the school was not good at consulting with them about decisions affecting their child.

How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Infants School provided an unsatisfactory quality of education. There were important weaknesses in key aspects of the work of the school. It lacked the capacity to improve without considerable support. Children achieved age appropriate standards in English, mathematics and science. The children at the school were well behaved, co-operative and friendly. Staff were

careful to promote positive attitudes but they did not successfully nurture children's independence skills.

There were important weaknesses in teaching and learning across all classes in the school. Teachers did not plan their lessons effectively. Activities did not cater for the range of children's needs in the different classes. The over use of work sheets and low level tasks, such as colouring in, meant that children were not sufficiently challenged or fully engaged. There were too few opportunities for children to be active in their learning. Assessment arrangements were unsatisfactory. Teachers did not plan their lessons and did not assess children's skills during lessons. There were no age-appropriate systems in place to help the children celebrate their achievements. The curriculum was not planned effectively to help ensure progression in children's skills and knowledge. The school had not taken any steps since the last inspection to formally document the content of the curriculum and plan projects or topics. Teachers did not include sufficient extended or additional activities, such as visits or visitors, to enrich the experiences of children. Children's experiences lacked variety and relevance. The school did not take into regard the interests and preferences of children in planning or implementing the curriculum. The school nurse provided an acceptable standard of care to help meet the medical needs of students. However, other aspects of health and safety were unsatisfactory. There were unhygienic practices in regard to toileting and the school premises were unclean. Outdoor play equipment was dated and required repair to ensure children's safety. The arrangements to prevent infection were not sufficiently rigorous. Relationships between staff and children were positive and staff were alert to children's physical and emotional needs. However, there were no effective systems in place to track children's progress or record their achievements.

The leadership and management of the school was unsatisfactory. The Headteacher and teachers lacked professional expertise. They were not sufficiently aware of best practice in early years teaching. There was no clear vision for the school and no formal consultation with stakeholders in developing the school's aims or reviewing its strengths or weaknesses. Teachers lacked guidance and support. The school's arrangements for self-evaluation were weak. There was no development plan for the school and no written action plan following the last inspection. Recommendations from the previous inspection had not been addressed. Self-evaluation arrangements were informal and there were no arrangements in place to monitor the quality of children's experiences. There were no effective governance arrangements and no steps had been taken to develop a governing body or ensure that the school was fully accountable to all stakeholders. There were significant weaknesses in the staffing, facilities and resources in the school. The school premises were dated and in a poor state of repair. Classrooms were not well organised to facilitate effective learning for young children. The resources available to staff were poor and there were no computers in the school which were accessible to the children.

Key features of the school

- The school had acceptable arrangements to support the medical needs of children and the school nurse worked effectively with parents and staff;
- Teachers lacked skills and expertise regarding how young children learn and this led to weak provision and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching;
- Assessment arrangements in the school lacked rigour;
- Teachers did not plan effectively and the lack of any formal structured curriculum meant that the quality of learning experiences were unsatisfactory;
- Although children were safe and well cared for by staff, resources in the school required updating and certain aspects of health and safety required attention to ensure children's safety and good hygiene.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching across all classes and ensure that activities are age-appropriate and that they meet the learning needs of children;
- Plan a curriculum for the school which will progressively develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding and give sufficient opportunities for choice and enjoyment;
- Update resources, particularly for reading and information and communications technology;
- Address the health and safety issues identified in this report;
- Plan for improvement through consultation with parents and all staff and create a written action plan addressing weaknesses in the school which is shared with all stakeholders.

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

Children's attainment and progress in English were acceptable. On entry to KG1 most children had weak skills in English. In KG1, children were able to follow simple instructions given by their teacher. By KG2, most were able to express their needs and ideas using short simple sentences. At KG1, most children could recognise their names and could identify certain letters from the alphabet. Only a few could read key words. At KG2, most children could match initial sounds to associated pictures. Children's written skills were age appropriate by KG2 with most children demonstrating the necessary fine motor control to write individual letters correctly.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were acceptable and children's skills were age-appropriate. At KG1, all children could name several simple shapes and count accurately to 5. They recognised these numbers in a range of contexts and could match and sort using simple criteria. At KG2, most children could work confidently with numbers to 10. They could use the language of measure to compare objects. Through the use of jigsaws and puzzles, most children had developed age appropriate problem solving skills.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. At KG1, the children could describe the key properties of certain materials. They could name the main parts of a plant. By KG2, children were able to name the parts of their body and explain how they used their five senses. Higher achieving children in KG2 read books on transport and were confident in explaining how different vehicles had different functions. The children's investigative skills were less well developed.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Children at the school were well behaved, co-operative and friendly. Staff were careful to promote positive attitudes and were successful in supporting aspects of children's personal and social development. In particular, children were helped to understand the importance of sharing, taking turns and caring for others. Staff were caring and kind and this helped the children feel happy and safe at school. However, although teachers placed great importance upon developing children's personal skills they were not effective in developing children's independence skills. A minority of children were late for class at the beginning of each school day.

