

English Medium Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

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.

The English Medium School was inspected in January 2010 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 the Oud Metha district, the English Medium School is a private school providing education to students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged four to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1382 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. The parents were generally happy with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school and that their children's progress was good in all key subjects. They agreed that student's behaviour was good and that their children were expected to work hard and do their best, and to become independent and responsible people. Parents also agreed that teaching was good and their children were treated fairly at school. However, only a minority agreed that there was a good range of activities which their child found enjoyable and stimulating and did not agree that the school gave them good information about the progress of their children. Around half of the parents did not feel comfortable approaching the school with a question or complaint and did not think that the school was good at consulting them on decisions affecting their children. Most parents agreed that the school helped keep their children safe and healthy and that teachers explained how they could help their children at home with schoolwork.

How well does the school perform overall?

The English Medium School provided, overall, an unsatisfactory quality of education. Attainment and progress in key subjects was unsatisfactory. In Kindergarten (KG), learning was restricted to a very narrow range of skills. Students in the primary grades developed their mastery of a core of basic skills in English and mathematics, but the development of extended and creative abilities in all subjects was inadequate. Secondary students performed acceptably in a narrow range of skills, which led to acceptable success in external examinations. However, they demonstrated few skills as independent learners and had developed only a limited capacity to think for themselves. Student attitudes and behaviour were good. Students had outstanding attitudes to work and learning, but relationships were poor with staff because teachers used inappropriate methods to manage their classes. Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable. The school placed a high value on Islam and students had an acceptable knowledge of the UAE. Primary and secondary students had an unsatisfactory economic and environmental understanding, but the understanding of post-16 students was acceptable.

Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory across the school. Almost all lessons were overly based on teacher talk and the purpose of lessons was not always clear. The quality of learning was unsatisfactory. Students' roles in almost all lessons were too passive, and they were not expected to make decisions, or engage in creative or challenging thinking. Assessment was unsatisfactory across the school. A few teachers marked exercise books with ticks and compliments but rarely added comments to help students improve their work. Test scores were not used to guide subsequent teaching and learning. The curriculum was unsatisfactory. Most teaching was based on textbooks and emphasised a narrow range of skills and many aspects of learning were repeatedly emphasised throughout the school with insufficient regard to progression. There was no systematic curriculum review. There was little meaningful development of cross-curricular themes and students did not have access to a range of extra-curricular activities. There were insufficient arrangements in place to support students who required additional support. Measures for protecting and supporting students were unsatisfactory. Buses were overcrowded, students had to stand and seat belts were rarely used in front seats. Emergency fire and evacuation procedures were established and the nurse provided helpful health and nutrition education. Whilst staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements, these were not adhered to. The quality of support for students was unsatisfactory. Teacher-student relationships were unsatisfactory as a few teachers humiliated students and used corporal punishment and little was done to make school enjoyable.

The quality of leadership was unsatisfactory. There was little vision for developing learning in the school and there was insufficient delegation to develop leadership at all levels. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school had no formal processes of self-evaluation and there was no strategic plan. An evacuation drill had taken place but other recommendations from the previous report were not acted upon. Partnership with parents and the community were unsatisfactory. Parents had little involvement in their children's learning and the work of the school and communication between the school and

students' families was too limited. Governance was unsatisfactory. School owners provided insufficient resources and guidance to school leadership and there was no stakeholder involvement. Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. Many staff had insufficient experience and no teaching qualifications. The school lacked adequate science facilities to conduct sufficient experimental work. A lack of resources made it difficult for teachers to use an adequate variety of teaching strategies.

