DUBAI
Knowledge المعرفة

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

School Inspection Supplement

2016-17

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Foreword

The academic year 2016-17 marks the ninth year of annual inspections of private schools in Dubai by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) and the second year of evaluating the schools against the UAE School Inspection Framework (the framework). When school inspections began in Dubai in 2008-09, just four schools were rated as outstanding overall. In the last inspection cycle, 16 schools were rated as outstanding and 13 as very good overall. This improvement in the quality of education provided by Dubai schools is encouraging as we continue to work towards meeting the UAE National Agenda goals.

There will be no changes to the framework for 2016-17; schools will be inspected against the same performance standards and indicators. The Dubai School Inspection Supplement 2016-17 (the supplement) has two purposes:

1. To help school staff and DSIB inspectors understand and use the framework consistently for school improvement.
2. To explain the focus areas that DSIB will be looking at during inspections.

Last year, DSIB introduced the National Agenda Parameter. The guidance has been updated to provide greater clarity about DSIB expectations for 2016-17. The framework emphasises the importance of educational outcomes in the key subjects. Given the widening choice of curricula offered by our schools, the supplement provides guidance on how external examination results for the various curricula are used to inform judgements on attainment.

DSIB is committed to enabling students to become effective citizens and residents of the UAE. Last year, information was obtained about the provision for UAE social studies in schools. This year all schools are expected to have formal planning documents and timetabled provision for the teaching of UAE social studies. Inspections will also be focussing more closely on the elements of the framework that relate to innovation.

In the drive for Dubai to become a fully-inclusive society, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will continue to be a major focus of inspections. An evaluative judgement will continue to be given on the overall effectiveness of provision for students with SEND.

DSIB places a high level of importance on school self-evaluation as part of each school's cycle of review and improvement planning. All schools are again required to complete the online DSIB self-evaluation form (SEF) prior to inspections so that these can be shared with inspection teams.

We trust that this supplement will provide useful additional guidance in those aspects which are of particular importance to our schools in Dubai. I wish you continued success in your efforts to provide a high-quality education for the young people of Dubai.

Fatma Belrehif
Executive Director, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

1. The UAE National Agenda Parameter 2016-17

The UAE National Agenda continues to be one of the most important strategic initiatives introduced by H.H Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai to steer us to work collectively to improve the quality of education across the UAE.

Last academic year KHDA introduced the UAE National Agenda Parameter, which requires all schools to participate in international and external benchmarking assessments on an annual basis other than TIMSS and PISA, and use them to monitor their progress in meeting their UAE National Agenda individual targets.

This year, DSIB will be evaluating the impact that the results and the findings from the National Agenda Parameter are having on the quality of education offered.

The new UAE National Agenda Parameter requirements for the 2016-17 academic year include three components as follows:

Table A: Required Components

The National Agenda Parameter components for 2016-17		Requirements	
		Targeted grades	**Number of students**
1	**GL Cognitive Ability Test – CAT 4** Schools wishing to use an alternative cognitive ability measure should seek approval from DSIB	Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 (UK schools: Years: 5, 7, 9 and 11)	All students in the targeted grades
2	**OECD "PISA-Based Test for Schools"**	Grade 10 (UK schools: Year 11)	All students in Grade10 (UK schools: Year 11)
3	One benchmark assessment in mathematics, science and English (Arabic for MoE schools) **listed in Table B**	Grades 4, 6 and 8 (in UK schools: Years: 5, 7 and 9)	All students in the targeted grades

