

INSPECTION REPORT

The English College - Dubai

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The English College - Dubai

Location	Al Safa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.englishcollege.ac.ae
Telephone	04 3943465
Address	PO Box 11812, Dubai, UAE
Principals	William Johnston, Allan Forbes
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Foundation Stage to post-16
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	949
Number of Emirati students	4 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 24th October 2011 to Wednesday 26th October 2011

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The context of the school

Located in Al Safa, The English College is a Foundation Stage to A-Level College for girls and boys. The school enrolls students from a wide range of nationalities and accepts students from a range of primary schools in the locality. At the time of the inspection enrolment was 949.

The school delivered the English National Curriculum. It covered all key stages and offered a range of courses for students at A-Level. Students completed key stage examinations as well as GCSE examinations in Year 10 and 11.

All staff members were UK qualified, excluding the Arabic and Islamic Education teachers.. Emirati students numbered 4, less than 1% of the overall student population. There were a few students identified with special educational needs. Provision for those students was outstanding. The Primary school Principal was in his second year in post.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance at The English College was good. It had many outstanding features. The school had a very strong ethos based on the core set of values. Students and teachers worked very effectively together in a calm and respectful manner. The overall attitudes and behavior of almost all students was a particularly strong feature of the school. Teaching was at least good overall and outstanding in Foundation Stage and post-16. Students' attainment and progress were excellent across all phases of the school in English, in secondary and post-16 mathematics, and also in Foundation Stage and primary science.

There had been improvements in many areas since the last inspection. Particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic, in which standards of attainment and progress were now acceptable with the exception of secondary Arabic as an additional language. More effective liaison was evident between the primary and secondary leadership. However, this was not consistent across all subjects. The standards of English attainment across the school were also noteworthy and it was clear that the strong work done in the school to develop this aspect had resulted in major improvements in all phases. In Foundation Stage

teaching and learning were also outstanding. The school demonstrated a strong capacity for ongoing improvement.

Key strengths

- There was outstanding attainment and progress in English across all phases, in mathematics in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 phases and in science in Foundation Stage and primary;
- Attainment had improved in Islamic Education, Arabic, post-16 mathematics and science;
- There was a wide range of purposeful and exciting extra-curricular opportunities for students in all phases;
- Almost all students displayed exemplary attitudes towards learning, supported by their teachers;
- Academic and personal support for almost all students with special educational needs was outstanding across the school.

Recommendations

- Build on the improvements in Islamic Education and Arabic to develop high levels of attainment and progress;
- Continue to develop meaningful curriculum links between the primary and secondary phases of the school;
- Develop a whole-school approach to the management of assessment data to meet all students' needs;
- Broaden the accessibility, role and impact of governance throughout the whole school.

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

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

Overall, attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable while attainment in English was outstanding in all phases. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language at the secondary phase was unsatisfactory. Mathematics attainment was outstanding in all phases except in primary where it was good and attainment in science was outstanding in primary and Foundation Stage and good in other phases. Where attainment was outstanding, students were highly skilled in analysis and interpreting. As a result

they demonstrated excellent capacities to apply their understanding in unfamiliar settings. They scrutinised their processes of investigation and responded effectively when appropriate levels of challenge arose. Most students performed to a high level in external examinations and they could work independently for significant amounts of time to pursue an objective. Where attainment was acceptable, most students had a thorough grasp of the knowledge of a topic but did not seek to understand the implications of their learning to their own lives. Recitation in Islamic Education and conversation, reading and writing skills in Arabic were not sufficiently well developed.

