

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai English Speaking School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai English Speaking School

Location	Oud Metha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dessdubai.com
Telephone	04 337 1457
Address	PO Box 2002, Oud Metha Road, Dubai
Principal	David Hammond
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-11 / Foundation Stage to Year 6
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	810
Number of Emirati students	6 (1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 31st October to Wednesday 2nd November 2011

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## The context of the school

Located in Oud Metha, Dubai English Speaking School was established in 1963. It is a private school that provides education for students aged four to 11 years, from Foundation Stage to Year 6. The school follows the English National Curriculum for most subjects; it follows the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic.

At the time of the inspection, there were 810 students. They were from a variety of nationalities; the majority were British. In all, 124 were Muslim, of whom a few were Emirati. Students were grouped into five classes in each year group. There were 56 full-time and six part-time teachers. Most teachers were British and were appropriately qualified. The Headteacher had been at the school for 23 years, the last six as Head.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai English Speaking School provided a good quality of education for students. It had several outstanding features, notably the high level of students' attainment, their attitudes and behaviour, as well as the close and productive partnership with parents. Students made good progress throughout the school because of the quality of teaching which challenged and motivated students well, especially in English, mathematics and science. Teachers knew their students well and provided skilled guidance in helping them to improve their work. There was a good quality of care for students. The senior leaders had identified the right kind of priorities to drive change. The dedication and enthusiasm of all staff meant that such priorities were well addressed. As such, the school had good capacity to improve.

The school had made good progress since the previous inspection. Newly appointed teachers for Islamic Education and Arabic were having a positive impact on the weaknesses in progress and attainment in these subjects. Teachers were steadily increasing the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. New assessment procedures and a richer curriculum were having a positive impact. The governors had taken some steps to involve parents more in the school's decision-making, but they had not successfully resolved the issue.

## Key strengths

- The high levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science, and the improving attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Students' excellent behaviour and rapport with adults;
- Teaching that motivated students and promoted their outstanding attitudes to learning;
- The wide-ranging and enquiry-based curriculum that strengthened students' attainment;
- The commitment of senior leaders to establishing new assessment procedures and maintaining outstanding partnership with parents.

## Recommendations

- Build on the recent improvements in the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic by providing consistently good teaching and curriculum;
- Develop students' awareness of the cultures and the traditions of the UAE;
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of provision by senior leaders is more precise and rigorous;
- Develop the role of the governing body as a critical friend to the school;
- Involve parents more in the decision-making process of governance.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
<b>Islamic Education</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>		
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good

Students continued to show outstanding levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. They spoke articulately and confidently in English. Their wide vocabulary and technical skills enabled them to read with excellent understanding and write imaginatively and expressively. By contrast, all aspects of the language were weak in Arabic as an additional language, particularly students' speaking and listening skills. Attainment in Arabic as a first language had improved,

although the students' reading and writing was underdeveloped for their age. Attainment in Islamic Education had improved because of more skilful teaching. The understanding of key principles and concepts was secure. Students had very good calculation skills in mathematics, but their problem-solving abilities were not as competent. Their in-depth knowledge of a range of scientific themes was matched by investigative skills particularly evident among the older students.

Students made good progress in all year groups. They made particularly good progress in the Foundation Stage, where they developed effective language skills and an understanding of how to use number. Their speaking and listening rapidly improved as their social skills blossomed. Students also made strong progress in Year 6 where teaching was more challenging. Throughout the school, students developed their independent skills well in using and applying their knowledge in real-life contexts. Students with special educational needs made the same good progress as other students. In their individual withdrawal sessions, the high quality teaching resulted in excellent progress.

The small number of Emirati students made good progress. There were no significant difference between their progress and that of other students. They made especially good progress in their English lessons, and had confident speaking skills. They were also making better progress in Arabic. The unsatisfactory progress in Arabic, at the time of the previous inspection had improved to be acceptable.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Outstanding attitudes and behaviour were evident across the school. Relationships between students and teachers were very positive and supportive. Student responsibility was encouraged and senior students took their civic duties seriously. Most students made wise eating choices and displayed well-developed awareness of healthy life-styles. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable. Most students had good knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Islam, and almost all students had a good appreciation of the benefits of living in the multi-cultural society of Dubai. Their good civic and economic awareness was enhanced through the developing role of the student council, playground and library duties and increased shared decision-making and opportunities to raise money for people less fortunate than themselves. Most students had good awareness of Dubai's economic progress and its position in the world. Almost all students took good care of their environment and consciously contributed positively to the environment by, for example, saving water and recycling.



## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good

The majority of teaching was good. A significant minority of lessons seen were outstanding, and these were evident in almost all year groups. Key features included the mutually respectful and supportive relationships between teachers and students that generated a positive climate for learning. Comprehensive lesson planning across the year groups gave a clear structure and cohesion to students' learning. Expectations of all groups of students were mostly good but not consistently high enough in all lessons. The teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic had improved although there remained too much variance in lessons. There was a similar picture in the development of enquiry and thinking skills. These were an increasing part of lessons, but the practice was not fully embedded into everyday lessons.

