

Jebel Ali Primary School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 6

Report published May 2010

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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.

Jebel Ali Primary School was inspected in October 2009 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 Jebel Ali, Jebel Ali Primary School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged from four to 11 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 646 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were very happy with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school, that the teaching was good and that their children were treated fairly. Parents strongly agreed that the range of activities available to their children was good and almost all agreed that they were comfortable approaching the school with any questions or complaints. They felt confident that the school would act promptly to address any issues. They felt that their children were well cared for and that teachers were good at explaining to parents what they could do at home to help with their children's work. Local community links were thought by most parents to be good. A minority of parents were unsure about the school's response to the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Almost all parents were very happy with their children's progress in all subjects. A majority of parents felt that children's progress in Arabic was good but a minority reported that they did not know.

How well does the school perform overall?

Jebel Ali Primary School was a good school with many outstanding features. Students made at least good progress in English, mathematics and science across the school and their attainment in these subjects in the primary phase was outstanding. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic were acceptable. Students' personal development was good overall. Their attitudes and behaviour were good and they interacted well with each other when working in groups or pairs. Most students had a basic understanding of Islam and understood the importance of some environmental issues. The majority of students showed an understanding of the economic progress of Dubai. Attendance levels were good though some students were late for the start of the school day.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school was good. Almost all teachers used a variety of teaching methods and resources in their lessons, which resulted in students enjoying learning. Assessment practices were consistent and effective. The quality of the curriculum was good and based on a thematic model. However, the number of lessons in Islamic Education and Arabic was less than that required by the Ministry of Education. The school's provision for the health and safety of the students was good and the quality of support for all students was outstanding. There were highly effective processes for monitoring the academic and personal development of all students.

Leadership, self-evaluation, partnerships with parents and governance were outstanding. This combination of commitment and teamwork had ensured stability and direction of the school through the setbacks related to the proposed redevelopments and expansion to include a secondary phase.

Key features of the school

- At the primary stage, students' attainment in English, mathematics and science was outstanding;
- There were good strategies across the curriculum to enhance the students' civic and economic understanding;
- Support for all students, particularly those experiencing difficulties with their learning, was outstanding;
- There were strong relations with parents and the community;
- The governing body was effective in supporting and challenging the strategic development of the school.

Recommendations

- Continue to improve the provision of Islamic Education and Arabic in the curriculum;
- Monitor the impact of the new curriculum developments to ensure the continuity, progression and assessment arrangements in key subjects;
- Develop and further embed the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for effective learning in the classroom;

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the primary phase. Most students knew basic facts and concepts such as the oneness of Allah and the Pillars of Islam. In Year 5, most students knew and understood the Pillars of Faith. Most students were aware of the importance of Hadith and had adequate knowledge of how to perform prayers. Students were learning how to recite The Holy Qur'an with accuracy. Although students' knowledge of Islam was improving, few could discuss in depth how the main principles and values of Islam had an impact on their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable across the school with better progress in Years 1 to 3. In Years 4 to 6, most students listened intently to their teachers, and they accurately copied words and phrases from the board. They responded accurately to their teachers' questions and used their increasing knowledge of grammar to construct sentences with gender accuracy. Although most students' fine motor skills were developing well, students were not able to construct sentences in writing and link them to form a short text.

Attainment and progress in English were good in the Foundation Stage and were outstanding in the primary phase. Students in the Foundation Stage responded well to the range of opportunities to listen and speak to each other and with adults. Good levels of attainment in English in the Foundation Stage were built on in Years 1 and 2. Writing was monitored carefully throughout the school and students were expected to learn to write in a range of genres. Attainment in English by the end of the primary phase was higher than the expected levels and the most able students were achieving exceptionally high standards. Attainment in writing had improved over the last two years but was still behind levels of attainment in reading.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in the Foundation Stage and outstanding in the primary phase. Children in the Foundation Stage could position an object in front, behind and on top of another object and could pick out the largest number from a random array of numbers. Year 5 students correctly interpreted line graphs showing heart rates against time obtained from two footballers, so linking mathematics with science in the curriculum. Students in Year 6 understood and used the probability scale from 0 to 1 and could describe the meaning of a probability of 0.5. Students progressed well in mental mathematics throughout the primary phase and could mentally solve problems involving all four number operations by Year 6.