Students' progress was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic. It was outstanding in English across the school. Progress was outstanding in mathematics in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 and good in primary. In science it was outstanding in Foundation Stage and Primary and good elsewhere. In lessons most students achieved the objective. Where progress was outstanding, students demonstrated highly creative writing and dramatic classroom presentations. They improved on the planned outcome and developed keen levels of understanding and application. Most met the expected level of challenge and developed complex skills independently. Progress for students with special educational needs was outstanding throughout the school. While working in the Enhancement Centres they developed specific and relevant skills in literacy and learning in general through well-planned and developmental support programmes. Most students used a wide range of resources efficiently to support their learning.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Attitudes and behaviour were excellent across the school. Both in the school buildings and the outdoor areas, students in all grades worked well together and respected each other in an exemplary manner. They had outstanding relationships with almost all members of staff. Student councils were very active and responsible in organising school-wide events and had a strong voice in the development of the school, notably in highlighting healthy food choices and promoting improved facilities. Attendance was outstanding and highest in the secondary phase. Almost all students were highly responsible and made effective contributions to the life of the school. Their understanding and appreciation of the impact of Islam on their lives was better developed in secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all students had an excellent awareness of environmental issues, such as recycling and urban development and how these were key factors in the continuing expansion of Dubai and the UAE. Senior students showed a particular interest in aiding overseas projects. They had links through their visits and studies, most notably in Tanzania, Kathmandu and Ethiopia. Students of all ages supported other good causes.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

Teaching for effective learning was outstanding across the Foundation Stage and post-16 phases. It was good in the primary and secondary phases. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge and were skilled in using this knowledge in supporting students to apply their learning to the real world. There were weaknesses in teachers' knowledge in Arabic. English, mathematics and science teachers communicated well with students and made good use of collaborative learning activities. In most classes teachers provided students with challenging work which encouraged them to develop critical and independent learning skills. Older students were encouraged to apply their learning and draw their own conclusions from theoretical and practical activities. At times, work was less challenging in some primary and secondary classes. In Arabic classes, teachers did not provide students with appropriate feedback to show them how they could improve. Teaching in other subjects including economics, history and geography was good. Teachers promoted interactive and engaging learning. They focused on developing specific skills and encouraged collaborative learning. A few teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) well to support their teaching and students' learning.

Learning was outstanding across Foundation Stage and post-16 phases. It was good in the primary and secondary phases. Students responded with enthusiasm to group work and presentations and collaborated very well when given the opportunity to do so. They were engaged and eager to be involved in learning activities. Lively whole class discussions were a feature in most classes. Most children in Foundation Stage and students in the upper secondary and post-16 classes demonstrated mature responsibility for their learning. In a few lessons in primary and early secondary classes, students were over-reliant on teacher direction. The extent to which students could make connections to other learning and to relate these to the real world varied from outstanding in English, mathematics and science to acceptable in Islamic

Education and Arabic. Students in Islamic Education and Arabic were often passive learners. The same students were active and involved in other subject classes.

Assessment was good in all phases. Through a range of checks and measures teachers accurately monitored, gathered and analysed performance data. They used this information effectively to set challenging targets for the school and individual students. Most students were generally well aware of their attainment and were clear about what they had to do, for example through independent work to reach their targets. Teachers in English and secondary mathematics used the assessment information well to provide clear ways forward and suitably challenging targets. However, where this did not happen progress was more variable. A few teachers were unsure of the learning outcomes. This hindered students' attainment and progress. The quality of marking and feedback in most classes provided good support to students to help them improve. Where this was not the case, as in Islamic Education and Arabic, students were not well supported in the development of key skills.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

The curriculum was outstanding in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 and good in primary. It provided a challenging and balanced programme. Regular analysis and review enabled the school to tailor content and approaches to meet the needs of most students. Enquiry skills were expertly incorporated throughout the curriculum. The Islamic Education and Arabic curricula were now compliant with Ministry of Education requirements. Overall, the creative curriculum at primary and the extended curriculum at secondary enabled most students to investigate topics in depth over extended periods of time. Commendably, the primary curriculum had been reviewed and a thematic approach adopted; however, with the exception of English and science, progression was not always sufficiently challenging for the more able. Extra-curricular activities were wide-ranging. There were many opportunities for interaction with the local community, such as work placements and charitable community activities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Procedures for the health and safety of students were good across all phases. Arrangements for arrival and departure on buses were in need of review. The school provided facilities that enabled students to learn well and support for students with special educational needs was strong. The premises were secure and students felt safe. Emergency evacuations were well rehearsed and great care was taken when students went on educational visits. Students were aware through their learning in science and physical education of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and what constituted a healthy diet. The school had two nurses and well equipped medical rooms enabled the provision of good medical assistance whenever necessary. Child protection procedures were firmly established and all staff members were aware of their responsibilities.

