

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Gem Private School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Gem Private School

Location	Oud Metha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaigem.org
Telephone	04-3376661
Address	Bur Dubai, Oud Metha Road, PO Box 989, Dubai
Principal	Keith Sedgwick
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 FS1 to Grade 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	1,380
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	3 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	24th March to 27th March 2014

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The context of the school

Located in Oud Metha, Dubai Gem Private School provided education for boys and girls from three to 18 years, from Foundation Stage to Grade 13. Most students were of Indian nationality. There were a number of other nationalities, mostly Pakistani and Asian. There were three Emirati students attending. Around 80 students were registered as having some form of special educational need.

The school followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales, with International General Certificate of Secondary Examinations (IGSCE) at Grade 11 and Advanced level at Grades 12 and 13. In Foundation Stage and primary classes, the curriculum was closely matched to the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum, supplemented with additional courses related to the local context of the school and a number of international assessments.

The school was organised into several sections. For the purpose of this report four phases were identified which matched the current organisational structure of the school. Foundation Stage classes catered for children aged three to five years. In primary students attended Grades 1 to 6 from ages five to 11 years. Secondary students, aged 11 to 16 years, attended Grades 7 to 11 and most studied for their IGCSE examinations at the end of this phase. In Grades 12 and 13, the post-16 phase students completed AS and A-level examinations.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Excellent behaviour, self-motivation and positive attitudes to learning characterised students across all stages of the school and outstanding community and environmental responsibility in primary, middle and high;
- Outstanding attainment in English, mathematics and science in examinations in the secondary and post-16 phases of the school;
- The caring ethos of the school, which contributed positively to the highly effective care and welfare of students;
- Focused leadership, which has led to continued improvements in the quality of teaching, notably in the Foundation Stage and primary classes.

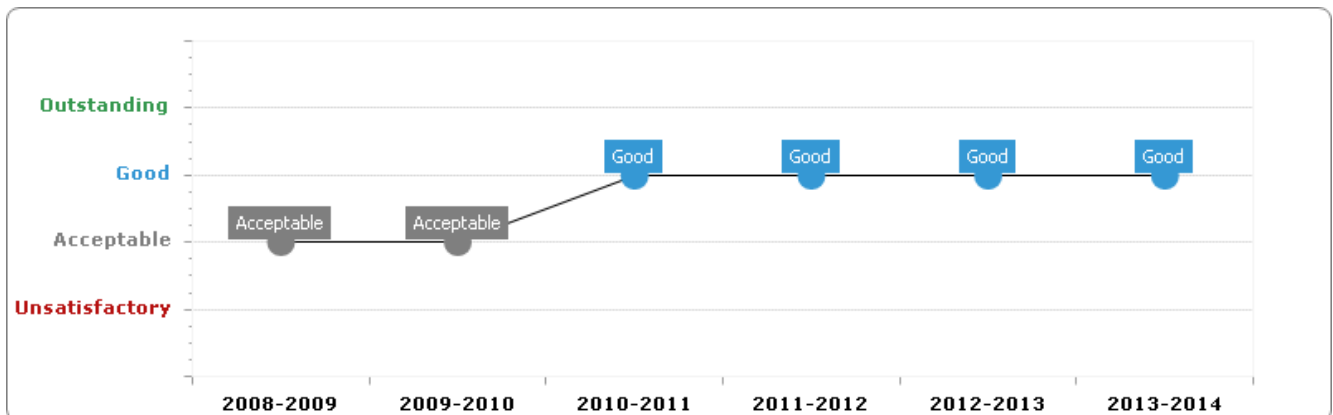
Recommendations

- Continue to develop provision for students for whom Arabic is a first language and ensure full compliance across all stages of the school with the Ministry of Education requirements for this subject;
- Develop students' investigative and independent learning skills further by increased and regular use of information and communication technology (ICT);
- Use assessment data to improve lesson planning and ensure that tasks are matched closely to the learning needs of all students;
- Improve marking of work to provide students with more detailed and formative information about their next steps in learning;
- Improve resources and facilities, as indicated in this report.

