

The Millennium 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.

The Millennium School was inspected in November and December 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 Qusais, The Millennium School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary to secondary, aged three to 17 years. The school follows the Indian CBSE and CBSE(I) curricula. At the time of the inspection, there were 2781 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents thought that the school was well led and were pleased with their children's progress in Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Most were happy with their children's progress in Islamic Education. Almost all parents were pleased with the quality of teaching and thought that their children were motivated to learn, were well behaved and were treated fairly at school. Most thought that the school encouraged their children to choose a healthy lifestyle. Almost all thought that school reports were informative, that their children were kept safe and that the school responded well to parental concerns. Most considered that communication between the school and parents was sufficiently regular and informative. Most thought that homework was appropriate and that parent-teacher meetings were helpful. A majority of parents thought that they were effectively involved in the life of the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school provided a good quality of education. It had responded effectively to the previous inspection and improvements had been made in a number of key areas of the school. Practical learning had been extended and children's language development enhanced in the Kindergarten as well as improvements to the teaching of environmental science in the primary. These approaches were still at an early stage of development. Teachers' classroom management was being supported through staff training and this was impacting positively on students' learning. Improvements had also been made to students' attainment in the secondary phases in mathematics and science and also in their progress in mathematics. Teaching, learning and assessment had also improved in the Kindergarten as had the quality of its curriculum. Arrangements for ensuring health and safety and the quality of support for students had improved and were now outstanding. The school had identified good practice through more formal lesson observations although senior managers needed to ensure greater consistency in their evaluations. This had led to effective sharing of good practice within departments but not yet across subject areas. A parental focus group had been established and this was beginning to ensure greater representation of parents' views in school decision making. Progress had been made in ensuring that class sizes were conducive to high quality learning but this remained a problem in a few classes. The school showed good capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic were acceptable in the primary and were good in the secondary. Attainment and progress were good in English across the phases. They were also good in mathematics at the Kindergarten and primary but were outstanding at the secondary phase. Attainment and progress in science were good at the Kindergarten and primary phases. Progress was good in science at the secondary phase with attainment outstanding. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the phases. Both their civic understanding, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture and their environmental and economic understanding were outstanding. The quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum was good across the phases. Both health and safety and the quality of support were outstanding. Most aspects of school leadership and management were good.

Key features of the school

- The confident, articulate and caring students;
- The very positive relationships between staff, students and parents;
- The focus of the school on ensuring an inclusive education for all students;
- Students' highly developed sense of community responsibility and service as well as their achievements in the expressive arts;
- The common purpose shared by all staff to raise standards of academic attainment and wider achievement of students;
- The high quality of attainment achieved by senior students especially in mathematics and science;
- The inconsistent attainment of a few students, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic in the primary phase.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic in the primary phase;
- Address the issues of overcrowding in a few classrooms;
- Build on the improvements made to sharing good practice in classroom lessons to ensure consistently high quality teaching;
- Develop the reporting on and assessment of students' academic progress to provide more written advice to students and their parents on how they might improve their learning;
- Ensure that governance in the school includes a wider representation of parents' views.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education was acceptable in the primary but was good in the secondary phase. Most primary students memorised short chapters well from The Holy Qur'an but had difficulty pronouncing words correctly. By Grade 11, secondary school students had good skills in memorisation of long chapters and applied recitation rules well. Primary students were able to recall important facts about the life of the prophet such as the full name of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the names of his parents. Overall, students were making better progress in the secondary phase where most were able to give extended examples of the lives of the prophets.

Progress and attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in the primary and good in the secondary phase. Primary students were able to speak using short and simple sentences. Secondary students spoke well using more complex sentences and in a variety of contexts beyond the school's curriculum. Most primary students relied on explanations in English to help them fully understand Arabic words. In contrast, most secondary students had good understanding of Arabic without reliance on English. Primary students could read words supported by pictures and short passages with appropriate accuracy and meaning. By the

secondary stage, most students read unfamiliar texts fluently. Primary students wrote and copied short sentences while secondary students wrote suitably extended passages using appropriate grammar.