Progress in science was good at both stages of the school. Attainment was good at the Foundation Stage and outstanding by the end of the primary phase. Over recent years, students at the end of the primary phase had been achieving above average levels of attainment in assessments. Year 2 students understood and made simple electric circuits to light a bulb. In Year 6, students were able to state the forces acting when considering acceleration and deceleration of vehicles on the Dubai Metro. Students regularly consolidated their understanding of scientific concepts through practical work, which they carried out confidently, safely and accurately. Children investigated science from the Foundation Stage onwards so that by Year 5 they could plan fair tests to check their own hypotheses.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Students were polite, answered and responded very well to adults. Almost all students collaborated well with each other in group or pair work. During play time, students showed independence and responsibility and usually sought to resolve any conflict in mature ways. There were excellent relationships between students and staff, including the management team. Levels of attendance for the last academic term were good. However, a good number of students were not punctual in arriving at school in the morning for reasons that could not always be related to traffic.

Students' civic understanding and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good in both phases. Almost all students participated actively in the life of the school through planned events and sports competitions, which reflected their pride in being students at Jebel Ali Primary School. In the Foundation Stage, all children played and interacted well with each other without regard to racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds. In the primary phase, students found having friends from diverse backgrounds to be exciting and enriching. Most students, however, demonstrated only a basic understanding of Islam and its impact on Dubai's contemporary society.

In both the Foundation Stage and primary phases, students' economic and environmental understanding was good. All students got to know Dubai better through planned activities and projects, which were displayed throughout the school. In the primary phase, students had a sound understanding of Dubai's economy and the landmarks that symbolize its progress. In the Foundation Stage, most children actively participated in tidying up their immediate environment. However, although all students participated in the recently introduced recycling scheme at school, most did not show good understanding of how they can help sustain the environment in their everyday activities.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching across the school was good and there were examples of outstanding practice. Almost all teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching methods within lessons to ensure that every student reached their full potential in learning. Most teachers used good feedback techniques to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers' effective use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards, helped to enrich learning. When lessons were less than good, teachers had not planned the variety of activities or the allocation of time to match the learners' ages.

The quality of students' learning was good in both the Foundation Stage and primary phases. Students were well motivated and eager to learn. Most students were aware of their progress and strengths in their learning. Children in the Foundation Stage were keen to show how far they could count and were enjoying mathematics. Students in the first years of the primary phase learned to complete tasks individually and in small groups. Most students were aware that not all knowledge came from the teacher but could be acquired from books and on the Internet. In the older year groups, students showed a capacity to develop their critical thinking skills.

Consistent and effective assessment practices were in place for monitoring children's progress from the many feeder nursery schools through the Foundation Stage to entry into the primary phase. All potential new entrants to the Foundation Stage were observed by an experienced teacher in their nursery school environment, followed by a more formal base-line assessment carried out within a week of entry. Every student was tracked in the first two years of the primary phase and the data was passed onto the Year 3 coordinator and then onto subsequent teachers to the end of Year 6. Assessment in classes was well developed in Year 1 and 2 classes and was under review in Years 3 to 6. In most subjects, the quality of feedback and assessment was good, but the quality of marking was not always consistent and did not always clearly highlight what students needed to do in order to improve their work.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in both the Foundation Stage and the primary phase and was based on the UK system. A recent review, building on developments in the Foundation Stage, had resulted in an extension of the curriculum through a thematic approach across the whole school. This was well-designed to complement the range and balance of educational experiences whilst enabling continuity from year-to-year. Of note was the inclusion of Dubai-related and enrichment opportunities in each topic. However, the introduction of this initiative was too recent for its impact to be reviewed and evaluated. Insufficient time was given to Islamic Education and Arabic. The school's arrangements for students with special educational needs were outstanding. Provision was made for these students to be supported in class with the assistance of additional staff. Induction arrangements to the school were good. Children were visited in their previous school before entry to Jebel Ali. In addition, students received appropriate guidance for transition to the secondary stage of education. The topic-based curriculum provided extensive opportunities for cross-curricular skill development and this was evolving, although students' independent use of ICT in class was under-developed. The curriculum was enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Moreover, the school made good and effective use of the environment and the local community. For example, following Year 1 work on discovering how musical instruments produce sound, a visit from the Dubai Police Band was planned. A particularly innovative approach had been the appointment of a Community Liaison Officer to help develop a range of links with the Dubai community.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were good on the two campuses that comprise Jebel Ali Primary School. All staff, including the management team, understood their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the health and safety of students. The school nurses were diligent in their care for students and in promoting healthy lifestyles through a series of orientation sessions and spot checks on snack boxes. In addition to the detailed records kept, relevant medical information was systematically shared with staff along with information sessions about students' illnesses.

