

Al Manhal Kindergarten Inspection Report

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 Manhal Kindergarten was inspected in March 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 Satwa, Al Manhal is a public school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) 1 to KG2, aged three to five years. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum and teaches English from KG2. However, in response to parents' wishes, KG1 are now introduced to English in short, weekly taster sessions. At the time of the inspection, there were 122 children on roll. The children's attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were very strongly supportive of the school with no significant concerns. Almost all felt that the children were treated fairly at school. They stated that their children enjoyed a full range of activities. Parents felt that they could come to school with comments or complaints and believed that they were fully consulted in decisions affecting their children. They stated that the children were safe in school.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Manhal Kindergarten provided its children with an outstanding quality of education and fully confirmed its promise to parents. It had improved significantly since its previous inspection because it had been rigorous in using the recommendations to complete a thorough review of provision. To augment their expertise, staff had sought support from other sources and used it selectively to introduce new ideas. This approach marked this school out as being open to change and ambitious for further improvement. Children made outstanding progress and reached good standards, except in Arabic and science where their attainment was outstanding. This was due to excellent planning, very effective use of resources and clear deployment of staff. This combination very effectively linked class lessons with activities around the central area during play time. As a result of this and some much focused teaching, children enjoyed learning together and making choices. Because children felt secure in this excellent learning environment, their behaviour was outstanding and they made rapid gains in other aspects of their personal development. They related confidently to others and the excellence of their civic and Islamic understanding was clear in their reverent behaviour at assembly, their observation of rules and their treatment of one another. For their age, their knowledge of Dubai's past and its current issues was outstanding.

Children benefited from some high quality teaching which was characterised by very effective use of resources, high expectations and a good match of tasks to children's ability levels. Learning in all parts of the school was always purposeful. For instance, children learned a new letter in the well resourced Arabic Centre which was then followed up in class, reinforced during activity time and consolidated at the Centre before they went home. Although teachers assessed children's progress carefully, they and classroom assistants could keep a more careful check of other learning in the lessons. Children enjoyed a very wide variety of activities in and out of school as part of an excellent curriculum which had broadened some aspects based on the Ministry of Education guidance. The school had excellent arrangements for children's health and safety which the parents appreciated very much. They were also extremely pleased with the care staff took of their children and the advice parents received about homework and their children's choice of school.

The school's overall improvement was due to the senior staff's outstanding leadership and their delegation of responsibility to staff teams. This united the staff's improvement efforts and ensured excellent links with parents and the community. These had a beneficial effect on school provision, in particular its excellent staffing, facilities and resources. Self-evaluation and school improvement planning had improved and were good. The school understood the need to include criteria that were measurable in quantitative and qualitative terms in the improvement plan to judge the impact of its actions. Although governance had formerly been through the close involvement of parents, the school had started to take this further by planning to appoint up to six local representatives as governors.

Key features of the school

- This was an outstanding school that had improved in most respects since the previous inspection;
- Children made outstanding progress in all subjects and reached good levels of attainment except in Arabic and science where levels of attainment were outstanding;
- All aspects of children's personal and social development were outstanding because of the excellent health and safety arrangements and care and guidance they received;
- Teaching and learning were outstanding and assessment was good and could be refined further;
- The curriculum was innovative and outstanding;
- The school was well led and arrangements for self-evaluation and planning had improved since the last inspection;
- The role of the governing body was acceptable and required further development;
- Links with parents and the community were excellent, as were staffing, facilities and resources.

Recommendations

- Ensure that teachers and classroom staff are more regularly noting significant changes in children's learning during activity time;
- Improve the success criteria in the improvement plan by making them measurable in terms of quantity and quality;
- Further develop governance in the school, as planned, to include a wide range of stakeholders in the leadership and management of the school.

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

Children's attainment and progress in Arabic were outstanding overall. Most children developed outstanding listening and speaking skills. In KG2 most children developed outstanding listening skills particularly in Classical Arabic and could respond accurately to the teacher's instructions and questions. Almost all children engaged well in basic discussions with their teachers. Almost all children in KG1 could identify, trace, and give examples of the letters they learned. Almost all students knew the days of the week and could name them correctly. Almost all were able to talk about the weather. All the children could recognise and name some animal sounds. Most could read and write their names and many could write their fathers'. Most students could distinguish between the different forms of the same letter in various positions in a word.