Table B: Benchmark tests available according to the curriculum

Curriculum	Recommended assessment (choose one from this list)	Targeted Grades	Number of students
IB, UK, Indian, Pakistani, Philippines, Canadian	• **ASSET** • **ACER ISA** • **ACER IBT** • **NWEA MAP** • **GL (PTE, PTS, PTM)** • **CEM InCAS** (available for primary grades only, age 6 to 11). Schools participating in CEM InCAS have to choose another Assessment for the upper grades.	Grades 4, 6 and 8 (UK schools: Years 5, 7 and 9) Grade 4 (UK schools: Year 5)	All students in the targeted grades
MoE Private schools	**UAE National assessment Programme (NAP)**	All UAE NAP Grades	
US curriculum schools	**NWEA MAP**	Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	
US/IB curriculum schools	NWEA MAP must be used for the grades that follow a US curriculum. For other grades, choose any appropriate test from this table (including MAP)		
Cambridge curriculum schools	**Cambridge Primary Checkpoint Y6, Cambridge Secondary 1 Checkpoint Y9** with one of the following tests for all students in Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9: ISA or IBT or ASSET		

Tables A and B feature some tests that are curriculum neutral and others that are better suited to a particular curriculum. These tests do not replace the need for curriculum-specific assessment across all phases of the school. Schools wishing to use an alternative external benchmarking test should seek approval from DSIB.

Schools wishing to test other grades in addition to the targeted grades are encouraged to do so. Testing all grades is not required, but this is educationally beneficial as it will provide schools with a more holistic picture of their students' performance.

For the academic year 2016-17, DSIB requires testing in Grade 6 / Year 7 because the students in this grade will be among the student population for TIMSS 2019 (Grade 8 / Year 9), and later will also be among the student population for PISA 2021. Therefore, these students will represent schools in the future cycles of TIMSS and PISA.

When evaluating the progress schools are making towards meeting their National Agenda targets, inspectors will also consider other sources of evidence in addition to that from the UAE National Agenda Parameter and the schools' analyses of these data. This should help determine the extent to which the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are promoting the required knowledge and skills for students to be globally competitive, and for schools to meet their National Agenda targets.

2. Evaluating students' attainment against curriculum standards (element 1.1.1)

When evaluating students' attainment using the framework, it is essential that judgements are made against the authorised and licensed curriculum standards.

The framework evaluates attainment based on the proportions of students "in line with curriculum standards" and at the "level above curriculum standards".

The table on the next page provides guidance for schools and inspectors for evaluating attainment across a range of curriculum standards.

At least 75% of the students should be attaining "in line with curriculum standards" for attainment to be regarded as "acceptable". The proportions of students reaching the "level above curriculum standards" are used for evaluating whether attainment is good, very good or outstanding.

It is important to note that assessment data are just part of the evidence sources that inspectors use to judge attainment in each subject (refer to Indicator 1.1 in the framework).

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Curriculum Standards 2016-2017

