

Gulf Model School Inspection Report

Pre-Primary to Secondary

Report issued February 2011

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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.

Gulf Model School was inspected in October 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 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 Islamic Education (for Muslim Students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Muhaisnah, Gulf Model School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary (Kindergarten) to secondary, aged three to 18 years. The school follows an Indian Kerala Board and Central Board of School Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 2276 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents thought that the students' behaviour was good, that their children enjoyed school and were enthusiastic about learning. Almost all were happy with the quality of their children's education in English, mathematics and science and most were happy with the quality of Islamic Education and Arabic. Most thought that their children were treated fairly. Just over half thought that the school dealt effectively with incidents of bullying and almost half of the respondents thought that teaching required improvement. A majority of parents thought that the school was well led and that it had responded effectively to the recommendations of the last report. A majority also felt that there was good provision for those students requiring additional support. Most thought that the school communicated effectively with them. A majority of parents thought that the school responded effectively to their concerns and that they were suitably involved in the life of the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided an acceptable level of education. Progress had been made in taking forward aspects of the recommendations of the last report but there remained areas of significant weakness. Leadership and management structures had been reviewed, leading to a large increase in the number of supervisors, and new posts of subject coordinators had been introduced. This was beginning to lead to improvements in teaching and learning. Leadership at a senior level was weak and required further review to ensure that the school developed a common vision linked to effective action to ensure a consistently high quality of education. Systems for monitoring the quality of lessons had been introduced, but these needed to be improved, including the introduction of a more systematic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, linked to an appropriate system of professional development and review. The unsatisfactory teaching of a few teachers had been addressed, but there remained variations in the quality of teaching and in the identification of students' needs. The school had failed to provide robust processes for development planning. The governing body had not ensured suitable representation of parents and the wider community. The school had improved resources to support activity-based learning in the kindergarten and had increased the number of books and computers, but more resources were required if the school was to achieve the objective of encouraging personal research. Weaknesses in management at a senior level need to be resolved to ensure more proactive leadership and a greater sense of accountability, sharing of decision-making and partnership if the school is to develop its capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress were acceptable in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language in the primary and secondary phases. They were unsatisfactory in Arabic as a first language. Attainment and progress were acceptable in English, mathematics and science across all phases. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across all phases. Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciations of local traditions and cultures were acceptable in Kindergarten and good in both the primary and secondary phases. Students had acceptable levels of economic and environmental understanding across all phases. Teaching, the quality of students' learning and assessment were acceptable across all phases. The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten but was unsatisfactory in both the primary and secondary phases. Health and safety and the quality of support were acceptable overall, as were partnerships with parents and the local community. Leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning, governance and staffing, facilities and resources remained unsatisfactory.

Key features of the school

- Courteous and considerate students and their desire to learn;
- The good discipline maintained through very positive student-teacher relationships;
- The positive initiatives, for example at the Kindergarten phase, being taken forward by most subject co-ordinators and supervisors, leading to improvements in students' learning;
- The weaknesses in the breadth and balance of the curriculum;
- The lack of opportunities for students and parents to work together with the school to support learning;
- Significant weaknesses in the leadership in developing and sharing the vision of the school with teachers and the wider community, together with the lack of direction provided on how to improve teaching and learning.

Recommendations

- The leadership at senior management level need to provide clearer direction for the school to ensure consistency in learning and teaching and develop the curriculum to better meet the needs of students;
- The curriculum should be reviewed to ensure that it fully complies with the requirements of the Ministry of Education with regard to Islamic Education and Arabic. It should be enriched and broadened to fully meet the expectations of the CBSE guidelines;
- The school should develop and expand its approaches to self-evaluation to ensure that the school knows itself better and that this leads to improvement;
- The school should develop its ability to identify the needs of its students and improve the quality and extent of its career guidance;
- Governance should be improved to ensure appropriate representation of the school community;
- Teachers should be provided with a well planned programme of continuing professional development to extend their range of teaching methods and to continue to develop the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning and teaching, including the use of the Internet to support independent research skills.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education in the primary and secondary phases were acceptable. From Grades 1 to 8 students had a good understanding of Islam, correctly referred to the Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) full name and could explain detailed aspects of his family and his life. They also had good knowledge of The Holy Qur'an and understood how it related to their daily lives. Most students in the secondary phase were able to make connections with concepts beyond their immediate coursework. By Grade 9 and 10, they confidently presented their views on Islamic Education. They knew the importance of showing respect to their elders and neighbours and explored a few examples to demonstrate the greatness of Allah. Most applied the rules for recitation of The Holy Qur'an appropriately.

Attainment and progress were unsatisfactory for the small number of students who studied Arabic as a first language. Students in both the primary and secondary phases were making insufficient progress in comparison with students of a similar age. Their ability to use vocabulary was underdeveloped and their ability to understand complex sentences was limited. Students' reading skill was poor and needed further development. Their use of appropriate grammar was inconsistent. They had insufficient skills in extended writing.