In speaking, listening and reading English, children had made outstanding progress and reached good standards. They made good progress in writing and reached acceptable standards. They exchanged verbal greetings confidently, listened very carefully and sang to rhymes, followed instructions well without repetition or guidance and explained their ideas clearly sometimes using full sentences and a wider than usual range of vocabulary. They could recognise and say the sounds of most letters and were beginning to use them to build one syllable words. They were practising left to right movements as a precursor to writing whole words such as their names, which around a third could do consistently.

Attainment in mathematics was good and children made outstanding progress. Almost all children in KG1 could count to seven accurately and most were able to state which numbers came before and after numbers up to ten. They made good progress and, in KG2, could count to 20 and understood concepts about numbers to sixteen. KG2 children recognised and knew the names of 2D shapes and included them in their drawings and paintings independently in free choice activities. Almost all could make block graphs of favourite animals and answer questions about them. Children's concepts of time were developing well. Children in KG1 understood vocabulary about time such as today, yesterday and tomorrow and could find the number for the date.

Attainment and progress in science were outstanding. In KG1, children built their vocabulary and knowledge about living creatures. They learned scientific skills such as observation and questioning. They learned the characteristics of creatures such as rabbits and birds. They knew that bees made honey and that animals such as goats produced milk for their offspring. They learned about animal welfare and knew that they needed clean water and different foods. Children listened carefully to the different noises made by animals such as the goat and parrot. In KG2, children used technology toys. They knew about characteristics of living creatures and that they moved in different ways. They experimented and made discoveries independently, including, for example, what happened to materials if they were mixed together or put in water.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Children's attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were outstanding. Children were polite and responded to instructions positively across the school day. Children were self-disciplined and worked and played happily alongside their peers. They were increasingly aware of the needs of others: they took turns and followed classroom rules very well. They were very comfortable with the staff and felt safe. They learned from one another such as when the older ones performed for the younger ones during assembly. Children's punctuality and attendance were outstanding.

Children's Islamic and civic understanding was outstanding. Almost all children had an excellent awareness of the various communities that characterised Dubai. All children could list and name the seven emirates and recognised the country's president. Most children carried out responsibilities during the class such as helping their teacher decorate, clean, and organise the classroom. All the children were proud to be Muslim with an age-appropriate understanding of some daily tasks required of Muslims.

Children's economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. Most children were aware of Dubai's main attractions and places of interest and talked confidently about them. Most children understood the value of money and the use of an ATM card. Children could name at least three banks in Dubai. Children had an excellent understanding of the need to conserve both water and electricity and took measures to do so. They also had a good appreciation of the need to keep the environment clean and how they could contribute to this.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching and learning was outstanding. Teachers had excellent subject knowledge and understood how young children learn best. They used a wide range of strategies and resources well to motivate children, instil confidence and make learning fun. In most lessons, tasks were well matched to children's needs and provided challenge. Almost all teachers managed time and behaviour well, used praise very well and made effective interventions in group work. Through skilful questioning, teachers extended children's vocabulary and developed children's thinking. Most teachers made effective use of classroom assistants. In the best lessons, teachers used varied tone of voice effectively to encourage children to listen carefully. Teachers used songs to help children remember and to establish routines. Teachers' detailed lesson plans stated objectives and how the inside and outside learning environment would be used. This created a balance between children making purposeful choices and staff directing them. Classrooms were attractive and well organised so that children became increasingly independent. Resources were labelled with words and pictures so that children could return them after use. Charts were at children's eye level so they could refer to words and numbers themselves. Teachers had excellent skills in questioning and in story time encouraged children to think at literal and inferential levels.

Adults were good role models. They respected children, and had high expectations of them. Children were building up skills in practical ways. They made choices, explored and investigated. They used different senses for learning: they tasted honey; observed animals carefully to find out about different characteristics; listened intently to the sounds they made; and carefully stroked rabbits to find out the texture of fur. Children enjoyed learning and happily co-operated with each other, sharing resources and taking turns.

The quality of assessment was good. Children completed a baseline assessment on entry to KG1 which was the start of recording their progress. In the specialist Arabic Centre, children used a range of resources and checklists to mark off for themselves work they had completed. Teachers kept individual files on children containing examples of their work which was dated so that progression could be seen. Teachers recorded skills and knowledge covered in topic charts, and also wrote evaluative comments about children's achievements. Data were recorded in graphs and teachers were beginning to use the information to target children for extra support or challenge. However, all classroom staff could note the range of progress children made in lessons, not just the part teachers focused on.