Type of curriculum		Acceptable		Better than acceptable	
		In line with curriculum standards		Level above curriculum standards	
		Attainment is Acceptable if at least 75% of students are attaining at or above the curriculum standards stated in this column		Attainment is Good: If at least 50% of the students are at or above the curriculum standards stated in this column Very Good: If at least 61% of the students are at or above the curriculum standards stated in this column Outstanding: If at least 75% of the students are at or above the curriculum standards stated in this column	
UAE	Grades 1-11	50%		70%	
	Grade 12 only	60%		70%	
Indian	CBSE Board: Class 10 - 12	Grade C1		Grade B1	
	ICSE Board (CICSE): Class 10 and Class 12 examinations	Grade 7		Grade 5	
	Kerala Board: Grade 10 / SSLC (School Leaving Certificate) and Gr12 / (Higher Secondary)	C+ (50 - 59%), Grade Value 5		B+ (70 - 79%), Grade Value 7	
French	French and Franco-Lebanese Curriculum	10 (Out of 20)		12 (Out of 20)	
Iran	National Curriculum	10 (Out of 20)		14 (Out of 20)	
Pakistan	National Curriculum	Grade D (40%)		Grade B (60%)	
Philippine	National Curriculum	75%		83%	
German	National Curriculum	Level 3 on the ranking scale 1-5 (1 is the highest)		Level 2 (1 is the highest)	
Russian	National Curriculum	Level 3 on the ranking Scale 1-5 (5 is the highest)		Level 4 (5 is the highest)	
Japanese	National Curriculum	50%		70%	
IBDP	All Subjects (Levels 1 – 7)	Level 4		Level 5	
MYP	All Subjects	Level 4		Level 5	
US Curriculum	Internal assessment	65%		75%	
	AP – Advanced Placement	Group A – Mark 2	Group B – Mark 3	Group A – Mark 3	Group B – Mark 4
	ACT – American College Test	Minimum College Benchmark: English – 18, Mathematics – 22, Science – 23			
	SAT I	International Mean 2015: for Mathematics – 511, for Critical Reading – 495. for Writing – 484			
National Curriculum of England*	Year 1 - Phonics Screening Check	Can read 32 out of 40 words (2015 pass threshold)		This level is not defined	
	End of KS1 - Y2	Level 2b		Level 3c	
	End of KS2 – Y6	Level 4b		Level 5c	
	End of KS3 – Y9	Level 6b		Level 7c	
	GCSE / IGCSE - All subjects	Grade C		Grade B	
	New GCSE (1-9)	5		6	
	GCE A Level (A* - E) and AS Level (A – E)	Grade C		Grade B	
Cambridge International Examinations	KS2 – Primary Checkpoint (Y6)	4		5	
	KS3 – Secondary 1 Checkpoint (Y9)	4		5	
All early years curricula	When inspecting provision in the early years inspectors will judge children's achievements in key subjects using child-development outcomes that are typically found in high quality early years curricula.				

* Note on changes to National Curriculum of England:

With effect from September 2014, and the introduction of the new National Curriculum for England programmes of study, curriculum levels for assessment of student achievement have been discontinued. In the table on the previous page, levels are given for reference only. Levels will be used as a measure of attainment if:

- reference was made to levels to describe attainment by benchmark tests.
- schools decide to use levels, as an interim measure of attainment.

- If schools decide to use levels as an interim measure, they should ensure that these are clearly defined against the expected curriculum standards and performance descriptors.
- Where schools have chosen another approach to assessment linked to the revised curriculum, they must clearly define what the minimum curriculum expectation and the level above curriculum expectation are. It is expected that these schools will provide a clear rationale for these descriptors together with the accuracy of assessment through internal and external standardisation and moderation.
- This year (2016) will see the introduction of the new tests for KS1 and 2 with a scaled score, rather than levels.
- As students enter Key Stage 3, they will do so with information that includes test results expressed as scaled scores. Teacher assessment throughout Key Stage 3 should evaluate whether or not students meet the National Curriculum performance descriptors of the expected standards (except in writing). It is expected that schools will identify clearly what was used as the minimum curriculum expectation and what was considered as the level above.

*Note on Early Years Education

- Early years education will be evaluated against the framework in the same way as all other phases.
- Inspectors of the early years phase will take into account the unique nature of this stage of education and contextualise their judgements according to recognised features of international best practice.

3. Evaluating students' attainment against international benchmarks (element 1.1.2)

Last year, KHDA launched the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments. The table below provides guidance for schools and inspectors for evaluating attainment against a range of international benchmarks used for the National Agenda Parameter.

The "standards" for the different tests were set in consultation with providers and were based on the National Agenda requirements.

At least 75% of the students should be attaining at or above the level specified in Column B to be regarded as "acceptable". The proportions of students reaching the "level above international standards" are used for evaluating whether attainment is good, very good or outstanding as described in Column C. It is important to note that assessment data are just part of the evidence sources that inspectors use to judge attainment in each subject (refer to Indicator 1.1 in the framework).

