

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai College

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai College

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaicollege.org
Telephone	04-3999111
Address	P. O. Box 837, Dubai, Junction of Al Sufouh Road and Road 331, Umm Suqeim, Dubai
Principal	Mr Peter Hill
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	11-18 years / Year 7-Year 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	826
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	6 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 12th February 2014

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014.....	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	14
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	14
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	15
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	16
What happens next?.....	17
How to contact us	17

The context of the school

Dubai College, which is situated in Al Sufouh, is a private, not-for-profit school with a selective intake policy. The school accepts around one-quarter of all applications for enrolment. Students followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales, and took GCSE examinations at the end of the secondary phase and offered GCE Advanced level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

At the time of the inspection, there were 826 students on roll, aged from 11 to 18 years. Just over half of the students were of United Kingdom nationality. Less than one percent of the students were Emirati. Eight students were eligible for Arabic as a first language lessons though none of them had this as their first language in the home. The school had identified 115 students as having some form of special educational need, including those with particular gifts or talents.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Outstanding

Key strengths

- Improved teaching approaches in Islamic Education, which had led to better attainment, particularly at the post-16 stage;
- Continuing high standards in teaching and learning, which had led to sustained outstanding attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science;
- Students' exemplary personal and social development, including their mature attitudes, strong work ethic, and well developed understanding of, and engagement with local and global issues;
- The high quality care and attention given to ensuring that students led healthy lifestyles, were safe, and were supported in their academic and personal development;
- The strong vision, direction and ethos set by senior staff and governors, in which many staff, were able to show leadership in taking the school forward.

Recommendations

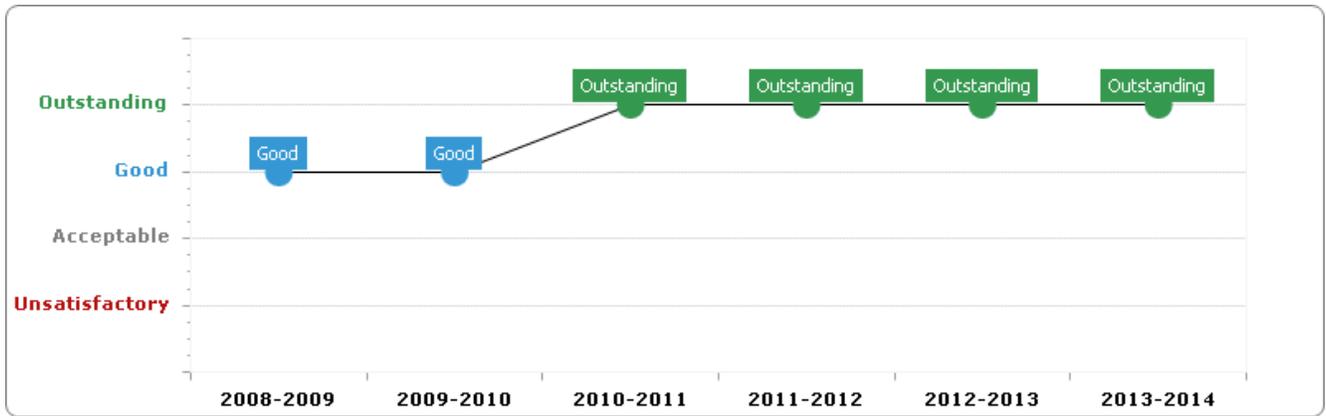
- Raise attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language, by improving teachers' subject knowledge and the teaching approaches adopted to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Monitor any potentially adverse impact of whole school, year, house or other activities on the continuity of students' learning in Islamic Education.

Progress since the last inspection

Teachers had built on good progress in Islamic Education and had improved attainment, particularly at the post-16 stage.

Marking of students' work was now more consistently of high quality.