Most children demonstrated age-appropriate civic awareness and understanding of Islam. They had participated in local events and celebrations which helped them to gain an understanding of important occasions. However, there were many missed opportunities to help children acquire further skills and understanding through taking responsibility in their classes and in the school. Expectations were not sufficiently high and teachers' inexperience led to a weak understanding of what young children were capable of achieving in their civic knowledge or understanding. In classes, teachers did not allow children to demonstrate independence and responsibility for the learning environment or for their own personal resources or personal care. For example, children were given resources as they sat waiting at the tables. They were passed jigsaws and not allowed to choose. They were not regularly encouraged to tidy away the toys they had used.

Children's economic and environmental understanding was age-appropriate and therefore acceptable. Children in KG2 were able to talk about caring for their school environment and referred to the work of adults who helped look after them in school and keep them safe. They knew about the importance of not wasting paper and could describe how adults in the school helped them save resources including, for example, switching off lights in the classroom.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. There were important weaknesses in teaching across all classes in the school. Teachers did not plan their lessons effectively. Tasks were not appropriate to the age or maturity of the children. Lessons did not cater for the range of children's needs in the different classes. Too often, children completed the same tasks, with limited choice available to them and, when finished, they were required to sit inactive until others finished. The over use of work sheets and low level tasks meant that children were not sufficiently challenged or fully engaged. There were too few opportunities for children to be active in their learning.

The quality of children's learning was unsatisfactory. Children were required to complete worksheets for extended periods of time. During lessons, children were not given sufficient support or guidance to extend their learning or master key skills. There were a limited range of resources available to allow children to investigate and explore. In particular, children had no access to information and communication technology (ICT) to promote their learning.

There were very significant weaknesses in assessment arrangements within the school. Teachers did not plan for learning and made no assessments of children's achievements. No records were kept and the three new teachers had received no information regarding the children entering their classes. Teachers did not assess children's skills during lessons. Consequently, tasks were not amended in the light of observations or children's strengths or weaknesses. There were no age-appropriate systems in place to help the children identify or celebrate their own achievements.

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

The curriculum was unsatisfactory. It was not planned effectively to help ensure progression, breadth and balance. The school had not taken any steps since the last inspection to formally document the content of the curriculum and plan projects or topics. The curriculum did not include any extended or additional activities, such as visits or visitors, to enrich the experiences of children. There had been no review of the curriculum for many years and teachers' timetables lacked detail and were poorly organised. Consequently, children's experiences lacked variety and relevance. The school did not take into regard the interests and preferences of children in planning or implementing the curriculum.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school nurse provided an acceptable standard of care to help meet the medical needs of students. Records of medication were kept up to date and children's health, including their dental care and weight were checked and detailed records were kept. Other aspects of health and safety were unsatisfactory. There were unhygienic practices with regard to toileting and the school premises were unclean. Outdoor play equipment was dated and required repair to ensure children's safety. The arrangements to prevent infection and, in particular, the spread of the H1N1 virus, were not sufficiently rigorous. A few children travelled to school on a minibus which was organised by parents. The school had not taken sufficient steps to ensure that this arrangement was compliant with national regulations. A few parents expressed concern that this bus was unsafe.

Overall, relationships between staff and children were positive and staff were alert to children's physical and emotional needs. Teachers keep daily attendance records and completed these each morning. However, there were no effective systems in place to track children's progress or record their achievements.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The Headteacher was respected by parents. She had acted upon the previous inspection report to provide more regular outdoor learning activities for children and appoint an additional teacher. However, the Headteacher, owner and teachers lacked professional expertise. They were not sufficiently aware of best practice in early years teaching. There was no clear vision for the school and no formal consultation with stakeholders in developing the school's aims or reviewing its strengths or weaknesses. Teachers lacked guidance and support.

The school's arrangements for self-evaluation were unsatisfactory. There was no development plan for the school and no written action plan following the last inspection. The school had acted successfully upon two recommendations from the last inspection report but a further two had not been actioned. Evaluation methods were informal and there were no arrangements in place to monitor the quality of children's experiences and no systems to seek the views of parents or children.

Partnerships with parents and the community were unsatisfactory. Although a few parents were able to meet teachers at the end of the school day, there were no formal reports or parent-teacher meetings to discuss the children's progress. There were no links with other schools and links with the wider community were not well developed.

The school was managed by the Headteacher and her husband, as school owners. There were no effective governance arrangements for the school. The owners had taken no steps to develop a governing body or ensure that the school was fully accountable to all stakeholders.

There were important weaknesses in the staffing, facilities and resources in the school. All three teachers were new to the school and had commenced appointment in October 2009, one month prior to the inspection. All three lacked expertise, understanding and experience in early years practice. The school premises were dated and in a poor state of repair. The outdoor play area required updating and improvement. Classrooms were not well organised to facilitate effective learning for young children. For example, there were unattractive and unwelcoming library corners, outdated books and very few examples of children's work on display. The resources available to staff were poor and there were no computers in the school which were accessible to the children.

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 English?	
Age group:	KG
Attainment	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Unsatisfactory

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 will undertake a Follow-Through Inspection of Dubai Infants School within three months of the original inspection and report to parents regarding 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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