Progress since the last inspection

- Teaching in the primary and Foundation Stage classes has continued to improve with more regular opportunities for children to learn through play and for primary-aged students to be active in their learning;
- The governance structure of the school has been developed and consequently, a wider range of stakeholders actively supported the school in decision-making processes;
- The school has taken a number of important steps to improve the arrangements to support students with special educational needs. These positive steps require further development both in terms of staffing and processes to ensure that all students' needs are fully met;
- The school has invested in ICT equipment and this has supported developments in teaching and learning in certain phases of the school.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Across most key subjects and in all phases of the school, attainment was broadly good. It was outstanding in English, mathematics and science in the secondary and post-16 phases. However, Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory in both primary and secondary. In Islamic Education, at the primary stage, a majority of students explained the pillars of Islam confidently and achievement was above expectations. In secondary, a majority of students showed a good understanding of Seerah, Morals, Shariyah and Islamic values. In Arabic as an additional language, most students demonstrated a good understanding of spoken Arabic. Their spoken language skills were appropriate for the length of time they had studied the language. Writing skills were not well developed and restricted too often to copying rather than writing independently. In English, at the Foundation and primary phases, the majority of students attained above expectations and, in the upper school, most attained well-above expectations. Across the school, almost all students listened well and talked with confidence in lessons. Despite low starting points, students could give lengthy oral responses and detailed presentations. Attainment, particularly in creative writing, was often limited by a lack of critical thinking experiences and relevant resources. As they progressed through the school, students in mathematics built successfully on the good skills they gained in Foundation Stage in understanding and using numbers. They could use fractions and decimals and explored geometric shapes in primary. Older students used complex algebraic expressions and geometric measurement with precision. In science, students in Foundation Stage were able to complete simple practical science tasks and had a good understanding of the main concepts. In primary classes, scientific thinking and practical skills become more commonly applied. In secondary and post-16, scientific thinking and relating knowledge and understanding to everyday examples was outstanding.

Progress in key subjects was generally good, but acceptable in Arabic as an additional language in primary and in Arabic as a first language progress was unsatisfactory. In English at the upper stages of the school it was outstanding primarily due to highly skilled and focused teaching. Progress in understanding Islamic Education was good in all phases. Students steadily improved their understanding of Seerah and Fiqh. However, progress was slower in developing recitation skills and using The Holy Qur'an or Hadeeth as a reference. Students in Arabic as a first language made unsatisfactory progress because lessons lacked challenge and, for some students, there was insufficient time allocated on the timetable. Most students followed the programme for Arabic as an additional language and their progress was best in terms of listening and understanding. In speaking, most students made acceptable progress forming sentences and reading key vocabulary and sentences from familiar texts. Students' progress in building to capacity to use the language in independent oral expression or in writing was much slower. Progress in English at the Foundation Stage and primary phases was good particularly as a result of a successful initiative, which promoted independent writing. In secondary and post-16 phases, focused planning of activities that

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interested both genders, notably reading texts, had increased progress especially for boys. Progress in mathematics was consistently good because students showed careful attention to their work and enjoyed exploring new concepts. By the secondary phase, they showed real enthusiasm and especially enjoyed solving problems and exploring more complex calculations. In science, practical skills were developed well throughout the Foundation Stage and primary phase. Older students were very confident in their practical, analytical and critical thinking skills. They discussed and challenged their peers and had developed a deeper understanding of complex concepts as a result.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills across the school were good. Students were eager to take responsibility for their learning. Children in Foundation stage and lower primary happily made choices when given the opportunity to learn in the activity room and enthusiastically found things out for themselves. They also worked well together within groups. They contributed to discussions and listened respectfully to each other, with some students expressing their own thoughts and ideas and presenting their learning with confidence. Students were able to make connections with previous learning and were successful in applying their skills in real life situations. For example, in Grade 6 mathematics, practical problems helped students understand areas and perimeters. The majority of students in secondary and post-16 were actively involved in their own learning and in the better lessons were developing greater independence as they progressed through the school. They sometimes used books and ICT to search for information and occasionally had opportunities for critical reflection. However, these learning skills were not consistently developed.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility across all phases of the school was outstanding. Self-discipline, self-control and mutual respect prevailed through all phases of the school and students managed their own behaviour effectively. Students displayed exceptionally good attitudes and were eager to learn and absorb knowledge. Relationships between students and teachers and students and their peers were always very positive and respectful and a strong aspect of school life. Healthy living was promoted and understood as shown in the eating choices students made at breaks. Attendance was outstanding.

The students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across all phases. They showed clear understanding of Dubai's culture and heritage. They could also explain how Islamic values influenced life style in Dubai. Most students demonstrated respect for the UAE tradition

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and celebrated it. Students had an appreciation of Dubai's multi-cultural society. However, their understanding of worldwide cultures was less well developed. Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in Foundation Stage and outstanding in other phases. The students had a strong work ethic and a mature sense of community and environmental responsibility. In primary, secondary and post-16 phases, the students were committed to their duties and work. They led their own initiatives. They contributed to a number of recycling, water and electricity projects and they participated effectively in charitable activities to help protect animals.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good across all phases. Most teachers had sufficient subject knowledge and were able to share this at a suitable level with students. They created a positive learning environment where students were respected and developed a love of learning. Lessons were planned carefully to show clear learning objectives. Most lessons had a variety of activities and teachers made good use of resources beyond textbooks to enable students to learn successfully. Teachers made sure that all students were engaged in lessons and used a range of questions to test students' understanding. In a few lessons, questions were focused and occasionally personalised for individual students. The pace of learning was adjusted in acknowledgement of students' responses, but this was not a regular feature of teaching across the school. Teachers recognised that different groups and individuals had different learning needs but they did not always adapt their methods, tasks and resources to meet those needs. Students were expected to think about what they were learning but there was insufficient development of enquiry and critical thinking.