Trend of overall performance



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Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language		
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was outstanding in English, mathematics and science, acceptable or good in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language, and unsatisfactory in Arabic as a first language. Most students at the secondary stage demonstrated acceptable knowledge and understanding of Seerah. At the post-16 stage, most students could explain in detail the conditions for performing Hajj. For the few students of Arabic as a first language, oral communications skills were weak and students could understand some colloquial Arabic but had difficulty in understanding standard language. Reading and writing skills were well below the expected levels. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students in the lower years of secondary had weak language skills, but these skills improved and exceeded expectations in later years in most aspects of the language. Extended writing skills, however, needed further improvement. In English, almost all students were highly articulate speakers and active listeners who keenly discussed and debated a wide range of texts and topics. In their consistently well-planned written work, they critically analysed literary texts, or created their own pieces, often with insight and wit. Students in all year groups had developed the ability to apply their mathematical thinking confidently in order to solve a range of challenging problems. They could make connections between their mathematics knowledge and the real life situations which they had investigated independently. In science, all students were able to use scientific language accurately to explain their ideas. Older students could provide reasoned explanations for experimental findings based on their secure understanding of scientific theory.

Progress followed broadly the same pattern as attainment. Discussions in Islamic Education helped students to make good progress and to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts. Recitation and memorisation skills were weaker, but improving. Progress in developing listening skills in Arabic as a first language were better than for other skills. However, progress in developing confidence in speaking, using relevant vocabulary, was below expectations. Most students made good progress in listening and responding in Arabic as an additional language as a result of exposure to good quality standard Arabic. Progress in reading was steady while writing was slower to improve. In English, almost all students progressively developed their skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing to high levels. As a result, older students especially were adept in applying the language of critical and evaluative thinking as valuable tools for learning. In mathematics, students were developing mathematical competence that enabled them to solve problems at a level well above international expectations. Students made rapid progress in their learning in the separate sciences. They developed confidence in enquiry-based learning and were able to apply their scientific knowledge to make sense of the world around them.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were outstanding. Students across the school were very keen to learn. In almost all lessons, they were able to collaborate very effectively. They thrived on lively and informed classroom discussion and debate. They were able to show increasing intellectual rigour as they progressed through the school. Almost all students were keenly aware of their own progress. They knew what they did well, and how they could improve further. They were adept at making connections between areas of learning, and with applications in contemporary everyday life and topical issues. In the school context of high expectations, almost all students understood, from an early point, their own responsibilities to enquire and research using appropriate resources including ICT. Such enquiry took many forms, from background reading to formulating and testing hypotheses, or setting their own questions to test their critical faculties, for example in English.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

All aspects of students' personal and social development were outstanding. Students' positive attitudes towards learning and other students and adults resulted in excellent behaviour. They displayed a strong sense of personal responsibility, and almost all were appropriately self-confident, while able to show tolerance and empathy towards others. They helped to make the school a strong and vibrant learning community, of which they were very proud. They responded very well to the wide range of opportunities offered to them to adopt healthy lifestyles. They were punctual and their attendance rates were outstanding. Students demonstrated an excellent understanding and appreciation of how Islamic values affected life in Dubai. They also expressed their respect for Islam. They appreciated the local culture and traditions and had excellent awareness of a range of global cultures. Students were major contributors to all aspects of college life. They had organised a wide range of charity events and had been fully involved in mentoring and induction activities for younger students. Elected members of the Student Council had a voice on school matters. Students had an excellent work ethic. Environmental sustainability was promoted well through the work of the Environmental Awareness Group.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Almost all teachers knew their subjects very well, and many inspired their students with their enthusiasm. Almost all teachers planned lessons well, based on suitably high expectations for students' achievement. Many lessons featured imaginative opening activities, often using ICT that caught students' interest, or enabled them to demonstrate what they already knew and could do. Rich dialogue between teachers and students characterised most lessons. Questioning regularly probed students' understanding and consistently challenged their thinking. Notably, in Arabic as a second language, teachers' motivational approaches were successfully building students' confidence in speaking the language. Almost all teachers' detailed knowledge of students' progress led to appropriate levels of challenge and support in stimulating lessons for groups and individuals. Teachers regularly created varied contexts for independent learning, within and beyond lessons, to which almost all students responded very positively.

