

Lycée Francais International Inspection Report

Maternelle to Secondaire

Report published May 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 Lycée Francais International was inspected in March 2011 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, French, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Oud Metha, the Lycée Francais International is a private school providing education for girls and boys aged three to 15 years from maternelle to secondaire. The school follows a French curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 1166 students on roll. The students' attendance for the last semester was outstanding.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to an on-line questionnaire completed by parents. Most parents indicated that they were happy with the quality of education in the school. Most reported satisfaction with progress in Islamic Education, French, English, mathematics and science while a significant minority did not think progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Almost all felt that the quality of teaching and learning were good. Almost half of the respondents thought that the range of extra-curricular opportunities and the resources for learning could be improved. Most parents were happy with students' behaviour and stated that their child was safe and healthy. A significant minority felt that their child required additional help at home. Most said that the quality of communication with parents and their involvement was good. Almost all considered the school to be well led. While teaching was recognised by parents as a major strength of the school, many thought that the learning opportunities outside the classroom, standards in Arabic, the quality of the facilities in the school and advice on future education options required improvement.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Lycée Francais International provided a good quality of education. The school knew itself well and had carried out improvements in line with the recommendations made in the previous report. The school demonstrated a strong capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress in mathematics, French and science were good in all phases. In English, attainment and progress were outstanding in the primaire and secondaire. They were good in the maternelle where children needed to develop their speaking skills further. In Islamic Education, attainment and progress are good in the primaire and acceptable in the secondaire. In Arabic as a second language, attainment and progress were good in the primaire and acceptable in the secondaire. In Arabic as a first language, progress was good in both Primaire and Secondaire and attainment was acceptable in the secondaire and good in the primaire. Students' attitude and behaviour were outstanding across the school. Teaching and learning were good in all sections of the school. Most teachers had good subject knowledge, had a good rapport with students and planned their lessons well. The curriculum was good in all sections. Students studied all the required subjects, including subjects regarded as extra-curricular activities in other international curricula. The timetabling for Islamic Education and Arabic had improved. Health and safety arrangements were good. The quality of support was also good in all grades. After school support classes (soutien scolaire) were a particularly positive feature in this area. Leadership and management were good. The new leadership team had a clear vision to improve the school. Middle managers contributed to the development of their area but they did not yet play a sufficiently evaluative role.

Key features of the school

- The good attainment and progress in most subjects;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour displayed by students towards their teachers and each other;
- The new senior leadership team's focus on raising standards through a clearly defined vision;
- The insufficient opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) appropriately as part of the regular learning and teaching experiences;
- The wide range of languages available to students.

Recommendations

- Continue to raise attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic in secondaire;
- Improve the youngest children's understanding of local customs, traditions and culture;
- Expand the range of information provided to students and parents at secondaire so that they know clearly what they need to do to improve;
- Ensure that governors and senior leaders develop an action plan that supports middle management capacity to appraise teachers and provides appropriate support where needed;
- Provide more resources, particularly for information and communications technology (ICT) and in the library, to assist students in all subjects with different learning needs and styles.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in primaire and acceptable in secondaire. In primaire, the majority of the students had knowledge of Islam in line with Ministry of Education standards, and sometimes exceeded it. They knew the meaning and the impact of Islam on the Muslims' life and they progressed well. This was apparent in their daily life, for example through prayer, the awareness of good and bad deeds and the memorisation of chapters of The Holy Qur'an. In secondaire, most students had sufficient knowledge and understanding of Islam. They discussed important issues such as human rights and were able to signpost many verses of The Holy Qur'an around this theme. They had appropriate knowledge about how Islam respects all individuals, and made appropriate progress. Most students were able to read chapters of The Holy Qur'an following some recitation rules and conventions. However, some students especially in secondaire, were not able to support their answers with clear examples from The Holy Qur'an.

Attainment in Arabic as a first language was good in primaire and acceptable in secondaire. Progress was good in both cycles. Most reading activities in primaire and secondaire included unfamiliar material around attitude and emotions. They could recognise points of view and almost all students had good listening skills when passages were spoken at normal speed. Students' reading was good, and they had acceptable writing skills but, in secondaire, they copied text slowly with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. Most students presented appropriate and correct information about the stories used in discussions in primaire, but this was less evident in the secondaire section. The majority had appropriate ability to read and analyse poetry in both sections.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were good in primaire and acceptable in secondaire. Almost all students in primaire had appropriate vocabulary and good pronunciation in paired work as they became aware of sound patterns. They read words and

phrases with standard Arabic grammar well. Older students understood some details and the main ideas of a story and could also distinguish between past, present and future events. They used this knowledge to describe feelings such as jealousy and admiration. Students were able to detect key verbs within paragraphs and were able to conjugate them in their sentences. Students skills in writing were weak.