Key features of the school

- Students had consistently positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour was consistently good;
- A lack of clarity about school ownership and governance meant that school leaders, had insufficient guidance and accountability, and there was no stakeholder involvement in governance issues;
- Child protection procedures were unsatisfactory as students were at risk of both physical and emotional harm;
- Leadership was ineffective and there was a lack of delegation of responsibilities;
- Teachers had little understanding of how students learn and received little support; consequently they were unable to use an effective range of teaching strategies.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the use of corporal punishment and emotional abuse in the school ceases immediately;
- Develop shared leadership so that all staff can carry out their duties and make a greater impact on the life of the school;
- Provide teachers with adequate training, support and resources so that they are able to carry out their duties effectively;
- Develop the curriculum and teaching strategies to;
 - encourage children in the Kindergarten to explore, investigate and develop their creativity;
 - provide active and age-appropriate learning across the school, and develop students' abilities to think for themselves, so that all students have improved learning opportunities;
 - ensure that teachers plan appropriate outcomes for each lesson setting out what children need to understand, as well as know and do.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. Most students from Grades 1 to 8 could recite verses of The Holy Qur'an with few errors in pronunciation. Other grades did not study recitation of The Holy Qur'an. In the primary phase students were developing their knowledge of the pillars of Islam. In other grades students developed their understanding of the behaviour expected of good Muslims. They learned the attributes of Allah and how this should affect their relationship with others. In Grade 10 they understood the importance of prayer and its impact on their lives. Students across the school appreciated the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as a role model. They also learned basic details about his life but they had limited knowledge about prominent Islamic characters and events.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable in the primary phase and unsatisfactory in secondary. In the primary grades, students were able to speak in short sentences describing what they saw. Students listened well but only a minority understood the teacher's instructions. Most primary students read familiar words and sentences accurately but with limited understanding. In Grade 5, students read confidently with good expression. All presentations were of a high standard. Secondary students listened well but did not always understand the teacher and students could not express themselves in Arabic. They read accurately but often did not understand what they were reading. Writing in secondary was well presented but limited to a few sentences. There were no opportunities to write independently.

In English, attainment and progress were acceptable overall but unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, where learning consisted of memorising letter names and copying letters. Phonics knowledge was poor. By Grade 2 students communicated well orally in English and listening skills were outstanding. Primary students made acceptable progress in reading, and read aloud with confidence. Most students developed good handwriting skills and accurate spelling and punctuation by Grade 3. Students in Grade 6 wrote independently for extended periods in a range of genres, but writing was formulaic and very similar for all students. In Grades 9 to 11 writing matured and students developed their own styles, showing a good understanding of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, foreshadowing and symbolism. Attainment in GCE 'O' Level exams was in line with international expectations.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and primary phases, and acceptable at secondary and post-16. Kindergarten students' learning was restricted to counting and copying numbers, and students' understanding of number was not secure. Primary students developed age appropriate skills in arithmetic but a majority had little conceptual understanding and could not apply their skills to practical situations or unfamiliar contexts. By the end of Grade 9, students could apply their knowledge of basic algebra, geometry and handling data to a restricted range of problems. Critical thinking and problem solving skills were under-developed throughout the school.

Attainment and progress in science were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and primary phases and acceptable in the secondary school. Kindergarten and primary students developed a limited knowledge of some scientific facts. Grade 4 students knew about some simple biological life cycles. However, students developed few scientific skills and little understanding. Grade 7 students knew about different types of forces and some places they occur. In Grade 8, students had acceptable knowledge about the periodic table and ionic bonds. Grade 10 students had factual knowledge about several systems in the human body but had not developed the ability to apply this knowledge to unfamiliar contexts. Students began to conduct experiments in Grade 12, but practical and investigative skills were underdeveloped across the school.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Students had outstanding attitudes to work and learning. Almost all students remained attentive during even the most repetitive lessons, and behaved well around the school. Although a majority of student-staff relationships were based on mutual respect, staff who physically and emotionally abused students had poor relationships with them. Overall, attendance was acceptable and most students were punctual to their lessons.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable. The student council was mainly concerned with maintaining discipline rather than developing civic responsibility and understanding. Although students expressed mature ideas on how to improve the school, there were no forums where these ideas could be used to support school life. Students appreciated and valued their Islamic identity. They understood the impact of Islam on Dubai and its importance in Dubai's identity. Students had acceptable knowledge about the culture of the UAE. They were proud of cultural tolerance in the UAE and understood both the strengths and challenges that it brings.