Attainment and progress were acceptable in the primary and secondary phases for those students who took Arabic as an additional language. Across all grades, most students were making progress in line with expectations. In Grade 1, students showed good memorisation of the alphabet. As students progressed through the primary levels, most of them could pronounce words correctly. They also could use them in the right contexts. They could read with acceptable fluency and they could write words and simple sentences accurately. By the secondary phase, most students could listen and speak effectively and with confidence. They read passages, including poetry, accurately and with good understanding. They were also able to apply grammatical rules correctly in their writing.

Overall, students' attainment and progress were acceptable in English at all stages. Grade 5 students attained less well in relation to international standards. By Grades 10 and 12, students' attainment was above the levels expected for their stage. In Kindergarten and primary, students followed instructions and responded accurately using appropriately complex words. They were developing effective reading skills through using phonic sounds. By the end of Kindergarten, the children formed accurate letters and words. Grade 8 students were able to write accurate summaries. From Grade 9 most students could understand complex information and could talk confidently in short presentations. A majority read and wrote accurately, but often with little understanding and expression. Across the stages students' skills in extended and creative writing were not appropriately developed.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable across the school. Students attained age-appropriate standards in most classes except in Grades 1 to 3, where progress was slow

and knowledge rudimentary. Kindergarten students used simple mathematical symbols confidently. Primary stage students understood and applied number operations skills well when comparing and interpreting fractions as decimals. By Grade 8 they could identify geometric shapes and applied correctly the Pythagorean formula. Secondary students solved appropriately complex problems on differential equations and had well developed abilities to collect and analyse data independently. Students' attainment in external exams had improved in the last three years with Grade 10 students making more progress than those in Grade 12. Students' internal examination performance showed consistent improvement in most classes except at the lower primary stages.

Attainment and progress in science in the Kindergarten, primary and secondary phases were acceptable. There was uneven attainment as students moved through the school and by Grade 10 performance in examinations was good with students' results having improved over the last three years. In Kindergarten 2, students were able to select and name animals and vegetables in line with age expectations. There was less progress in Grades 3, 4, and 5, but by the later primary and secondary phases students were in line with international standards. By Grade 12 students could classify amines and make biological slides. Independent research was mainly confined to Grade 11 and 12, limiting knowledge and understanding beyond the text book. Practical and investigative skills were not systematically developed in Grades 1 to 10.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good at all stages of the school. Most students displayed exemplary behaviour during classes, but a few did not pay sufficient attention to their teachers. Almost all students were well behaved around the school and showed respect to teachers, fellow students and visitors. Students spoke knowledgeably about healthy living and made appropriate choices in the food they ate. Students' punctuality was exceptionally good. Attendance had been high prior to the inspection but was good overall when inspectors were in the school

Students' civic and Islamic understanding was acceptable in Kindergarten and was good at both the primary and secondary phases. Prefects and House Captains were very responsible in ensuring good behaviour, but they had insufficient opportunities to contribute to decision-making in the school and in contributing to the wider community. Both Muslim and non-Muslim students were knowledgeable about Islam. They understood and respected the religion and the local traditions and culture.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable across the school. They were able to discuss most of the current major events in Dubai. They were aware of the main factors that made Dubai and the UAE an international destination. Students had positive views about how they could contribute to Dubai. Students had a basic knowledge about environmental issues such as recycling and global warming. They had only irregular opportunities to look after their immediate environment or support environmental improvements in the wider community.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Overall, teaching was acceptable across the school. Teachers had good subject knowledge in mathematics. In Islamic Education, Arabic, English and science, teachers' subject knowledge was acceptable. At the Kindergarten phase, teaching had improved. Teachers were beginning to use active learning methods and resources appropriate for this age-range such as flash-cards, clapping, singing rhymes and using objects for practical activities to reinforce students' understanding. In the primary and secondary phases, a minority of teachers used a range of learning activities such as group and paired work effectively to enhance learning and enjoyment; for example in some science and mathematics lessons. In a minority of lessons, learning objectives were unclear and insufficient attention given to collaborative and active learning. In a few primary and secondary grades, the pace was slow because teachers planned insufficient work to keep students engaged in purposeful tasks throughout lessons. In many lessons, there was too much teacher talk in teacher-led lessons. Although teachers used work-sheets for students of different abilities, in a minority of lessons there was insufficient challenge for more able students.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable at all stages. In almost all lessons, students were attentive to teachers and worked hard. In primary and secondary grades they collaborated very well in group-tasks when given the opportunity and when the purpose of group tasks was made clear. Students showed responsibility for their own learning by taking notes, for example, in mathematics and English lessons in the secondary grade. In a few lessons in Kindergarten, limited opportunities for social and activity-based learning resulted in distraction and inattention amongst students. Where the pace of teaching was slow, students were passive and uninvolved. In lessons with no variation in teaching methodology, students became distracted and as a result made slow progress in learning.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. Teachers and supervisors were now more consistent in tracking students' progress. Records such as individual student profiles were regularly updated and termly reports to parents provided information on students' progress. Assessment information from class and end-of-term tests was used effectively to identify high attaining students or those needing additional support. Limited use was made of assessment information to plan activities and resources to match the range of students' needs. Marking of written work was not sufficiently informative and there were few comments in exercise books to help students improve their work. Attainment data was not analysed by gender or by separate sciences.