Column A	Column B	Column C
International benchmark test	**Acceptable**	**Better than acceptable**
	In line with international standards	**Level above international standards**
	Attainment is Acceptable if at least 75% of students are attaining at or above the international standards stated in this column	**Attainment is** **Good: If at least 50% of the students are at or above the international standards stated in this column** **Very Good: If at least 61% of the students are at or above the international standards stated in this column** **Outstanding If at least 75% of the students are at or above the international standards stated in this column**
MAP	41st international percentile	61st international percentile
GL PT (PTS, PTM, PTE)	Stanine 5	Stanine 6
IBT	41st international percentile	61st international percentile
ASSET	Stanine 5	Stanine 6
InCAS	Standardised score of 96	Standardised score of 104
ISA	International mean minus one quarter of standard deviation*	International mean plus one quarter of standard deviation*
	*International mean and standard deviation for each subject and each grade can be found in the ISA school report under "All schools mean" and "All schools standard deviation".	
PISA – Based Test for Schools	The results will be analysed by the test provider based on PISA requirements	
UAE NAP	The standards will be announced at the later date	

4. UAE social studies

In line with the UAE national priorities and the Dubai strategic plan 2021, schools in Dubai are required to incorporate the Ministry of Education UAE social studies curriculum standards into their curricula. The rationale for this is to provide students with in-depth knowledge, skills and understanding in UAE history, geography and civics, emphasising the links and relationships between diverse groups, people, science and society. The delivery of this curriculum should help ensure that students will contribute, as responsible citizens and residents of the UAE, to the building of a cohesive society that is inclusive of all, while preserving the UAE culture, heritage and traditions.

During the 2015-16 cycle of inspections, information was collected on the status of the provision for UAE social studies in Dubai private schools. This year, DSIB requires all schools to have curriculum planning documents that incorporate UAE social studies standards and to discuss with inspectors how UAE social studies is taught.

Guidelines:

- Prior to inspection, schools will be asked to provide DSIB with information about the provision of UAE social studies in their schools. This information will include the curriculum approach, time allocation, language of instruction, teaching methods and resources used. Schools will also be asked to include supporting documents, such as curriculum plans to show how the UAE social studies curriculum standards are incorporated into the school curriculum. DSIB inspectors will have a conversation with schools based on this information.
- Schools need to ensure that their UAE social studies provision is for all students of all nationalities and backgrounds, from Grades 1 to 9 (Years 2 to 10).
- Schools have the option of teaching the UAE social studies in their language of instruction, Arabic, or to use a mixed approach as appropriate for their student population.

Inspectors will visit lessons, and look at students' work and the school's curriculum plans in order to report on the UAE social studies provision. An evaluative paragraph will be included in the inspection report, although judgements will not be made.

For further information, refer to the national curriculum documents for social studies online at:

https://www.moe.gov.ae/Arabic/Docs/Curriculum/Learning%20Standard/Social_Studies.pdf

5. Innovation

The UAE Vision 2021 includes innovation in education as part of the National Agenda. Schools are required to promote innovation through meaningful learning opportunities with elements of enterprise, enquiry, research, critical thinking and the use of learning technologies. Each school's commitment to educational innovation should have a positive effect on students' outcomes and lead to school improvement.

During the 2015-16 inspection cycle, schools were evaluated on how well they were promoting innovation. As we move towards achieving the UAE Vision 2021, the 2016-2017 school inspection cycle will include a greater focus on the UAE School Inspection Framework performance standards and elements that target innovation in curriculum, teaching, learning skills, school leadership and students' personal and academic development. Schools should be demonstrating a commitment to integrate innovation through their vision and interpretation of innovation in each of the selected performance indicators and elements.