Assessment practice was outstanding. Comprehensive systems to gather, organise and share data enabled teachers to form an accurate profile of each student's attainment and progress. These profiles helped to ensure that all teachers set ambitious yet attainable targets for individuals. Teachers' assessments were subject to rigorous moderation. In lessons, almost all teachers accurately informed students of their successful learning based on their assessment of progress. Frequently, teachers used observations of progress to adjust their teaching approaches during lessons, to meet students' learning needs better. Senior staff had ensured that written and oral feedback across the school consistently recognised effective learning and shared helpful advice on how to improve. In doing so, they continued to respond to the views of students on the helpfulness of such approaches.

[View judgements](#)

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

Curriculum quality was outstanding. Staff were clear about what the curriculum was designed to achieve. There was breadth, balance and progression for all students, and they could choose from a number of academic pathways. Transition was well planned, and teachers were well briefed about students' performance as the students moved through successive years. Staff liaised effectively with the main feeder schools to inform new entrants about the school. Review of the curriculum was regular and systematic, and involved all stakeholders. Departments had responsibility for subject review and also made contributions to the whole school curriculum, as did students, parents and governors. Cross-curricular links were effectively planned and implemented by subject teachers. Learning was enhanced through topics linked to real life situations. The range of extra-curricular activities was extensive, and included, for example, ballroom dancing, theology club and many sports. Outstanding links with the local, national and international communities further enriched the quality of provision for students.

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Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Curriculum design was outstanding. The college had in place a curriculum that addressed the needs of all groups of students, including those with a range of additional educational needs. Staff had a high level of understanding of the diverse needs within the college, whether related to nurturing talents or supporting learning. Senior leaders timetabled Islamic Education classes to avoid clashes with other subjects. At times, students missed those classes when whole-school, year, or house activities coincided with lessons. Students could select from a range of subjects when they moved from one key stage to another. The college provided many opportunities for the highly motivated and talented students to be fully equipped for their lives beyond the college.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Staff rigorously applied effective policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of students on school transport and while they were on the school site. Arrival and departure of school buses and private cars was efficient and well supervised. The school premises were kept safe and attractive through a regular programme of improvement and maintenance. The promotion of healthy lifestyles was embedded in the school ethos. Sporting facilities provided all-year access, and the school canteen served a range of healthy menu options. The care and welfare of students was paramount and good child protection systems were in place.

The excellent relationships between staff and students were based on mutual respect and high expectations. Incidents of poor behaviour were rare. The school had very effective systems to promote excellent attendance and punctuality. Staff identified students' special educational needs appropriately. The inclusive ethos within the school and lessons ensured that those students made excellent progress. Through tutor periods and enrichment days, staff provided a wide range of advice and guidance for students to promote their personal, social and emotional development. Students moving on to higher education were given excellent support on career guidance and university application procedures.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

All aspects of leadership and management were outstanding. The headmaster and governors worked together very well to set out and oversee the implementation of their vision for the school's development. Actions to secure improvements were well planned. Staff at all levels had opportunities to show leadership and take responsibility for promoting high standards in students' academic and personal development. Teamwork was a strong feature of the school. High quality communication between senior staff, teachers and other staff, and students was being maintained and in some cases further improved. Senior leaders were being successful in increasing the school's already highly developed capacity for improvement.

Staff used a wide range of approaches to gather data and information about provision and outcomes for students. They analysed the information carefully to evaluate the school's performance, and drew up systematic plans to maintain high standards and effect improvements as necessary. The new deputy head was leading a review of the school's system of professional development and review for teachers, one aim of which was to grade the quality of lessons more finely. High standards in almost all subjects had been maintained. The school had made considerable efforts to address the recommendations from the last report and even though the outcomes for students were less successful than they had hoped they had attempted to make Arabic as a first language accessible.