Progress and attainment in English were good. In the Kindergarten, students were making good progress in their language development but were relatively less skilled in their early writing. In the primary phase, students listened well and could provide good oral responses to their teachers' questions. Most students were able to express their views and opinions, participate in group discussions, read fluently, comprehend texts and discuss favourite authors and preferred genres to a good standard. Almost all wrote with neat cursive handwriting. In the secondary phase, students were articulate, confident and could express themselves clearly and concisely. They could read a range of texts with good expression and understood the difference between literal and inferred meanings. Most students wrote well for different purposes and audiences. Students in the secondary phase attained high levels of attainment in CBSE examinations.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were good in the Kindergarten and primary phases and were outstanding in the secondary. Senior students' attained significantly high levels of success in CBSE examinations. In the Kindergarten, almost all students could identify simple shapes and use language associated with place accurately. Primary phase students were able to define problems and derive solutions using correct steps and procedures. By Grade 8, they could find the perimeter and areas of quadrilaterals. Throughout the secondary phase, students had developed a very good range of calculation skills using increasingly complex data. This included calculating lengths of circular arcs and areas of sectors. Students used symbols precisely and consistently. Their abilities to apply independent analytical thinking to construct and evolve their own strategies were relatively less well developed.

Students' attainment and progress in science were good in the Kindergarten and primary. In the secondary phase, attainment was outstanding with students achieving consistently high levels in CBSE examinations. Their progress across the secondary grades was good. In the Kindergarten, almost all students could identify animals and fruits and could discuss accurately the role that animals play in producing food and clothing materials. They were still developing their investigative skills through structured play. Primary and secondary phase students had a good understanding of scientific concepts and facts. In Grade 8, almost all students understood the main causes of global warming. In Grade 9, they knew the elements in an atom. By Grade 12 students understood the laboratory methods of measuring chemical quantities.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good. They were courteous, well behaved and considerate. They had very good relationships with each other and with their teachers and visitors. Almost all showed a positive attitude to learning and appreciated the strong role that the school played in their social development. Prefects, house captains and student council members were very proud of their roles and responsibilities.

Students' civic understanding, understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were outstanding. Students' involvement in Round Square and Best Buddies initiatives resulted in a highly developed sense of community service. They showed a high level of commitment to supporting the social and educational integration of visiting students with special needs. Students had a good understanding of Islam and appreciated the key messages of Islam. They also demonstrated a strong appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai through their coursework and cultural activities. They were able to explain confidently key aspects of the principles of Islam, Dubai's local history and heritage.

Students exhibited outstanding economic and environmental understanding. They demonstrated mature understanding of the present and past economic conditions of Dubai. They understood the significance of the rapid changes in architecture, infra structure and other facilities and the impact it had on their lifestyles. They were determined to play an active part in the future development of Dubai as responsible citizens. The students responded very positively to the many opportunities to contribute effectively to improving their environment and understanding global issues.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was good. Teachers had secure subject knowledge and as a result they were confident, gave clear explanations and answered students' questions competently. Lessons were carefully planned with clear learning objectives and activities that supported the stated learning intentions. Most lessons were timed well but a few ended abruptly or left insufficient time at the end of a lesson to summarise and evaluate learning. In the Kindergarten, good use was made of resources to enrich students' learning experiences. Teachers used a range of resources including information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to provide stimulus but in a few lessons the resources used were limited or not used to maximum effect. The relationships between teachers and students were very positive. The relationships enhanced the quality of dialogue in lessons and allowed students to ask questions and seek clarification. Whilst teachers knew students well, took into account different learning styles and provided a range of learning activities these strategies were developing and in a few lessons did not fully meet the needs of all learners. Teachers in primary Arabic lessons did not use enough Arabic conversation in their lessons.

The quality of student learning was good. Students enjoyed learning and when given the opportunity, especially in the higher grades, took responsibility for aspects of their own

learning. Students reflected on their strengths and areas for development through completing individual profiles. They carried out high quality independent research through projects and homework assignments but had limited opportunities to use ICT. Students of all ages were able to make connections with previous learning and relate these to the real world. They worked collaboratively and showed higher order and critical thinking skills when given the opportunity to solve problems or lead learning.

Assessment was good. Teachers monitored students' progress effectively through consistently applied assessment approaches. This helped teachers to modify their lesson planning to support learning. Aspects of peer and student self-assessment helped students to develop a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as did joint parent, student and teacher meetings to discuss student progress. Teachers regularly marked students' work. Whilst the written comments in course books and written reports provided positive encouragement and highlighted some weaknesses they did not identify sufficiently the next steps a student needed to take in order to improve their work or inform parents about how best to support their children's learning.

