

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai College

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai College

Location	Sheikh Zayed Road
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaicollege.org
Telephone	04-3999111
Address	PO Box 837, Um Suqeim, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Peter Hill
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	11-18 / Secondary and post-16
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	817
Number of Emirati students	2 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 31st October 2011 to Wednesday 2nd November 2011

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The context of the school

Dubai College is situated in Al Sufouh. The school opened in 1978. It is a private school with a selective intake policy. At the time of the inspection, 817 students were enrolled, aged from 11 to 18 years. Students were grouped into 47 classes. There were six classes in each of the Years 7 to 11, and 17 classes in Years 12 and 13. Two students were Emirati. A few students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need and received special support lessons from a specialist teacher.

The school followed the English National Curriculum. Students were presented for GCSE at the end of the secondary phase and for GCE Advanced level examinations at the end of the Post-16 phase.

There were 82 full-time teachers, including the Headmaster and a senior management team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by five technicians. Staff turnover was relatively low. At the time of the inspection, eight teachers were in their first year of teaching at the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Outstanding

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai College provided an outstanding quality of education. Its main features were the high standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science. In almost all other areas of the work of the school, its performance was of a very high quality. Teaching, learning and assessment were outstanding at all stages. The school's ethos, its curriculum and its arrangements to look after and support students were all outstanding. Leadership and management were also outstanding at all levels. The Headmaster showed excellent skills in managing staff and students to ensure continuous progress towards the school's ambitious goals. The board of Governors was active, but not fully representative of all the stakeholders which it served.

The school had made very good progress towards meeting the two recommendations in the previous report. Attainment had improved in Islamic Education and Arabic, in some areas more noticeably than others. However, attainment in these subjects still lagged behind that in other key subjects. The needs of the few students for whom Arabic was their first language were not being fully addressed, although the

school had taken some important steps to do so. The school had sufficient capacity and determination to continue to improve.

Key strengths

- The very high standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science;
- The development of students into mature, responsible young adults, well prepared to take their place in a global society;
- The school's ethos, which promoted very high standards and full involvement of students in their learning;
- The outstanding curriculum, delivered with flair and confidence by almost all teachers;
- The high quality of leadership, continually striving for further improvement.

Recommendations

- Continue the pursuit of high attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Reconsider membership of the Board of Governors to include a wider representation of the school community and the context in which it operates.

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

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

Attainment at the secondary stage was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. It was good in Arabic as an additional language and outstanding in English, mathematics and science. Post-16 attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and outstanding in the other key subjects. Recitation skills in Islamic Education were underdeveloped. In Arabic as a first language, students' skills in speaking, reading and writing were limited. They were stronger in Arabic as an additional language, though skills in

reading for pleasure were weak. Students achieved exceptionally high standards in English, where speaking and listening were particularly strong, and featured extensive, sophisticated vocabulary. They were fluent and assured writers. In mathematics, students had a very good ability in problem-solving and in the clear presentation of their solutions. Their practical ability in science was very well developed.

Progress in Islamic Education in post-16 and Arabic as an additional language was good. In Arabic as a first language, it was acceptable. In other key subjects, progress was outstanding, with rapid sustained progress in English through both stages. Students in mathematics were making outstanding progress in their understanding of mathematical principles and in science they made strong cross-curricular links as their understanding deepened. They made consistently greater gains in attainment over time than was predicted at the outset of their studies. Students classified as having special educational needs also made outstanding progress in all subjects.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Behaviour throughout the school was exemplary. Students consistently showed high levels of mutual respect and self-discipline. They applied their understanding of healthy lifestyles through choice of food and exercise. Students had a good appreciation of Islam and were aware of the common values between Islam and other religions. The newly-established Islamic Club contributed effectively to deepening students' understanding of Islam and to promoting tolerance. Students also highlighted the fact that the individual Emirates still maintained aspects of their national identity and traditions despite their rapid economic growth. Trips abroad involved students in community service. Environmental awareness was raised through expeditions to the desert as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Older students had developed alternative resources of energy from wind and solar power. They had advanced knowledge about the causes of the global economic crisis. They demonstrated excellent environmental understanding and talked knowledgeably about desalination, pollution and the 'clean-up the world' campaign.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

The overall quality of teaching for effective learning throughout the school was outstanding. The specialist teachers' advanced subject knowledge enabled them to offer a high level of challenge to meet students' needs. The setting of very specific objectives for all lessons helped teachers to select varied but highly focused activities. These activities developed skills and understanding whilst engaging students' interest and promoting effective learning. Opening lessons with film clips or news items, for example, enabled teachers to set the context of their main theme effectively. Most teachers were sensitive to their students' grasp of the concepts being taught and used skilful intervention to rectify any problems. The most successful teaching featured a partnership in which teachers acted as planners and facilitators of learning. They arranged their teaching to allow students to work, often in groups, to develop and present their ideas and responses. However, there was some inconsistency in teachers' approaches to lessons. On the few occasions where it was less effective, it constrained students by unchallenging tasks, too much teacher talk and insufficient purposeful activity.

The quality of students' learning was outstanding. Almost without exception, they were attentive and enthusiastic participants in lessons and ready to accept any learning challenge. Students showed maturity beyond their years as they co-operated and collaborated with each other, sharing and developing ideas. They were able to see the connections between different areas of learning, linking English and history, drama and physics. Most were able to explain what they were aiming to achieve, even when working in unfamiliar territory, and how it related to their overall learning targets. Students were frequently able to demonstrate good skills of research, analysis and synthesis and they always responded well to regular opportunities to think critically.