Students' learning was good in both phases. They concentrated very well in lessons and were keen to participate and complete tasks. They co-operated productively with one another and were also very capable of working well on their own. Older students were independent as learners and had effective thinking skills, but this was not consistent across the school. Sometimes, students were too passive. They had good skills in reflecting upon their own work and that of others. They usually knew what they needed to do to improve.

Assessment procedures were good and gave details of students' progress. The procedures in Islamic Education and Arabic had improved and were more accurate. The school's analysis of assessment data was thorough, but not as rigorous as it could be. Self-assessment and peer-assessment were becoming intrinsic parts of everyday learning. Teachers and teaching assistants offered sensitive guidance in lessons and their marking of books showed students clearly how to improve. Assessment information was often used to meet the learning needs of students, for example to arrange special groupings of students according to their ability. However, assessment information was not always used skilfully in lessons to ensure that all students were fully challenged.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

Throughout the school, the curriculum was good with some outstanding features. It was broad and balanced, and included a good range of subjects. Based upon the English National Curriculum, it included Arabic for all students from Year 1 and French from Year 3. The school included 'circle time' to further the development of students' social skills. Senior leaders had revised the curriculum to enable teachers to deliver it through a thematic approach and offer some choice of activities for students. This recent innovation made learning exciting and more meaningful for students. Further work was required to improve the curriculum in Islamic Education and Arabic. Teachers emphasised the development of learning skills and planned good opportunities for students to apply literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. In Year 6, the separate subject teaching improved attainment and helped students to make the transition to secondary education. Students' learning was well enriched through excursions and a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good

Health and safety procedures were good. The school was a safe place for students; they were well cared for and protected. Staff made students well aware of the importance and advantages of living a healthy life-style and of taking regular exercise, for example in participating in organised sports and games. All students received good personal and medical support, and knew that all staff would provide them with help if it was needed. The school was well aware of the need for vigilance at the beginning and end of the school day, both in terms of organised transport, and the delivery and collection by parents of individual children. Arrangements for child protection were robust and procedures to follow were fully understood by all staff.

The support for all students was good. Students had positive relationships with their teachers and felt that they were treated fairly. There were well-understood and effective arrangements for dealing with any

incidents of negative behaviour and for promoting positive attitudes. The school provided good support to those students who were preparing to move on to the next phase of their education. A particular strength was the very good provision in the specialist facilities for students with additional learning needs to receive very well-focused support. The school had some good systems to promote the attendance of students but these had yet to reduce the levels of absence.

## 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	Outstanding
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

Leadership was well-structured and well-delegated. The senior leadership team was cohesive and provided a clear direction for all members of staff. Leaders had clear roles and responsibilities, and were very supportive of colleagues. All senior and middle managers were well involved in the school's development planning, although the school was keen to develop the scope of subject leaders further to drive change in their subjects. Professional development for staff was a key priority and, for this reason, there was an extensive programme of monitoring the work of staff. Communication had been an acknowledged issue between staff and senior leaders. Steps had been taken in an attempt to resolve matters.

The school's self-evaluation was comprehensive, and senior leaders certainly knew the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some judgements were too generous. This was particularly true of the evaluations of classroom practice. The school had established thoughtful and appropriate priorities to help the school improve, and rightly linked teachers' professional development closely with them. Improvement plans were extensive and touched on most aspects of the school. However, the plans were not streamlined enough to clarify the most important foci. The school has responded very well to two of the recommendations from the last report, notably the development of Islamic Education and Arabic, and the range of opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. However, the

governors have not shown the same sense urgency in welcoming and adding the parental voice to their work.

The school had done outstanding work to strengthen its partnership with parents. Many parents gave freely of their time on a regular basis to help at school with a range of activities, such as hearing children read, leading clubs and supporting visits. Parents felt that they were very well informed about the school's activities and what their children learned although they also felt that the website should be updated to improve two-way communication. Reports about students' academic progress were lengthy, detailed and informative, and gave helpful comparisons about expected levels of progress. Links with other schools were plentiful and strengthened students' experiences.

Governors had a good strategic overview of the school. They were in regular contact with the school and often visited to see at first-hand how it operated. They brought some expertise to support much of the school's operation. The governors monitored the activities of the school but did not hold the school to account with enough rigour. In addition, their intention to involve parents more in the process of governance had taken too long to fulfil.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. The school ran very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school had maintained its excellent environment for learning, especially the spacious and well-equipped classrooms. The many specialist teaching rooms included two music rooms, two ICT suites, a well-stocked library and rooms for art, design and technology, French, learning support and performing arts. Outstanding facilities for sport included a sports field, as well as two indoor sports halls, one outdoor arena and a swimming pool. The teaching staff shared considerable expertise, boosted by good staff appointments for Islamic Education and Arabic.

## 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	225	38%
	Last year	212	35%
Teachers	32		52%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A significant minority of parents responded to the survey, slightly more than last year. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school and believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Parents were less positive in their views of progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. Parents were broadly satisfied with the provision at the school across a range of aspects and indicated that they were involved in improving it. Teachers were also positive in their views of the school and indicated that inspection had led to improvements.

## 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](mailto: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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