The quality of support for students was outstanding across all phases. Staff-student relationships were very positive throughout the school and impacted well on students' learning. There was outstanding pastoral support for the academic and emotional needs of students provided through a system of mentoring where individual targets were set. Guidance for careers opportunities enabled students to make informed choices. Students requiring additional support were identified early and given help which enabled them to make outstanding progress. Attendance and punctuality were closely monitored and the new strategies had resulted in significant improvement, particularly in secondary.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership was good, overall. Senior leaders in the school displayed high levels of dedication, professionalism and knew the work of the school well. An increasing level of partnership and focus was evident between the two principals and a number of effective working groups were at various points of development across the school targeted at specific improvements. At subject level there was some inconsistency among the heads of department concerning the whole-school understanding of how to measure students' attainment and progress. This was noticeable in particular at transition points between primary and secondary. Where joint working parties were in place, a more cohesive whole-school understanding and management of assessment information had led to significant improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Detailed self-evaluation documents had been compiled both at primary and secondary. Overall, judgments in these documents were broadly in line with the inspection teams' evaluations. The school planned further development to ensure that self-evaluation had wider involvement and cross-curricular and cross-phase input. A detailed school improvement plan was in place. However, the success criteria identified in this work were not always sufficiently focused or shared with all staff. There was a good professional development programme available for all teachers and promising progress had begun to be made in the practice of many teachers, especially in the Islamic Education and Arabic departments. The school had made good overall progress towards addressing the recommendations from last year's report.

Relationships with parents and the wider community were good. The parents were very supportive of the school. They expressed high levels of satisfaction with communication, reporting, accessibility and the overall quality of education. There was some confusion over the school's policy on the distribution of English National Curriculum level data across all phases. Parents were unsure of the role of governance in the school and felt that access to effective decision-making processes was too limited. There was universal support from parents for the need for a permanent sixth form centre to enrich the learning experience of

the oldest students. Strong community links were in place. The school had several very productive engagement programmes with local businesses, international partnerships and charitable foundations.

Governance was acceptable. Since the last inspection, support from governors to improve science, physical education and swimming facilities had provided more suitable teaching and learning opportunities. The development of an ICT working group had been developed. It had approval from the School Board for its work and funding was being put in place to support the recommendations over a three year period. However, the role of the governors was unclear among the entire school community. Parents, teachers and students felt that the relationship was remote and that school governors were not yet meaningfully involved in the school's improvement journey. There was scope for governors to work with parents and all staff to ensure the development of a whole-school engagement with improvement targets.

Staffing, facilities and resources in the school were good. While many aspects of the school, specifically the ICT provision, a permanent sixth form centre and up-to date science facilities, were limited, teachers and students used the current provision effectively. The school campus was very well maintained by all and day-to-day management of the school was highly efficient. Staff turnover had reduced significantly since last year and greater liaison between primary and secondary colleagues was now a developing feature of the school's work.

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	217	30%
	Last year	226	29%
Teachers	24		30%
Students	52		30%

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

Almost one third of parents responded to the survey which represented a slightly higher rate than last year. The response rate of teachers and students was similar. Most parents, students and teachers agreed that the school provided a good quality of education across all the phases and subjects, although a minority of parents reported dissatisfaction with the progress of recitation skills in Islamic Education. Almost all parents believed that the school provided a safe environment for their children and most students considered that they were valued, safe in the school and enjoyed the range of activities and learning opportunities available to them. Most teachers judged that the school's ethos and quality of learning experiences for students helped to promote not only good behaviour but good understanding and respect for being part of the multi-cultural nature of the school. A majority of parents and students expressed concern about the lack of a Sixth Form Centre for learning and academic development of Post 16 students.

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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