Attainment and progress in French, the language of instruction, were good across the school. The majority of students achieved good results in the national tests and some exceeded the national average in France. In the secondaire section, students' achievement was in line with national average. In the maternelle section, good listening and speaking skills enabled children to communicate their understanding of a story following a reading activity. They were able to formulate focused questions to achieve this. In the primaire section, students had developed grammatical skills which enabled them to manipulate and analyse language. As a result they were confident writers whose analytical minds help them to write about the world around them in detail and accurately. In the secondaire section, students' level of language when discussing French literature was good.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding in primaire and secondaire, and good in maternelle. All lessons were conducted in English throughout. In maternelle, songs were well used, and by the end of this cycle children spoke in full sentences, using elaborate vocabulary. By the end of primaire, students confidently presented prepared activities to the class, using complex phrases. Progress in writing was outstanding but in maternelle the more able did not have enough opportunity to develop those skills. Older students expanded their writing well, with more able sets studying complex topics. In secondaire, students progressed to extended writing, exploring cultures, using technical vocabulary. Many students achieved beyond international expectations, gaining merits in international key English tests and preliminary English tests, in advance of their age.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good throughout. Students performed above average in French national tests. In maternelle classes children could recognise numbers, name them and count accurately. At the early stages in primaire, almost all could add and subtract accurately. By the end of primaire, their knowledge of geometry was very good. They could recognise, name and draw accurately a number of regular two dimensional figures, and could calculate area. In early secondaire classes, students could perform calculations using positive and negative numbers. The oldest could solve algebraic equations, and could calculate volume, using a scale factor to deduce the correct volume of a reduced pyramid. Most demonstrated a good, logical approach to problem solving.

Attainment and progress in science across the whole school were good. In lessons and in their recent work, the majority of students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and concepts that were above international standards. Particular strengths across the whole age range were rich scientific vocabulary, the application of science to real life and creating and testing hypotheses. In maternelle most children understood the terms carnivore, omnivore, and herbivore. In the primaire phase, all students were able to construct and research hypotheses on the skeletal and digestive systems. In the secondaire section, nearly all students were able

to recognise the relationship between the body's metabolism and a variety of factors. The use of experimentation was wide-spread but there was no evidence of students constructing their own fair tests.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school. Both in class and about the playground, students in all grades worked, shared and played respectfully with each other. They took great care to listen attentively when their peers spoke. They displayed mature self-control in their dealings with adults and older students were particularly aware of the need to take care of younger children. Almost all students ate healthy lunches, made mature and positive lifestyle choices, and followed the advice of the nurse regarding fitness and well-being. Attendance was outstanding and almost all students were punctual to class each day.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of their local traditions and culture were acceptable in maternelle and good in primaire and secondaire. In primaire and secondaire, students were responsible and contributed actively to the life of the school. They showed that they were able to act independently during break time, and they cleaned up themselves at the end. During lessons almost all students had a good knowledge of Islam and realised the importance of Islam in Dubai. Almost all students understood Islamic links to legislation and how this related to a multi-cultural Dubai. Students showed appreciation of the local traditions and culture by activities and drawing.

Economic and environmental understanding was good. At all stages, students showed good understanding of the economic situation in Dubai. They were very aware of the political developments in the Middle East and of the possible economic consequences locally and throughout the world. Senior students showed a particular interest in energy saving and in the prevention of pollution. While they took steps to recycle materials in their personal lives and at home, they were disappointed that the school did not capitalise on their interest and expertise to support sustainability and conservation.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was good across the school. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge. The understanding of how students learn was variable throughout the grades. Lesson planning was thorough and reflected the priorities developed through collective and regular planning sessions. Teachers used the available resources well. Questioning was effective when teachers allowed the students to take time with their responses, and encouraged independent and higher order thinking. Where teaching was good, teachers helped students of all abilities and learning styles to develop hypotheses, question critically and work independently. Where teaching was less effective, there was too much teacher direction. In a small number of lessons independent learning was restricted by unnecessarily rigid classroom management techniques.

Learning was good throughout the school. Students worked collaboratively, taking responsibility for their own understanding. They helped each other regularly. Almost all students knew their challenges. Most worked on understanding rather than knowledge and they could apply their learning to real life situations. There was a strong sense of cross-curricular relevance in the work done by students, leading to a consistency of learning across the subjects. In each phase, students displayed and communicated what they had learned as a starting point in each lesson. They then developed their learning in the lesson based on what they already understood and built further skills as appropriate. Higher order thinking, developed through independent enquiry using ICT was not a regular feature of lessons.

