

# Dubai English Speaking School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 6

Report published May 2010

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## Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

**Outstanding** – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

**Good** – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

**Acceptable** – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

**Unsatisfactory** – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Dubai English Speaking School was inspected in October 2009 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

### Basic information about the school

Located in Deira, Dubai English Speaking School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged four to ten years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 797 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were pleased with the school. They said their children enjoyed coming to school and that they were well cared for by staff. They were particularly pleased with how approachable teachers were if they had any concerns. They also appreciated senior managers being on duty at the school gates every day and their availability to talk to parents. All parents stated that the school had helped to make their children independent and responsible. They praised the information they had received about how to help their children with mathematics and would have liked similar information about other subjects. A few would have liked more information about how their children were getting on with their learning. A minority did not think that their children were making good enough progress in Arabic.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai English Speaking School provided a good quality of education overall. Students' attainment was still unsatisfactory in Islamic Education and Arabic. However, the school had taken significant steps to increase learning time and improve the quality of teaching in these subjects. As a result students' skills and progress were beginning to improve. Outcomes in English, mathematics and science were good overall. Students made acceptable or good progress in building further on the high levels of skills and knowledge which they brought to school. In particular, their skills in mathematical calculation and writing were improving as a result of changes staff had made to the way they taught these subjects. Students' behaviour was excellent. The school had taken significant steps to ensure that students knew a lot about Dubai's environment and culture. The UAE was a focus for much of the learning that took place around the school, and this made learning more meaningful to students, particularly those who had lived here for a long time.

Teachers planned their lessons well and had begun to give students more opportunities to learn through enjoyable activities. Students worked hard, particularly when teachers gave them opportunities to work together in groups. Teachers assessed students work regularly to make sure they were making progress. Those who were not making good progress were supported well. Teachers needed to use assessment information more effectively to plan more challenging learning activities, particularly for those of the more able students who were capable of making faster progress. Most students were being well prepared by teachers for their transition to secondary education. Students were safe in school and on school transport. Caring staff knew the children and their families very well.

The school's day-to-day management was efficient. The senior managers and governors knew the school well, and knew what they had to do to improve the school further. However key stage leaders did not always support improvement effectively. They did not give their staff clear guidance on how to improve teaching and learning. Subject leaders were making good progress in improving aspects of the school. They had improved communication with parents and had plans to develop this further. Parents were pleased with the school and felt involved in their children's learning. The school's facilities provided an outstanding range of learning environments and resources.

## Key features of the school

- Students' excellent behaviour, self-assurance and good manners;
- The positive and supportive relationships between students and between students and staff;
- The positive learning environment and, particularly, how well staff used displays to celebrate learning;
- The quality of students' learning and attainment in the innovative Year 6 curriculum.

## Recommendations

- Give students more opportunities to learn by finding things out for themselves;
- Monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously;
- Improve how teachers use assessment information to plan challenging next steps for students;
- Continue to improve the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic.

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

Across the school students' attainment was unsatisfactory in Islamic Education, but progress was acceptable. The majority of students were studying Islamic Education in English. These students understood the subject better than the students who were studying Islamic Education in Arabic. Most students in the younger classes were able to talk about the life of The Prophet Ibrahim. In the older classes, students could talk about the family tree of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). A minority of older students could not explain clearly the difference between the Pillars of Islam and the Pillars of Faith. Too few students were able to recite verses from The Holy Qur'an confidently. At all stages, students' attainment was below expected levels for their ages.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory. Across the school, students were making too little progress in learning and using the language. Students in Year 1 knew some colours. Those in Year 3 could name the main parts of their bodies. By Year 6 they could give family members their titles in Arabic. However, at all stages students struggled to remember words and phrases that they had been taught previously. As a result they could not build upon their learning to construct simple sentences, or use words at a level appropriate to their age. Students' reading and writing skills were under-developed because they could not use the Arabic alphabet confidently. Their speaking and listening skills were beginning to improve. However, these skills were not yet at a satisfactory level.