Performance standards/elements

Performance Standard	Students' achievement
Indicator	**1.3 Learning skills**
1.3.4 Innovation, enterprise, enquiry, research, critical thinking and use of learning technologies	Guidelines and impact: • Students should demonstrate that they are innovative (creative, confident, independent) in their learning in different subjects and across the school. • Learning technologies should enrich, stimulate and promote students' capacities to be innovative. • Critical thinking and problem-solving skills should be embedded and promote learning and enterprise.
Performance Standard	**Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills**
Indicator	**2.3 Social responsibility and innovation skills**
2.3.2 Work ethic, innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship	Guidelines and impact: • Students' work ethic should motivate them to develop new ideas in their learning and across the school. • Innovation skills should contribute to a culture of innovation through project initiatives and enterprise/entrepreneurship activities.
Performance Standard	**Teaching and assessment**
Indicator	**3.1 Teaching for effective learning**
3.1.5 Teaching to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and independent learning skills	Guidelines and impact: • Teaching should provide opportunities to develop and promote students' idea generation, critical thinking, initiative, problem solving and other innovation skills. • Teachers' professional learning and research should inform their planning of lessons to develop students' independent learning skills.
Performance Standard	**Curriculum**
Indicator	**4.2 Curriculum adaptation**
4.2.2 Enhancement, enterprise and innovation	Guidelines and impact: • The curriculum design and delivery should provide opportunities for innovation to motivate and challenge students in their personal and academic development. • The curriculum design should include a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and encourage students' participation to enhance their overall innovation skills development. • Partnerships (local and global organisations/businesses) should support opportunities for innovation that enrich enterprise, creativity and social contributions across the curriculum.
Performance Standard	**Leadership and management**
Indicator	**6.1 The effectiveness of leadership**
6.1.4 Capacity to innovate and improve	Guidelines and impact: • School leaders should create a compelling vision, mission and strategy for innovation and school improvement that addresses the capacity for innovation. • Working in partnership with all school stakeholders, leaders should provide direction for promoting a culture of innovation.

6. Special educational needs and disabilities Inclusion

Dubai is determined to become fully inclusive by 2020. The 'My community…a city for everyone' initiative makes this commitment clear and is supported by Dubai Law No. 2, 2014. It is expected that each school in Dubai will promote a highly inclusive ethos, the outcome of which will be evident in the values, culture and achievements of each school community.

Schools must develop their internal capacities to identify and remove barriers that restrict the achievements and educational experience of students with SEND. In order for this to happen, senior leaders and governors must develop and implement a policy that guides inclusive provision and practice so that students with SEND are not disadvantaged.

Medical vs social model of disability

Inspections show that the majority of schools are taking actions to address barriers to inclusion. However, some schools tend to focus too heavily upon the 'medical model' of disability and the impact of their efforts is limited by their narrow view of disability. Truly inclusive schools utilise a 'social model' of disability to shape their provision for students with SEND.

The medical model

This model is based on the view that the cause of a student's educational difficulty is directly attributed to the student's disability and personal 'deficits'. The focus of the school's provision becomes one of 'fixing the student' rather than accommodating the student. In these cases there tends to be an over-reliance on the use of medical professionals to assess, diagnose and treat students with SEND in an attempt to make them 'better learners'.

The social model

Schools that adopt the social model in their approach to SEND, recognise the nature and impact of the difficulties that students experience. They are proactive in identifying and minimising the physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers that restrict student achievements. These schools take appropriate actions to remove obstacles which impose educational and, ultimately, social exclusion. The students gather a strong sense of belonging from their school communities, develop emotional resilience, and are well prepared for their next stages of education and life.

Implications for identification

The appropriate identification of the needs of students with disabilities is the first step in developing quality provision and support. Consequently, it is essential that the correct approach is taken when using appropriate identification procedures. Careful consideration should be given, not just to 'what' procedures are used but also to 'why' they are being used.

The purpose of identifying the type of difficulties that a student with SEND experiences is to enable educators to provide direct support to the student and also to evaluate and lower other external barriers to learning. It is important to understand that in most cases this process should not necessarily require a formal diagnosis. The presence of a formal diagnosis should not be the gateway to provision and support for students with SEND.

Schools should ensure that:

- Specialist staff make use of a range of assessment tools to identify accurately all students with SEND. The schools must utilise this information to develop provision to meet the needs of all groups of students with SEND.
- There are effective identification procedures for new students entering schools and for students already within the schools. Schools must provide accurate and detailed identification of needs. Consequently, interventions should be well matched to the type and level of SEND.
- Well-developed policies and plans are effective and that provision for students with SEND consistently supports progress.
- There is sufficient investment in SEND resourcing, including the recruitment, development and deployment of effective members of staff across most levels of provision.