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

Overall, the curriculum was acceptable in the Kindergarten phase. It was unsatisfactory at the primary and secondary phases due to non-compliance with the Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. Courses and programmes at all phases provided narrow learning experiences in subject areas. From the primary stages students had insufficient opportunities to learn Arabic, and to learn about Islamic Education through the Arabic language for those students for whom it was their first language. At the Kindergarten phase recent improvements had broadened students' learning experiences. At the primary and secondary phases there was insufficient breadth, balance or progression in subject areas such as the expressive arts. Students had insufficient opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, particularly through sports coaching or team sports activities. Course options led to certification in either Indian Kerala Board or CBSE examinations. Students could take a choice of three mother tongue languages Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam. There were some cross-curricular links in science and through occasional school activities, but this was underdeveloped. Courses were reviewed annually and at Kindergarten had been improved to include a greater emphasis on practical learning experiences for children. Curricular links with the community and local environment were weak.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Overall, arrangements for health and safety were acceptable. Bus safety measures were adequate, with good supervision of students during the school day and at dispersal times. School premises were clean and hygienic, but there was limited space and access for students with special educational needs. Students received regular check-ups and medical records were well maintained. Students were not supplied with protective goggles during chemistry lab work. Students' understanding about healthy living was raised in a minority of lessons and a few posters in the school corridors promoted healthy living. Senior managers did not ensure a consistent approach to health promotion across the school. Students had regular physical exercise during physical training lessons and healthy eating options were in place in the school canteen. Fire drills and safety equipment checks were carried out, but students had inconsistent knowledge of evacuation plans. Care and welfare arrangements were in place, including appropriate systems for communicating with parents, but students were not always clear to whom they should raise matters of concern.

The quality of support provided by the school was acceptable, overall. Student-teacher relationships were positive but formal guidelines on discipline and behaviour were not sufficiently in place or shared effectively by senior managers. Students did not have sufficient career guidance and were guided by their own interests and parental aspirations. Recent improvements in teaching and tracking students' behaviour and academic progress had helped target support for higher attaining students and for those requiring additional support. Attendance was monitored regularly. The school was still developing its capacity to identify students' varying needs accurately and there was limited knowledge of the range of needs.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was unsatisfactory. The Principal and her Vice-Principal were insufficiently proactive as leaders and managers and had failed to develop a shared vision for the school. Recent staff appointments had resulted in a significant increase in middle management posts. These supervisors and subject coordinators were still developing their remits. Improvements had been made to aspects of courses and students' learning, particularly in Kindergarten. Senior and middle managers' mainly functional remits were not sufficiently focused on leadership or teaching and learning. Middle managers had insufficient direction from senior managers and lacked development opportunities to improve their leadership skills.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Only aspects of the last inspection's recommendations had been met. The school action and development plans did not link sufficiently well. There was a lack of success criteria and formal recording of the impact, timescales, roles and responsibilities across all aspects of the work of the school. Recent managers' observations of learning and teaching lacked rigour. The scant information gathered through the limited focus of these visits did not result in sharing of best practice or improvements in teaching.

Partnerships with parents and the wider community were acceptable, overall. Most parents felt welcomed in the school and thought they could discuss any aspect of their children's education. The school informed them by phone or letter in the event of any concerns. Regular newsletters provided information on school events. Parents meetings were held three times a year and these, along with written reports, informed parents about their children's progress in class tests and examinations. There was no parents' association and parents were not sufficiently involved in decision-making or in other aspects of the life of the school. The school linked with its wider community through annual sports days and through other events throughout the academic year. Despite these activities there was insufficient involvement of the school with the community.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The owner was a regular visitor to the school. He had held two recent formal meetings with a large group of parents to discuss their concerns, but there had been no formal record of the outcome of these meetings. Although the owner met regularly with senior managers to discuss key aspects of the school, he had not been given a sufficiently accurate picture of how the school was performing.

Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. Teachers were sufficiently qualified, but had an inadequate programme of professional development to enhance their teaching skills. The school did not analyse observations on learning and teaching to identify and share best practice. Training events were often limited to information on the requirements of the examination boards. Improvements to the facilities in the school included the provision of a basketball court and Kindergarten play area. The hard surfaces of the sports areas were a potential health and safety hazard. The number of library books and computers had increased, but remained below the required amount to support effective independent reading or research skills. The size of some classrooms and external spaces restricted learning, particularly in practical subjects. Muslim students did not have a dedicated prayer area.

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 Islamic Education?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
1% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

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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