In Foundation Stage and throughout the primary, students were attaining well and making good progress in English. In Foundation Stage, children were able to read familiar words in simple stories. They listened well to others and spoke clearly and confidently to adults and to their classmates. Most children were able to write single words using capital letters correctly. By Year 2 students could write instructions in sequence and use clear statements to give spoken instructions to others. By Year 6 almost all students had well-developed English language skills. Most were attaining above expected levels for their age. They talked confidently in many different situations. For example, they listened to one another carefully and added their own thoughts when they discussed the features of autobiographical writing. Most students used their wide vocabularies very effectively in their writing.

Students' attainment in mathematics across the school was good. They made acceptable progress in their learning in Foundation Stage, and through the primary stages they made good progress. Most children at the Foundation Stage had well-developed mathematical skills. They could name colours and shapes. In school they had learned to use these skills in different play situations. By Year 6 almost all students achieved, and a majority exceeded, expected levels of attainment. Across the school students' skills in mental calculation were improving. A majority of students could work out for themselves how to apply mathematics to their everyday lives. By Year 6 students showed a very good understanding of basic algebra. Overall, however, students were capable of making better progress from year-to-year.

Students' attainment in science was good at all stages. Their progress in learning was acceptable at Foundation Stage and good through the primary stages. Children in the Foundation Stage had a good knowledge and understanding about their environment. They understood how colours could be mixed to form new colours. They knew why their senses were important and investigated how sand and stones could be separated in their play activities. A few children demonstrated good knowledge of class work in advance of their actual lessons. By Year 3 students could name all the types of human teeth and explain what each was used for. Students at Year 5 planned fair tests to find out about evaporation. By Year 6, they could carry out independent investigations into how animals were adapted to live in the desert.

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

Throughout the school, students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They were polite, articulate and confident. Staff had helped them to learn about their rights and responsibilities. In particular, students showed kindness and respect for one another. Regular international events helped them to understand and value each other's backgrounds and cultures. Students were proud of their school and had very positive relationships with their teachers and support staff. They attended regularly and enjoyed coming to school. Attendance during the complete last academic session was good.

Students at all stages had good civic understanding, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture. Almost all students developed their skills by taking part in clubs and musical and sporting events. They learned about the needs of others by raising funds for charities, including for children in Ethiopia. The new student council members were ambitious to make a positive difference in the school, but they were capable of taking more responsibility for decision making. A majority of students had a basic understanding of Islam and a few were able to talk about how Islam had shaped Dubai.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was also good. At all stages students had developed a sound understanding of Dubai through their lessons in almost all subjects. Children in the Foundation Stage talked about places they had visited and where they liked to go. The majority of primary students could find where they lived on a map. They could explain how to get around Dubai and the impact of some recent projects such as the Metro. Students showed respect for the school and wider environment through their daily actions. They could explain why it was important to recycle. Older students were less clear than younger ones about the impact of their carbon footprint on global environmental concerns.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good in both Foundation Stage and throughout the primary years. Teachers planned their lessons well. They gave students tasks which made them think about what they were learning and this encouraged the students to use their knowledge to solve problems. Teachers had high expectations of students' handwriting and the presentation of their work. In the best practice, teachers gave students independent research tasks and, in such activities, most students achieved high standards. The students also remembered what they had learned. Across the school teachers told students what they expected them to learn, but most gave the students too few opportunities to learn by finding out for themselves. At the end of lessons, most teachers checked carefully that students had understood.

The quality of learning was good at all stages. Students came to school eager to learn and always took part enthusiastically in activities. In almost all lessons students gained new skills and knowledge. In particular, they were developing good skills in learning with others in pairs and groups. At the beginning of the best lessons students shared what they already knew and agreed what they wanted to learn. This helped to ensure that they built further on what they already knew. More commonly, lessons ended with students discussing what they had learned. In a majority of lessons, however, a few of the more able students did not extend their existing knowledge far enough.

Across the school, assessment was acceptable. Senior managers analysed students' attainment thoroughly. They used this information to check that students were making progress and to set targets for attainment in each year group. They did not yet give clear enough advice to teachers about how these targets could be met. A few teachers used assessment information to set attainment targets for individual students. However, too few teachers across the school had a clear understanding of what students already knew in each curriculum area. As a result they could not ensure that lessons challenged all students. The quality of marking of students' work was inconsistent across the school. In English, teachers made comments in their marking which helped students to understand how to improve their work, but in other subjects there was considerable scope to help students more, through comments on their work and in understanding their next steps in learning.