Overall, economic and environmental understanding was unsatisfactory in the primary school and acceptable in the later stages. Students were aware of the progress Dubai made in recent decades and its place as an international city. Primary students interviewed did not know the central features of Dubai's economy. Secondary school students understood the main sources of income in Dubai and the major industries. They believed that they could contribute to Dubai by ensuring that the city kept its Islamic identity. A few students had age appropriate knowledge about the environmental problems facing Dubai.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was unsatisfactory throughout the school. Although there was some variation in the quality of teaching, there were examples of unsatisfactory teaching in most year groups. The teaching of English as an additional language was most effective throughout the school. However, significant weaknesses in teaching restricted the quality of students' learning in most other subjects. Most teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge, but did not know how to teach well. Teachers talked too much and for too long and the purpose of lessons was not always clear. For example, children in the Kindergarten were exposed to repetitive lessons with too much emphasis on copying. In most lessons, at all phases, the teachers' plans did not take account of children's prior learning. Resources were insufficient and not used appropriately; teachers occasionally used references from textbooks which students did not understand. There were no effective arrangements to meet the differing learning needs of groups or individuals in lessons.

The quality of learning was unsatisfactory. Students were able to sustain concentration for a considerable amount of time in most classes and approached their learning with impressive commitment. However, this was not the case in Kindergarten, where children were often restless and weary. Activities in the Kindergarten did not engage learners and children were often sitting passively for extended periods and required to complete inappropriate tasks. Across the school, lessons were not planned to involve students closely in their learning. In many lessons, teachers talked for long periods and students were not expected to make decisions, or engage in creative thinking; this did little to develop their higher order thinking skills or improve their understanding. Students did not discuss their work with one another; nor were there many opportunities for students to work as a group for a common purpose. However, some students had produced anthologies of written work that were of good quality. This demonstrated their capacity to operate as independent learners when they were given the opportunity.

Assessment was unsatisfactory across the school. A few teachers marked exercise books with ticks and compliments but rarely added comments to help students improve their work. End of unit tests and examinations provided staff with some assessment information, but this was not used effectively to improve their planning to meet individual needs. Students were not involved in the assessment process. They could not explain clearly what actions they themselves needed to do to improve their work. They were not aware of the school's tracking systems which recorded their achievements and they were not part of the assessment process. Consequently, students were not empowered to reflect on their achievements or set their own targets for further improvement.

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

The curriculum was unsatisfactory. It lacked both breadth and balance. The curriculum in the Kindergarten was not age-appropriate. It focused on rote learning of letters and numbers with a narrow range of worksheets and written work, and none of the activity-based learning appropriate to this age group. Primary and secondary curricula relied too heavily upon a narrow range of textbooks, with little regard paid to the learning needs of different groups of children. There were too few opportunities for extended work and practical activities in the curriculum. Coverage of all subjects overemphasised factual knowledge at the expense of understanding. Music provision was limited to the Kindergarten. There were no opportunities for independent extended writing in Arabic throughout the school. There were no effective or systematic procedures to review the curriculum, although the English department had begun to address some aspects of continuity and progression. Many aspects of learning were repeatedly emphasised throughout the school with insufficient regard to progress and advancement form year to year. There was no meaningful development of cross-curricular themes and students did not have access to a range of extra-curricular activities. Class teachers did not have access to computer rooms to allow computers to be used to broaden the areas covered within their curriculum areas. The school had not made good or effective use of the environment or the local community to bring relevance and meaning to learning. The school had not made appropriate provision to cater for the educational needs of all students. Courses did not provide sufficient challenge for gifted and talented students and higher achievers. There were insufficient arrangements in place to support those students who required additional support.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Measures for protecting and supporting students were unsatisfactory. Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security were weak. Arrivals were adequately supervised but students who were late being collected were often left unsupervised. Arrangements for ensuring safety on school transport were unsatisfactory. Buses were overcrowded, students had to stand and seat belts were rarely used in front seats. Adult bus monitors did not ensure students' safety. Moreover, students were exposed to exhaust fumes in a restricted area for long periods, whilst waiting for buses to leave. Premises and facilities were unattractive and poorly maintained. Effective emergency fire and evacuation procedures had been established. Monitoring to ensure student health and well-being was carried out by the nurse who also provided health and nutrition education. The food and drinks available in the school canteen did not provide healthy options. Whilst staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements, these were not adhered to.