The school's systems for assessing students' work and using the information to promote their progress were outstanding. Teachers were good at gauging students' levels of skill and understanding in lessons. When combined with the results of the schools' arrangements for formative and summative testing, this provided a detailed picture of both the attainment and progress being made by individuals and groups. Challenging end of year targets in all subjects coupled with predictions for every student helped to focus their efforts and improve performance, and highlighted any shortcomings to be addressed. The frequent practice of asking students to assess their own or others' performance helped them to develop a keen sense of their strengths and weaknesses. Most marking offered useful feedback to students on selected tasks.

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

	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

The school's outstanding curriculum was successful in its aim of giving all students across the whole ability range appropriate opportunities to enrich their learning and to develop their individual talents and skills. It drew on the best elements of the English National Curriculum. Across all stages, the curriculum had a clear rationale and was broad and balanced. It was reviewed annually to ensure that the needs of students were met. Significant new features at Key Stage 3 included enhancements in Arabic, where, in Year 7, students from three form classes formed four smaller Arabic classes to improve the student-teacher ratios to meet students' needs more effectively. An extensive range of extra-curricular and community-based activities enriched student learning. Over 80 per cent of students were involved in at least one activity. In particular, students enjoyed a variety of sporting, musical and drama activities as well as hobbies and special interests. The inclusion of information and communication technology (ICT) in classrooms to support learning was underdeveloped.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

The quality of arrangements for the protection and support of students was outstanding. The school had extremely effective policies and procedures which were known to all and conscientiously implemented. All members of the school community benefitted from the well-established safe and secure environment. Transport arrangements were exemplary. Well-trained staff carried out their roles with a professionalism that ensured the safe arrival and departure of students, either by bus or private transport. The school premises were maintained to a high standard. Buildings and all equipment used by students were appropriate and fit for purpose. The school ensured that all students, including those with special educational needs, were appropriately catered for in and around the premises. Maintenance records and records of fire drills were accurately kept. Medical staff ensured that all requirements were met to ensure the proper care of students, including routine medical checks. Information on students was properly recorded and shared with staff and other agencies as required. All medicines were stored securely. The school had in place education programmes to inform students about healthy living, much delivered through a specific programme. Canteen provision reflected the views of students and the school on healthy eating.

An appropriate policy was in place for child protection. All staff and students were aware of the policy and knew whom to contact if concerns were identified. Whilst the child protection policy was in place and all concerned were aware of the contents, not all staff had been trained to identify possible cases where students might be vulnerable or in need of protection. Working relationships were extremely effective across the school. Teachers and students enjoyed a productive partnership based on a mutual trust and professional respect. All those who formed part of the school community had a care and concern for others. Behaviour management policies were highly effective. Very good procedures were in place to provide students with help and guidance on the next stages of their careers. Individual tutorials for Year 11 and close links with universities for Year 13 ensured that students received good advice. Students' academic performance was closely monitored to ensure that their potential was realised. It was evident that the well-being of all students was paramount. Those students identified with special educational needs made outstanding progress in line with their peers. They were extremely well supported by a special needs co-ordinator who ensured that staff members were appropriately briefed. Procedures for managing attendance and punctuality provided for prompt and decisive action, if required.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership was outstanding. The Headmaster had a very precise, well-formulated vision for the school. He and the senior staff gave very clear direction and took appropriate measures to ensure that all staff shared a common approach. Senior management staff worked effectively to try to ensure consistency of student experience. The roles of senior leaders were clearly expressed and subject to review and adjustment. At all levels, leaders successfully ensured high educational outcomes and had brought about noticeable improvement in specific areas. There was a clear capacity among the leadership personnel to support further school improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. The school had detailed self-evaluation procedures, in which all staff members were involved. The views of students, parents and teachers were carefully collated, focusing the attention of senior management on areas of concern. A rigorous programme of professional review informed high quality action planning, which was driven by a comprehensive five-year plan. Within this, annual departmental and sector action plans were established, representing a good balance between personal, professional, pedagogical and material aspects. The previous inspection report had recommended action to improve attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic. There had been improvement, though Arabic as first language still needed additional careful attention.

The school's relationships with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents were highly supportive of the school and its senior management. Responses to the parental survey were overwhelmingly positive. Curriculum updates were placed on the school website, which was being reviewed. Parents received regular informative reports. They had consultation evenings twice per year. Links with the community were well established and productive. The school had forged links with public

schools in Dubai to learn how to improve its own practice. Former students assisted with work experience and work shadowing.

Governance was good. Members saw their role as providing advice and support to the management team. The Board's main concern in recent years had been finance. Its education sub-committee had analysed results in public examinations. Members had taken a particular interest in Arabic. The Board issued a questionnaire to parents and members listened to the views of the student council. The Board did not yet have representation from higher education or from the parent or student body. The Board did not yet have sufficiently broad representation from a wide range of stakeholders.

Management was outstanding, and ensured a quiet, efficient daily routine. New teachers were appropriately supported. A good feature of management was the inclusion of Arabic in the modern languages department and of Islamic Education in the social subjects department. This arrangement allowed for the productive sharing of professional ideas, resulting in a better experience for students. The buildings and grounds were maintained to a very high standard. A few classrooms were restricted in size and stairwells in some blocks were narrow. Excellent displays and artwork enhanced the environment.

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	337	49%
	Last year	347	49%
Teachers	65		79%
Students	184		42%

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

About half the parents responded to the survey, similar to last year's response. Most teachers and a minority of senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students were satisfied with the overall quality of education available at the school, and believed that progress was good in the key subjects. Parents held broadly positive views about the different aspects of school provision and indicated that they were involved in the life of the school. A majority of parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school. Teachers and students also held largely positive views of the school.

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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