

INSPECTION REPORT

The Central School

Report published in February 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Central School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.centralschool.net
Telephone	04-2674433
Address	PO Box 90697, Al Nahda 2, Dubai
Principal	Syed Rasul Syed Mirza Ghalib
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2,454
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 24th to Thursday 27th October 2011

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	10
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	12
What happens next?.....	13
How to contact us	13
Our work with schools.....	14

The context of the school

Located in Al Nahda, The Central School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary to secondary, age three to 18 years.

The school followed the National Council for Education and Research and Training syllabus (NCERT) until Grade 9 and then the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) examination syllabuses until Grade 12.

At the time of the inspection there were 2,454 students, of whom the majority were Indian and about a quarter were from other Asian countries. There were no Emirati students. There were 120 qualified and trained teaching staff and two teaching assistants. Two of the staff provide specialist teaching for 24 students with special education needs.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Central School provided an acceptable quality of education. It had some important strengths in regard to its students. Their understanding of Islam, and implementation of its values, underpinned the good ethos of the school and were evident in their enthusiasm for learning and their behaviour in lessons. Teaching for effective learning was acceptable throughout the school but was significantly better for students in the morning than in the afternoon. Some good teaching was seen in all phases but too often the learning was wholly teacher-directed and provided insufficient opportunities for students to learn independently.

The school had taken appropriate action to address the recommendations of the previous report but these have had little impact. Subject leadership in most of the key subjects remained weak and the provision for children with special education needs required improvement. The quality of teaching across the school was very variable and overall remained acceptable. The students knew about healthy lifestyles but the food provided for and consumed by them in the canteen was often unhealthy. There was an improvement in the provision of equipment in the science laboratories but the ratio of computers to students remained low and the library was under-stocked with learning resources. Nevertheless, the school had both the capacity and the determination to improve.

Key strengths

- Students' enthusiasm for learning and their behaviour in lessons were outstanding;
- Students' understanding of Islam and Islamic values in everyday life was positive;
- Relationships between teachers and students were conducive to good learning;
- The effective integration of the school's multi-national population.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - planning lessons to provide for the needs of all students;
 - making clear to students at the beginning of each lesson what they should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson;
 - ensuring the marking of students' work leads to improvement in their understanding and progress;
 - maintaining high expectations of all students appropriate to their abilities, but particularly for more able students.
- Review and improve the breadth and balance of the Kindergarten curriculum.
- Improve the procedures for identifying, and the provision for, students with special education needs.
- Improve subject leadership to ensure that:
 - all teachers understand the elements of a good lesson in their subject;
 - subject leaders have a clear understanding of students' progress in learning their subject.

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

	Pre-Primary (KG)	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
English				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Across all subjects and within most phases of the school, students' attainment was acceptable. In English, children in the Kindergarten achieved good standards and most demonstrated good listening skills. In Arabic, students in the morning school demonstrated listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, often above the level expected. However, students in the afternoon school were just in the line with the expected level for their ages. Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable in primary but good in middle and secondary. Boys' attainment was lower than girls' attainment across the school. In mathematics, students in the primary and middle phases were secure in their knowledge of simple shapes and could carry out calculations to find areas and perimeters. They were less secure in unfamiliar tasks. In science, attainment in Kindergarten was acceptable although the children had limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment for middle and secondary students was acceptable. Almost all students entered in external examinations achieved levels that were in line in with international standards. They demonstrated good levels of knowledge but their scientific skills and understanding were less well developed.

In Islamic Education, students in primary made acceptable progress. The majority of the girls made good progress by linking knowledge to their everyday lives. Boys across the school were making less progress in relation to explaining the Qur'anic verses. In English, progress was acceptable across the school and almost all students secured a pass or better in the most recent CBSE examinations. In mathematics, most students made steady progress through the school. Their calculation skills were well developed. Almost all gained examination passes, but the numbers of high grades were relatively low. Students in science made acceptable progress through the school in developing knowledge, practical skills and understanding. However, their ability to apply their knowledge and to think critically was undeveloped and too few had obtained high grades in Grade 10 and Grade 12 CBSE examinations over the past three years.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Pre-Primary (KG)	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Attitudes to learning and behaviour were good throughout the school. Attendance was acceptable. Students of different nationalities worked and played well together; they respected each other's cultures. Children in Kindergarten confidently explained many aspects of Islam correctly and they had a very strong sense of Islamic identity. Almost all Muslim students practised and could explain Islamic values such as charity. They had detailed knowledge about the UAE culture such as its values, sports and clothes. Students knew about healthy lifestyles but did not always choose food wisely. They knew their responsibilities to keep their environment clean, in accordance with their religious beliefs. They knew the importance of this to the community, to Dubai and to the world. Many students participated in environmental competitions, projects and gained awards. Their civic and economic awareness was enhanced through the student council. Students were involved in designing, organising and managing events both in the school and the community. Most had good awareness of Dubai's economic progress and its position in the world.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Pre-Primary (KG)	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable across all phases of the school. There had been a number of changes in teaching staff in the last year. A few examples of good teaching were observed. The majority of teachers had good subject knowledge. The strongest teaching was seen in the upper primary and secondary phases. This was especially the case in the girls' sections of the school in Islamic Education, Arabic, English and science. There was no noticeable difference in the quality of teaching of mathematics for boys and girls. The majority of lessons were well planned but the learning objectives were not always clear. In the best lessons, students were actively involved and all were appropriately challenged. In weaker lessons, teachers talked for too long, students were mostly passive in lessons and there were too few opportunities to develop enquiry and critical thinking skills.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable across all four phases. Almost all students had positive attitudes towards learning and were willing to answer questions and participate in lessons. In a few classes, students worked well together in groups. Outside school, students could find things out for themselves for homework and projects, and they used information and communication technology (ICT) in limited ways to support their learning. Enquiry and critical thinking skills were underdeveloped.