The need to establish effective identification procedures is clear, whether or not formal diagnosis has been secured. To help this, the structure of the 'school pre-inspection identification form for students with SEND' has been amended. This will enable inspectors to gather an accurate picture of the number of students with SEND within a school community and the nature of their needs. The main additions are included on the next page:

Aspect of identification	Guidance
Formal diagnosis Yes/No	The form must provide details of all students who have been identified with a SEND. This identified need may be supported by a formal diagnosis. However, the absence of a formal diagnosis should not restrict a student's access to in-school support and provision.
Main category of identified need	A student may be identified with more than one category of SEND, for example dyslexia and dyspraxia. In this section of the form, please select the category of need which presents the greatest barrier to learning in school.
Additional category of identified need	If a student has been identified with more than one category of SEND, please identify the additional categories of need in this section of the form. You can select up to 3 additional categories of need.

Whether or not a student with SEND is supported by a formal diagnosis, inspectors will scrutinise the quality of assessments and supporting information to evaluate the appropriateness of the identified category of SEND.

Self-evaluation and SEND

The key elements of provision and outcomes which reflect quality practice in the identification of students with SEND are made explicit within the online SEND self-evaluation tab for schools. This self-evaluation framework covers 26 different aspects of provision and provides quality descriptors for each aspect ranging from very weak to outstanding. All schools must use this resource to:

- complete and submit an accurate SEND self-evaluation form prior to inspection
- demonstrate, through evidence in the completed SEND self-evaluation form, how improvements have been made in the quality of provision for SEND.

This year, all schools will be given access to their SEND SEFs that were completed in in 2015-16. Schools should use these as starting points for reviewing the provision and outcomes in order to update their evidence and evaluations.

7. School self-evaluation

DSIB recognises the importance of self-evaluation as an essential part of schools' ongoing cycle of review and improvement planning. The self-evaluation form (SEF) is an important tool in this cycle. It helps schools to measure how well they are doing in different areas, leading to an overall evaluation of the quality of education. DSIB believes that the SEF should be a working document used by school leaders and governors to inform them of their school's improvement.

In line with international good practice in school inspections, DSIB places firm emphasis on the need for all schools to be familiar and confident with the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning. DSIB has updated the SEF for 2016-17. It includes supporting documents and is aligned to the elements of the framework. All schools should familiarise themselves with the inspection framework, the revised school SEF and the supporting documents. DSIB expects schools to work in partnership with inspectors to bring about improvements.

After eight years of inspections in Dubai, schools are well placed to use the information from previous inspections and their own evaluations to plan for the future. DSIB requires all schools to submit a SEF and a school improvement plan (SIP) 14 calendar days prior to the school inspection. This information should be aligned to the performance standards and performance indicators in the framework.

Inspectors will use the SEF and the SIP provided by each school as starting-points for their work. They will focus on the accuracy of the self-evaluation using the data and information that the school has provided, and begin to evaluate it against the framework. During the inspection, inspectors will work with school leaders to determine each school's priorities for further improvement.

A suggested number of words to be used by schools in their responses is provided in the SEF. It is expected that schools will provide succinct bullet points which contain phase-specific detail on each element, with appropriate evidence to support their evaluations. The information should be an evaluation (not a narrative description) of the impact of the school's work in relation to improving outcomes for students.

For the 2016-17 academic year, all schools must complete the DSIB SEF as found in the schools' KHDA electronic document. In addition schools must complete the National Agenda, social studies, SEND and innovation supplement information, and submit all information to DSIB at least 14 calendar days before the school's inspection visit.

Knowledge & Human Development Authority

P. O. Box: 500008, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Tel: +971 4 364 0000 Fax: +971 4 364 0001

www.khda.gov.ae