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding. It was innovative, broad and balanced and focused on learning through practical, play-based activities. It covered all areas of learning and effectively supported children's academic, physical, creative and personal development. Children used a wide range of activities and resources which added to their learning enjoyment and provided them with varied choices and challenges. Children regularly used the excellent Arabic Centre for language development as well as science discovery areas for independent investigations. During break-times, children enjoyed a variety of very well-organised, purposeful play experiences. Children challenged themselves physically and adults helped them to maintain a good balance between safety and taking well-judged risks. The curriculum was planned effectively and linked carefully to skill development. Regular meetings reviewed its content and matched it to children's changing needs. Teachers added to the units and planned a programme to help children's transition between the KG2 and Grade 1.

All children had equal access to the curriculum. Children with additional needs and the more able children were challenged and supported in small groups throughout the day. Activities were cross-curricular. For example, children learned about letters during activities with food. They made smiley face sandwiches for the letter 's' and, in science, work with animals was linked to their writing activities. There were regular, educational visits to support topic themes. Children learned from first-hand experiences and recorded their experiences in drawings, paintings and emergent writing when they returned to school. The large number of visits and visitors to school and links with the community enriched the curriculum.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure health and safety were outstanding. There were very effective security systems in place including identity checks. The school management had ensured the building was maintained very well through scheduled cleaning and checks and the toilets were hygienic with support from additional staff readily at hand. The nurse monitored and provided an outstanding level of health care. Children's medical records were kept up to date including those referred to the clinic. Medications were kept securely. The nurse followed up chronically sick children and made all information available to other staff and teachers. The school promoted a healthy lifestyles plan through regular physical exercise, healthy diets and attention to personal hygiene. The nurse kept accurate records of accidents to children plus any follow up. The children were well supervised during school hours. The school had a fire drill recently and evacuation of the building was very efficient. Children were well monitored to ensure their safety as they boarded the buses.

The quality of support was outstanding. Staff knew their children well, especially those who found learning difficult. They were fully aware of children's individual social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs and reported regularly to parents on their progress. Staff had greatly improved the way they tracked and used information about children's academic progress. The school promoted children's behaviour and attendance exceptionally well. Individual teachers noted children's personal development and behaviour but this was not centrally recorded. Staff-children relations were very positive. Advice was given to parents to guide their children in preparation for Grade 1.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding because it had secured school improvement to leave only one acceptable feature. The Principal had a clear view of further school improvement and worked effectively with senior managers and staff teams to bring this about. She had secured incremental school improvement and could justify additional resources because they impacted directly on learning. The senior leaders sought advice to augment the staff team's expertise and arranged staff training and visits to successful schools in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. This helped to motivate staff and increased their skills. Staff at all levels carried out their responsibilities diligently.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school responded positively to the previous recommendations through a strong consultative process with staff and parents that drew together the action plan priorities. The school improvement plan drew its priorities from the analysis of children's performance, staff evaluations and parental suggestions. This process worked well and helped the school to improve significantly on all the recommendations. However, the improvement plan's success criteria were not easily measurable and did not enable the school to see how far it had succeeded in enhancing provision or impacting on children's achievement.

The school's partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents held the school in high regard, and were willing supporters in its further improvement. As a member of staff said, "Parents work very well with us, we only have to ask and they are there." Parents helped regularly in many ways, received weekly curriculum updates and in turn they made suggestions for improvement. The community were equally supportive by providing donations, for instance for the Arabic Centre, venues for children's trips and visitors to enrich the curriculum. The school reached out to the wider Dubai community because television programmes were made there. The school had effective links with other schools which were a source of ideas for improvement, as this school was already becoming for others.

School governance was acceptable. The school worked very closely with parents even inviting them to observe lessons. They had provided a good beginning to the further development of school governance on which the Principal was ready embark.

The school had an outstanding range of staffing, facilities and resources that were imaginatively used for excellent support of children's learning. Well qualified staff shared their ideas and planned lessons together very well. Facilities were flexibly arranged to provide a very well balanced series of exciting learning opportunities. Resources were used with flair to add zest and fun to the children's learning. The Arabic Centre was a good example of how the school connected aspects of the curriculum through meticulous planning and rich resourcing. The school made good use of the information technology equipment it had and planned to buy more.

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:	Kindergarten
Attainment	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school protect and support students?	
Age group:	Kindergarten
Health and safety	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Outstanding

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.

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