Assessment was good. The school, at each phase, gathered student progress data. This was largely skills based information that reflected the expectations of the French National Curriculum. The teachers and co-ordinators in each grade knew the attainment and progress of each student well. Regular and close attention was given to understanding the next steps in learning for students. Students were then allocated to particular groups in each grade where teaching and learning were adapted to meet the needs as required. Teachers mostly gave oral feedback to students, who, along with parents, had an understanding of what level they were at and how they could improve. Regular and informed parent teacher conferences took place about progress. There were inconsistencies in ensuring that more detailed and relevant information for secondaire students was systematically recorded, analysed and reported in writing and with clear directions. The school did not use a sufficiently wide range of international benchmarks to develop its understanding of how to help students to improve even further

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

The curriculum was good in all sections. Continuity was ensured by following the French National Curriculum, enriched with Islamic Education, Arabic, Spanish, Latin and English. Science had an increased emphasis on experimentation and enquiry. Programmes in French and mathematics were well structured for progression between each grade. The curriculum was constantly under review and the English programme was new this year, from the CP section (Cour Primaire section) to Troisième. The new programme related expectations to the Common European Framework and prepared students for Cambridge English as a Second Language qualifications. The science curriculum was updated each year but was not fully defined in terms of scope and sequence. Differentiation was not systematically addressed through any schemes of work, limiting learning outcomes for some students, particularly the less able ones (élèves en difficulté scolaire). Cross- curricular links were made, with the English department leading theme months, such as Dr Seuss Month and Environment Month. Other cross-curricular links engaged science and English in studying for example, nutrition. A post office visit led to activities where students wrote letters in French and English. Other enrichment was provided by a cultural visit to Italy. The use of the local desert environment included a geological visit by the secondaire. Sporting activities for all classes such as basketball, handball, tennis, Kung Fu

and football were well attended. Tournaments between schools were organised through the French Embassy. In addition, all students participated in timetabled sports. Extra-curricular activities were not as developed in secondaire as in the other sections. However, activities which would be considered extra-curricular in other curricula were on offer in the students' timetable. School events included fundraising and sponsored environment projects, a carnival and art and craft exhibitions.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all students were good. All the areas of concern, mentioned in the last report, have been improved. School transport procedures were very safe. Fire drills took place regularly and were monitored by Civil Defence. The school was well maintained. The part-time doctor and two nurses kept records for each student as well as a set of protocols for individual students whose health had caused concern. There was an accident book that detailed the problem, the solution and the action that followed. A child protection system was in place and was known by the staff and the students. The school was clean; however some areas were in need of refurbishment. Some classrooms were small for the number of students and there was a lack of shade at playtimes.

The quality of support was good. The relationships between staff and students were very positive. Care and concern was demonstrated by all members of the school community towards each other. There was a detailed system for tracking students' personal and academic progress. Procedures to identify and support students with special educational needs were effective due to the weekly after school academic coaching sessions (soutien scolaire). There were rigorous systems to record attendance and prompt action was taken when students failed to arrive at school. Personal and career guidance was given by the Conseillère d'Orientation and the Collège Directeur organised a four-day work placement for the students in the troisième class. Procedures to support good behaviour were well-known by parents, students and staff.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were good. The Proviseur and the Directeur who had been in place since the beginning of the academic year worked closely with the school co-ordinators and the administrative team. They had a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear vision for improvement. They sought guidance when appropriate from different educational experts within the AFLEC Schools and the French Embassy. However, they need to be more accountable in raising standards for all students in the pursuit of excellence.

Self-evaluation and planning for improvement were good. Effective measures had been taken to address the recommendations in the last report. The senior management team monitored the quality of teaching and learning in some grades but this was not thorough and frequent enough to constitute a robust evaluation. However, they recognised the need to involve middle managers more in the evaluative process. National examination results were carefully

analysed and the information was appropriately used to support students' learning. This approach was not yet fully in place in the non-examination classes where teachers used continuous assessment.

The school's partnership with parents and the community was good. Parents were very supportive of the leadership team and their staff. They participated in committees which directly influenced the life and work of the school. However, they needed to be more involved academically outside the committees, for example, by more regular interventions within school. Communication was of high quality, including an informative website and letters to specific groups of parents on issues of concern. The carnets de correspondance provided a very useful and effective means of communication, both to and from the teachers, and they were used very effectively. Reports to parents were detailed, but the format did not provide sufficient indication of what students needed to do to improve.

Governance was good. The board of governors was very well structured and included members with financial, legal and educational expertise who helped the school to meet its priorities for improvement. Parents also played a key part in the decision-making process and informed the school about their needs.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Resources were well deployed amongst the school community. Outdoor facilities had been developed and ICT resources introduced but these had not yet fully impacted upon the learning of different groups of students.

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:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? 47% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in French ?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Mathematics?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Science?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
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:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Maternelle	Primaire	Secondaire
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good

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	Good
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

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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