The quality of support for students was unsatisfactory. The school rarely took account of student needs beyond their academic requirements. Teacher-student relationships were unsatisfactory as a few teachers' humiliated students and used corporal punishment. The very few, minor incidents of poor behaviour were not managed well. Care arrangements were weak and not applied consistently so that tracking and supporting students overall well-being and academic progress was limited. Most departments collected test data but this was not used effectively to track progress. The guidance which students received on future education and career opportunities was lacking, as was support for students with additional learning needs. The very small incidence of poor attendance and late arrival to school was managed effectively. Students did not feel safe in school and reported that very little was done to make school enjoyable.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was unsatisfactory. Senior leadership provided little vision for developing learning in the school, and staff morale was low. An emphasis on discipline encouraged students' work, but leadership did not ensure that discipline was appropriately maintained and had not prevented physical punishment. Most staff with leadership roles were committed to the school, but a majority did not possess the necessary skills to be effective in their roles. There was no regular supervision of staff, and they received little guidance or support. Leadership was highly centralised with the Principal. Several subject leaders were committed to school improvement and had some useful ideas but there was no forum for the expression of these ideas.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school had no formal processes of self-evaluation and there was no strategic plan. Records of examination and test performance were not communicated to teaching staff or used to inform school improvement. Only the key strengths of the previous report had been shared and distributed, not the recommendations and areas for improvement. An evacuation drill with local civil defence was carried out following one of the recommendations. Other recommendations were not acted on. The action plan was not developed collaboratively or distributed even amongst senior staff and therefore had no impact.

Partnerships with parents and the community were unsatisfactory. Parents had little involvement with their children's learning and the work of the school. They received regular reports from the school that contained exam scores but little information about how students' learning could improve. Over half of the parents who had responded to the survey did not feel the school would respond to concerns they raised. There was little connection made between the school and the local or wider community.

Governance was unsatisfactory and ownership roles in the school were unclear. School owners had little vision for the school's success, and gave insufficient support to school leadership in terms of both resources and guidance. Owners partially recognised the need for investment in facilities and resources, and had developed a new playground area and added limited computer resources but were unaware of the resources needed to support acceptable learning throughout the school. Governance did not hold leadership accountable for raising attainment or for the welfare of students, and did not include stakeholder involvement in governance issues.

Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. There had been a high staff turnover at the start of the school year. Consequently, many staff were hired with insufficient experience and no teaching qualifications. Staff absences had led to periods when some classes lacked a teacher. The facility was drab and unattractive it was not conducive to developing a stimulating learning environment. The school lacked adequate science facilities to conduct sufficient experimental work. Most classrooms were too small for flexible groupings, and space in kindergarten classrooms was poorly utilised. A lack of resources made it difficult for teachers to use an adequate variety of teaching strategies and Kindergarten classrooms did not have the resources necessary to provide age-appropriate learning. There were two computers laboratories, but these were underused and most classrooms had no technology to support learning. Teachers did not have the facilities to develop classroom materials beyond worksheets.

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:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Post 16
Health and safety	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of support	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Unsatisfactory
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Partnerships with parents and the community	Unsatisfactory
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Staffing, facilities and resources	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school perform overall?
Unsatisfactory

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 will undertake a Follow-Through Inspection of the English Medium School within three months of the original inspection and report to parents regarding 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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