Assessment was good across all phases. There was a well-established system to review the attainment of children as they joined the Foundation Stage. This included information from parents and assessments by teachers and this provided a secure base for measuring progress. Assessments in the primary phase relied on teacher generated tests with the addition of optional standardised papers for the end of year examinations in Grades 3 to 6. Senior staff introduced self-assessment opportunities in key subjects. Recording of information was well organised and analysed to identify broad trends and individual progress, all of which was shared with staff. Teachers had a broad understanding of the attainment and progress of groups and individuals. However, assessment information was not used enough by all staff in planning to meet the learning needs for all groups of students. Students were given oral feedback on their work, exercise books were marked regularly but there were too few comments to advise students about how to improve. Students' evaluation of their own and others' work was used in some lessons but was not a regular feature of assessment procedures.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in all phases. The curriculum had been reviewed since the last inspection, especially in Foundation Stage, and was well planned to provide progression. The school followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales and used associated assessment levels to monitor progress. The school had continued to develop stronger transition arrangements as students progressed from one phase of the school to the next. Although cross-curricular links were encouraged, they were more frequent in some subjects. The curriculum covered most of the expected National Curriculum subjects with options to study modern foreign languages in primary and separate sciences from Grade 8. A range of educational visits, including some to other countries, enriched the curriculum. Activity clubs were held after school on four days each week. The school did not comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Education for Arabic as a first language.

Curriculum design was acceptable. The curriculum in Foundation Stage had been adapted to provide more activity-based learning and more free-choice experiences through play. In primary and secondary phases, a few teachers provided different tasks and materials for the range of abilities. Provision for those with specific learning difficulties was appropriate although teachers did not consistently provide effective support for their specific needs in the classroom. There was a programme of individual support for students provided by the Special Educational Needs department and this had enhanced progress. Provision for gifted and talented students was inconsistent with opportunities to challenge and develop higher-order thinking skills missed in many lessons. There was scope for a wider range of subject options for IGCSE and A-levels to broaden students' qualifications and experiences. Students were well prepared for moving on to university and many students achieved places in the United Kingdom and USA.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The protection and support across all phases was good. The school treated the health and safety of its students as a high priority. The security team, bus staff and cleaners ensured that the site was safe, secure and hygienically maintained and that students arrived at and left the site safely. The school premises provided good outdoor-seating areas, which were used well by the students. The buildings had many stairs and different levels, which made access difficult for any with mobility issues. There were extensive records for maintenance, risk assessment and health matters. The Doctor and two nurses provided good health care for the students and delivered an annual health education programme for most of the students. The child protection policy was available on the website and was understood well by all teachers.

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The quality of support was good in all phases of the school. Very good relationships between staff and students were based on mutual respect and were a notable feature of the school. Efficient attendance and punctuality systems ensured most students attended in line with expectations. The identification of students with special educational needs was broadly acceptable. A general understanding was in place to refer students to the specialist staff but few teaching strategies were consistently applied to help address the specific needs of students. Students were confident to seek help and advice from staff on a range of personal matters as well as future careers guidance.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership of the school was good. The Principal communicated a clear view of the school's aims and all staff were informed and committed to achieving the school's vision. Over recent years there had been a notable improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly in Foundation Stage and primary. The school leaders had been successful in developing the school and in communicating and meeting its promise to parents. Leaders shared responsibilities across the school and all teams were held to account for the performance of the department. Teams developed relevant self-evaluation information and this was analysed and reviewed by the Principal. In most cases this led to robust and comprehensive data, which informed school improvement strategies. Relationships and communication between all staff were professional and helped ensure that the school ran smoothly. The Principal demonstrated good capacity to secure further improvement in the work of the school.