The quality of assessment was acceptable at all levels. In the primary and middle phases, teachers gave regular support and feedback to students to show them how to improve their work. In the secondary phase, the school used a well-established system for assessment to monitor students' attainment at key points throughout the year. In all phases, there was insufficient assessment of the progress of individuals through questioning in lessons. More regular written feedback on students' day-to-day work was required at primary, middle and secondary stages. As noted in the previous inspection, students did little self-review of their progress.

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

	Pre-Primary (KG)	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. In Kindergarten, the time allocated and the areas to be learned were not well distributed. Too much time was allocated to some areas of the curriculum and insufficient opportunities given for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world and to strengthen their emotional, personal and social development. Much of the curriculum in the school was delivered by direct teaching. Students throughout the school had insufficient opportunities to learn independently through investigations and problem-solving, to think critically and to meet challenges that extended their thinking. The provision for students with special education needs was weak and did not meet the needs of either the most able or the least able. However, some good examples of linking learning in different subjects were seen; for example, between science and Islamic Education, and science and mathematics. The split-shift nature of the timetable meant that girls did not have the same opportunities as boys to attend after-school activities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Pre-Primary (KG)	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were acceptable. Well-established routines throughout the day ensured student and staff safety. Systems for movement on to and off the buses required improvement. The classrooms were clean and tidy at the start of the day, as were the corridors and washrooms. Fire drills were carried out at appropriate intervals. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely. Healthy living was promoted in the curriculum but food purchased by students in the school was not always healthy. There were very limited opportunities for students to purchase fruit and very few salads were available. Most staff were not aware of the child protection policy or the procedures to use should they be required.

The quality of support across the school was acceptable. Staff-student relationships were good and almost all students knew they could turn to an adult in the school if they had a problem; the counsellor was

readily available for help and advice. However, the school did not maintain and use adequate records for the personal development and progress of individual students, especially those with special educational needs. The provision for these students in the focused withdrawal groups was not well developed or linked to their class lessons. As a result, these students did not make good enough progress. Attendance and punctuality were monitored effectively and the school was proactive in promoting this with awards for full attendance. Guidance on future education was available for older students but the range of options presented was limited. There were, however, strong links with several universities.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was acceptable. The Principal provided clear and determined leadership and this, together with assistance from the Headmaster and Headmistress and guidance from the advisory council, gave well focused direction for the work of the school. However, the subject leadership of some key subjects required improvement. The senior teachers often did not provide a good role model for teaching. They lacked vision for the development of their subjects in the school and made insufficient use of assessment information about students' progress.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had developed an appropriate range of self-evaluation strategies including a questionnaire to parents. However, the arrangements lacked rigour as the judgements made by senior staff were not sufficiently evidence based. The school's self-evaluation did not contribute meaningfully to its improvement plan. This indicated that the recommendations of the last report were acted upon but the plan was not well structured. For example, the targets set were only the recommendations from last year's report; there were no success criteria, no start and end dates and no link with the school's budget. The actions taken had not achieved the desired outcomes and most of the recommendations from last year remained.

The partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and its leadership. There was regular communication between the school and parents through the 'Open House' sessions conducted by the school. Parents were kept informed about their child's progress through sharing of report cards at regular intervals. The school had ongoing links with the wider community by being a part of the New Indian Model Schools group of schools and actively participated in a variety of activities beneficial to the students.

Governance was good. The governing body, or advisory council, had adequate representation of parents and the community. The Principal and senior team received sound advice from the council on such matters as staff appointments and future school developments; they also ensured statutory requirements were met. The council held the school to account for the progress of the school and in particular for its external examination results. Parents and other stakeholders communicated regularly with members of the council who used these links to determine levels of satisfaction.

The management of the school was acceptable. Staff and student council shared responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the school day. Most of the staff were qualified and trained to teach, and were effectively deployed in the school. However, there were insufficient support staff and insufficient teaching resources in Kindergarten. There was inadequate training for Islamic Education and Arabic teachers, the special educator and for the counsellor, to impact positively on learning. In general, classrooms were adequately furnished with sufficient play areas. However, there were insufficient ICT and teaching resources. The library was understocked, especially in fiction reading and books suitable for younger students; it was not available for use by Kindergarten and primary aged-children.

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	426	33%
	Last year	774	62%
Teachers	44		37%
Students	145		56%

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

About a third of parents responded to the survey, less than last year's majority response. A majority of them believed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, but a few parents disagreed that progress was good in Arabic as an additional language. Senior students confirmed the opinions of the parents. Parents were generally satisfied with the quality of education provided, but a few were not. A few parents indicated that the homework given was not suitable for their children and that communication with the school was less than good. Almost all parents agreed that inspection had led to improvements at the school. A minority of senior students responded to the survey. A few of them disagreed that there was a good range of subjects on offer at the school, and more than a few disagreed that they could join in a range of clubs and activities. A few teachers responded to the survey and they were supportive of the school in all aspects of its performance.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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