The quality of support was outstanding. Teachers knew their students very well and were fully aware of their individual, social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Continuous assessment, observations and consultations resulted in highly effective processes for checking the academic and personal development of all students. Parents and students received well-informed advice and guidance about a range of matters, including the next steps in the learning process. The processes for transition within the school from one key stage to the other and the transition of students following Year 6 were highly effective in ensuring academic progress and personal and social well-being. The school often employed the services and expertise of external specialists such as speech therapists, psychiatrists and counsellors to help meet students' learning, emotional and social needs.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Jebel Ali Primary School had experienced a number of setbacks related to the proposed redevelopment of the school and the addition of a secondary phase. The surrounding physical location of the school has become a harsh environment because of developments beyond the control of the Principal, senior staff and governors. In these circumstances the Principal has shown outstanding leadership qualities in maintaining the ethos of the school and continuing to ensure high academic standards. He had shown dedication to the school, the students and the parents and continued to give clear direction to the development and improvement of Jebel Ali Primary School. There has been a clear commitment to distributed leadership through the senior leaders in the school and this had led to successful developments such as the introduction of a new curriculum structure. Effective procedures for performance management were in place and appropriate attention was given to continuing professional development for staff.

A well developed system of self-evaluation was in place with opportunities for staff to reflect and analyse strengths and development needs. This linked well with school improvement planning which was based on internal and external evaluation evidence. Progress had been made in responding to the recommendations of the previous inspection report and had led to improved provision and outcomes in Arabic. However, further steps were needed to comply with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. Responsibilities for the various elements of the improvement plan were clearly defined and, in line with the distributed leadership policy of the Principal, individual members of the management team had responsibility for developing more detailed sections of the improvement plan. Students' progress was monitored across the key subjects.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents appreciated the school's open-door policy and valued the commitment to them by the school. The parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive for almost all questions. The school's appointment of a Community Liaison Officer since the last inspection had opened up a range of new opportunities for the school to develop links with the wider community.

Governance was outstanding. The Governors took their responsibilities very seriously and had been closely involved in dealing with the changes to the plans to develop a new school building. Prompt action was taken by the Governors and the Principal to keep parents informed about developments. This included finding secondary education opportunities for Year 6 students, who had expected to transfer to the new school. The Principal was fully accountable to the governing body, which was made up of representatives of all the stakeholders. The governing body met regularly and had a number of sub-committees to deal with a range of aspects of the school's life. It both supported and provided professional challenge to the Principal in relation to the school's performance and quality.

The school was well staffed with suitably qualified teachers. A wide range of activities were also provided by school staff and others, including parents. The school facilities were good and much had been done to continue to deliver a high quality education for students despite the cancellation of the major school building project. Students had access to good sports and physical education facilities, including a new grass soccer pitch with floodlights. There was good provision of ICT resources for learning through interactive white boards and an ICT suite. However, more could have been done to develop and embed the use of ICT as a tool for effective learning in the classroom.

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:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Good	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Outstanding

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

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

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good

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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Good	Good
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
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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