The school benefited from high quality partnerships with parents and the community. Parents enjoyed a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. The Friends of Dubai College organised events for students and parents, and fund-raising activities. The school had maintained and broadened its already extensive network of community links. The role of alumni in careers education and the provision of work experience for students was a very positive feature of the school's partnerships. Staff worked very productively with a wide range of schools and institutions in Dubai, the United Kingdom and elsewhere to benefit students.

The sub-committee structure which the governing body had implemented just before the previous inspection was now well established and was exerting a positive influence on the school's development. The governing body had been closely involved in the production of the school's strategic five-year plan. Committee members were increasingly involved in ongoing aspects such as senior appointments through the work of the human resources committee, or teaching and learning matters through the education committee. Through the various committees, governors supported the school with helpful advice and guidance, and also exercised appropriate accountability.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Senior staff and others carried out management duties, including those related to staffing, facilities and resources, very well. The school functioned smoothly and efficiently, in a calm but purposeful manner. Almost all staff had appropriate subject knowledge and teacher education. A small number would have benefited from opportunities to see high quality teaching in areas other than their own. Twelve new staff members had been inducted well to the school's work. Facilities were of high quality and were well-maintained. The school had a rich supply of learning resources to support its extensive curriculum. Plans for the development of the buildings and facilities were well judged and likely to improve further the provision for students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The school had a very small number of Emirati students. Staff tracked their progress and attainment carefully, and supported them appropriately and adequately in different subjects. Their attainment was in line with that of their peers in all subjects, and attendance was, like that of other students, outstanding. The curriculum gave appropriate attention to the Emirati context. Senior leaders and governors were keen to improve provision for Arabic as a first language in order to help the school achieve one of its aims of attracting high-attaining students from all backgrounds, including Emiratis.

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

Students with special educational needs made outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science and good progress in Arabic as an additional language and Islamic studies. The school had a fully inclusive ethos. Once students had passed the admission requirements there were effective systems for identification of need. The largest identified group of students were gifted and or talented. Intervention support for students with learning needs was effective, and they made similar progress to their peers in each subject. Partnership with parents was strong, and the SEN leader was responsive to requests for additional information or to allay concerns. The school carried out regular reviews for students with individualised education programmes. The students were themselves involved in this process. School leaders had already identified the need to enhance the SEN leadership and provision, and had planned additional training for staff and form tutors.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

The teaching strategies which the school had adopted had not effectively addressed the specific needs of individual students of Arabic as a first language. At the point of the inspection the strategies adopted had not had impact on student outcomes. Planning did not always take into account students' abilities and their prior knowledge. Teachers' instructions had not had the desired positive impact on students' language skills which needed significant improvement to meet the requirements of Arabic as a first language.

The rationale of the curriculum delivered in the school was unclear. It had some significant gaps in some aspects of the language and lacked structure. Opportunities for promoting essential skills were neither balanced nor sufficiently consistent. Review was not sufficiently focused on students' outcomes.

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	31%
	Last year	245	36%
Teachers	60		67%
Students	113		34%

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

Around one quarter of parents and students, and a majority of teachers, responded to the questionnaire. All parents and almost all students who responded were satisfied with the overall quality of education. Almost all parents thought that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Almost all had very positive opinions about the curriculum, teaching, learning, and safety. Almost all thought that the school was well led, but only a majority of parents and students thought that leaders listened to their opinions. A few were concerned about the school's responsiveness, and the quality of reports on their children's progress. All teachers who responded felt that students were well behaved. Teachers had very positive views on their involvement, for example in curriculum review and in self-evaluation and improvement activities. They felt that they were supported to help students with SEN and more generally through professional development activities. Only a majority felt that they had enough time for marking and lesson preparation. Students had mainly positive views about the school. For example, almost all were happy with the range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

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.

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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

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