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

The curriculum was good, with outstanding features at the primary and secondary phases. The school regularly reviewed and amended its curriculum which was suitably broad and balanced. It ensured appropriate subject choice and progression to certification in CBSE examinations. The school had improved the Kindergarten curriculum through increasing practical learning opportunities, providing more student choice through planned free play activities as well as a greater emphasis on planning to meet the varying needs of students. In the primary and secondary stages a good start had been made to piloting a CBSE-I curriculum at Grades 1 and 9 as well as establishing wider cross-curricular links between subjects at all phases. The curriculum at the primary phase was now developing more effectively scientific knowledge and skills in environmental science. The school had revised its programme of after-school activities to ensure greater participation by students through rotating groups of participants throughout the week. This programme included an extensive range of high quality creative arts and sports activities. The after-school classes aimed at meeting the varying academic needs of students and to promote independent learning needed further improvement. A range of external trips supported students' social and academic experiences including trips to NASA for Grades 7 to 12 and participation in Mathematics Olympiads. Students benefited from extensive links with other schools, participation in environmental initiatives and in international student led conferences and projects which enhanced their sense of community service. Students were also involved in supporting visiting students with additional support needs through well established links with local schools and centres.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's health and safety arrangements were outstanding. Students felt very safe in the school and arrangements had been improved since the last inspection. This included fitting buses with scanners to monitor student movement and training staff in safety procedures which ensured a secure and safe environment for students. Efficient fire evacuation procedures had been evaluated and improved and the equipment updated. Healthy life styles were promoted through the involvement of the school medical team and parents as well as through regular curriculum inserts, after-school activities, school assemblies and displays. Students had taken a strong lead in the provision of healthy food choices in the canteen. The school medical team worked well with individual students and their families to tackle obesity. A range of sporting activities promoted healthy life styles.

The quality of support was outstanding. Staff were very supportive of students' welfare and educational needs. Individual students' progress was tracked leading to improvements in their attainment. Students benefited from regular guidance on both their personal and emotional as well as their academic needs. Parents were able to access electronic information on courses and their children's progress in addition to receiving written reports. This helped parents discuss appropriate option choices with their children as they transferred from the primary to the secondary stage and in considering career choices. Students with special educational needs were well supported in the school and were benefiting in their emotional and social development as well as in their academic progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good with outstanding features. The Principal had established a strong culture of inclusion, including support for students with additional support needs. Senior managers and their staff were developing effectively students' sense of community, civic responsibility and creativity as well as focusing on their academic attainment. There were good levels of distributed leadership with supervisors and coordinators developing their leadership and management roles, particularly in taking forward agreed school priorities. The school was still developing collaborative teamwork across the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior managers monitored teaching and learning leading to improvements, although further work was required to ensure complete consistency in their evaluations. The school had developed its communication and tracking systems for gathering data on the school's performance in examinations and care of students. This had led to more effective support. Good progress had been made in taking forward the recommendations of the last inspection. Consultations on aspects of school life had been carried out with staff, parents and students. This information had helped inform the school development plan.

Partnerships with parents and the wider community were good. Parents regularly supported the school through helping in classrooms, supporting field trips and external visits. Parents had also participated in joint training activities with other schools or through activities linked to

healthy living or environmental improvements. A Parental Focus Group formed last session contained a broad range of parental membership. They were developing their role in ensuring the representation of the views of the wider parent group in informing school priorities.

Governance was acceptable. The representative of the governing body held the school accountable through regular visits and through evaluating school performance. He was very supportive in helping the school identify and meet its priorities and in ensuring that the school's focus on inclusion was fully supported. A recent questionnaire was also helping to gather views on what parents thought about the school but the governing body had not yet established parental or wider representation to hold it accountable.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. Well maintained buildings, facilities and equipment enhanced the learning environment. They were well suited to the educational needs of students, including those with special educational needs. Professional development was helping ensure consistency in teaching and learning. Good progress had been made in controlling the number of students enrolling in the school and a rotation of students participating in the after-school activities programme had helped address issues of overcrowding. Despite these good efforts there remained overcrowding in a few classes. The school library was very well stocked with books which supported students' reading and research. Teachers were benefiting from recently improved ICT equipment

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	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
0% 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	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good

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

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

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

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	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

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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