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

The school's curriculum was good. Overall, it supported the school's aims well and followed the English National Curriculum closely. Students made progress from year-to-year in a broad range of subjects. Staff worked together to give students a wide range of interesting and relevant topics at each stage. At Foundation Stage, children experienced a combination of play and teacher-led activities, which was sometimes too formal for a few younger students. Across the primary stages student's learning was enriched by specialist teachers of subjects such as music, art, technology and physical education. The school had taken an innovative approach to the Year 6 curriculum. Students received lessons from specialist teachers in a wider range of curriculum areas. As a result they received high quality teaching and were well prepared for the curriculum in the secondary school. Senior managers had increased the time students spent studying Islamic Education and Arabic, but it still fell short of the Ministry of Education time requirements. Students further developed their skills and interests in a wide range of after-school activities including successful sports teams, enthusiastic music ensembles and martial arts. The 'Green Club' was very effective in promoting students' understanding about their environment and teaching them how to take active steps to look after it.

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

The quality of protection in the school was good. The building and school grounds were safe, secure and well maintained. However, there were gaps in systems for regularly checking and reporting a few health and safety matters. Staff members knew students and their families well, and were alert to their individual needs. They took appropriate steps to ensure that students were safe and well looked after in school. For example, there were appropriate procedures in place to ensure that parents were contacted when unexplained absences occurred. Staff needed further training in how to identify children who might be at risk. School bus routines were well organised and supervised with appropriate safeguarding procedures in place.

Support of students was good. The students had regular opportunities to keep fit through regular physical activities and sports including swimming and dance. Staff taught them about the importance of eating healthily and encouraged them to make healthy choices. The school's procedures for identifying and supporting students who needed extra help with aspects of their learning or behaviour were of good quality. The learning support teacher worked closely with class teachers to help them to meet students' needs in lessons. She provided strong support to individuals and small groups and kept parents well informed about their children's progress. The school's assessment systems did not always effectively help teachers to identify students who required extra challenge in their learning.



## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The Headteacher and senior managers effectively managed the daily running of the school. The Headteacher had consulted staff, and together they had agreed a clear mission for the school. Coordinators for each year group made daily arrangements that supported teaching. Their regular meetings with staff did not focus closely enough on improving students' learning. A few staff had responsibility for particular subjects. They understood best practice in their subject and demonstrated this in their own teaching. They had effective plans to improve those aspects for which they had responsibility. School leaders at all levels were not rigorous enough in their monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and achievement.

The school had good arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning. Senior managers looked closely at students' attainment and took account of teachers' views when planning improvement. As a result the school's development plan contained appropriate priorities. A few subject leaders and experts from outside the schools had helped staff to understand how to change their practices. For example, new approaches to teaching were beginning to involve children more in activities during lessons. Managers had observed a few lessons to monitor their quality but they did not give teachers sufficient feedback on how to improve their work.

The school used the local and wider community extensively to support students' learning, for example, through educational trips and environmental activities. The Friends of Dubai English Speaking School were very active in supporting a wide range of school activities. The year representatives helped new parents to feel welcome. Staff had provided clear information to parents about what their children were learning in school. Very good links with the mathematics department ensured that parents knew how they could help their children at home. Staff kept parents informed about their children's progress through regular reports and parents' nights. The school had not yet formally asked parents for their views about its work.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The governors had a key role in shaping the strategic plan for future development of the school. They had adapted this well to take account of changes in Dubai. The strong affiliation with a secondary school, Dubai English Speaking College, provided helpful continuity. Governors' professional advice was shared effectively and reassured parents of smooth transitions in their children's educational experiences. They set targets for the school and monitored them. However, they did not communicate with parents clearly about their work. Whilst they had supportive links with school managers, they had not yet made routine arrangements to discuss the school's work with staff and parents.

The school's learning environment was enriched by outstanding facilities and staffing levels. High quality sports facilities, up-to-date information and communication technology suites, a welcoming library and a swimming pool were notable features. The classrooms were spacious and shared spaces were used well for group activities. In particular, staff made the school into a welcoming learning environment with daytime activities and displays of students' work.

## Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

## Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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