There were good, comprehensive and systematic processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning. All teaching staff had contributed and, in almost all cases, this led to valid and reliable information about the performance of the school. Senior staff contributed well to evaluating the work of different departments and sections of the school and had improved in their efforts to become more evaluative and precise in identifying strengths and weaknesses. There was scope for staff to make further use of international assessment data to analyse trends over time. Regular lesson observations were undertaken and these were helpful in identifying priorities for the school in its efforts to improve teaching and learning. The Principal and other senior staff provided robust feedback to teachers and this had helped focus attention on key issues, particularly in Foundation Stage and primary classes. The staff had agreed to a number of priorities in the school improvement plan and these were appropriate, well focused and achievable. The post-inspection plan from the last inspection had led to progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the previous report.

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There were well-established and highly productive links with parents and the community. Parents were actively encouraged as partners in learning and communicated regularly with school staff through the use of homework diaries, regular meetings and reports. The school website had proven to be a useful tool for parents to share information with the Principal and prompt responses from the school were appreciated by parents in ensuring that potential issues were quickly resolved. Reports were issued twice each year and these provided a broad overview of progress. Links with the local community impacted positively on the educational experiences of students and the school planned to widen these further to include work experience and additional voluntary work involving older students.

Governance was acceptable and was supported by a Foundation Board and an Advisory Board. The latter had been established recently and had yet to have a significant impact on the work of the school. As a result of the new governance structure, a wider range of representation from stakeholders was evident. Parents and staff contributed to the Advisory Board and senior staff attended both groups. The Foundation Board met regularly and had reviewed, as part of its work, the school improvement plan and examination results. The governors had not yet ensured that the school was fully compliant with the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Arabic.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was acceptable. The school day was effectively and efficiently managed. Timetabling made best use of available staff and teaching areas. Close liaison with parents and good communication across the school ensured the smooth operation of all school activities. Almost all staff were well qualified and deployed appropriately. In the Foundation Stages, classroom assistants and additional staff supported teachers and the ratios of staff to children were good. This allowed good levels of supervision during activities. In primary and secondary classes, the level of support available to students with special educational needs required improvement. The premises were adequate but specialist facilities were somewhat restricted, notably in science. Learning resources were sufficient but the library areas required improvement and there were too few ICT resources in classes to help facilitate independent learning and research.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The provision for special educational needs was acceptable. Focused leadership and a strongly inclusive approach to enrolling students with special educational needs were showing signs of improved practice. There were recent improvements to the provision made by the school following the appointment of a well-trained teaching assistant to support the development of students' literacy skills and a support teacher to

work with a student in Foundation Stage. Consistent support for all students identified as having special educational needs was still not in place despite the schools best efforts. Students' needs were accurately identified when they entered school through careful monitoring of their progress and attainment. Some programmes of study were modified well to meet specific needs of students. Additional training had been provided for teachers to guide them in adapting the classroom curriculum to provide tasks, which were suitable for students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those who had special gifts and talents. Students provided with specialist support made good progress and those who were supported in class by their teacher made satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Close liaison with parents ensured they were kept appropriately involved in their child's progress. In certain cases, additional external tests or support were recommended for students, with parents receiving clear guidance to access this specialist support. The management of special educational needs within the school was efficient and ensured the care of students was underpinned by good communication.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

The quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language was very inconsistent across the school with a significant proportion of teaching at an unsatisfactory level. Most teachers had secure knowledge of the content of the subject they taught. They planned for their lessons regularly and set clear learning objectives for their students. Teaching depended on the use of oral questions and dialogue supported by occasional use of ICT. The small number of students in many lessons facilitated appropriate levels of interaction with teachers. However, the curriculum on offer in most classes was very limited. It did not match the students' learning needs and offered very low levels of challenges. This meant that there was very limited opportunity for progression for students who were unable to develop their skills in the key aspects of the language. In addition, insufficient time was allocated for the teaching of the subject for many students, particularly in the primary phase; this also had a negative impact on students' progress in many classes. The curriculum therefore required immediate review to ensure that it complied with the Ministry of Education time requirements for Arabic, to ensure that appropriate opportunity was provided for students to progress in their linguistic skills year on year.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	328	34%
	Last year	379	40%
Teachers	70		61%
Students	210		95%

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Approximately one third of the parents, one half of the teachers and almost all Grade 10 to 13 students completed the on-line survey prior to the inspection. Parents and teachers expressed satisfaction with the leadership of the school and stated that the improvements in the school over the last two years was a consequence of the strong vision and leadership of the school Principal. Almost all parents indicated that the school kept children safe and that the arrangements for the care and welfare of all students were positive features of Dubai Gem Private School. There was a high level of satisfaction regarding the quality of education and students' progress in most key subjects. Comments about Arabic were less positive. Teachers felt involved in the work of the school including the review of the curriculum. Students felt they were making good progress in key subjects but would have welcomed more regular opportunities to participate in a wider range of extra-curricular activities.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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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