

Our Own English High School - Dubai Inspection Report

Pre-Primary to Secondary

Report issued February 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school.....	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school	5
Recommendations.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching and learning?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	9
Summary of inspection judgements	11
Next steps	15
How to contact us.....	15

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.

Our Own English High School, Dubai was inspected in October 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 Oud Metha, Our Own English High School, Dubai is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Pre-Primary to Secondary, aged three to 18 years. The school follows an Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 7589 students on the roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic term was acceptable. The levels of attendance had dipped from the previously high levels achieved by the school. This was due to low levels of attendance in the Kindergarten.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. A very large percentage of parents responded to the questionnaire. Almost all were happy with the school, thought that it was well led and that it kept their children safe. Almost all were pleased with their children's progress in English, mathematics and science. Most were pleased with their children's progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all were pleased with the quality of teaching. Almost all parents thought that their children were motivated to learn, were well behaved and were treated fairly at school. Most thought that the school encouraged their children to choose a healthy lifestyle. Almost all thought that communication between the school and parents was regular and informative. Most thought that parent-teachers meetings were helpful. A majority of parents thought that they were effectively involved in the life of the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school provided a good quality of education. The Principal and the Headmistress had been in post for less than three years. They had successfully worked with staff across the school to widen and improve the quality of learning experiences for students. Very good progress had been made in meeting the recommendations of the last inspection. A range of initiatives was impacting positively to help improve consistency in teaching and learning. Considerable progress had been made in using formal observation of teaching and learning and in tracking and evaluating students' progress. This had led to a greater coherence in the school's approach to supporting students' learning. Further work was required to ensure full consistency in evaluating strengths and weaknesses and in providing students with information on how they could improve. Co-ordinators and leaders in subject specialist areas had been introduced in most key areas of the curriculum. These initiatives, combined with recent staff developments in teaching and learning, had led to improvements in the coherence between the Kindergarten and primary phases, and in the attainment of students in English, mathematics and science. Parents reported significant improvements since the last inspection in the range and quality of information provided by the school on their children's progress.

Students' attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. Primary students' attainment had improved in all of these subject areas. Students' attainment and progress in Arabic remained acceptable. Students' attitudes and behaviour, civic understanding and their understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture remained outstanding. Their economic and environmental understanding was also outstanding. The quality of teaching, students' learning and assessment was good across the school. This included improvements in all three areas in the primary phase and was directly linked to students' increased attainment. The curriculum was good, having improved in both the primary and secondary phases. Health and welfare and the quality of support were both good following improvements in safety arrangements in the primary and secondary phases. The quality of leadership, self-evaluation and partnerships had improved but remained good overall as the changes had yet to fully impact on students' learning. Governance and staffing, facilities and resources remained acceptable. A double shift timetable had been introduced this session following an increased school roll from 6891 to 7589 students. The school had anticipated a move into new facilities in the summer of 2010 but this had been delayed. The quality of students' learning in the afternoon shift was not as good as for those attending in the morning. As a result, the school and governing body were discussing options to address this difficulty. The Principal and his staff were highly committed. They were making good progress in enabling students to be creative as well as independent learners while building on the long academic tradition of the school. The school demonstrated a good capacity for continuous improvement.

Key features of the school

- The positive and purposeful environment for learning;
- The devolved leadership including the willingness of teachers and students to take on considerable areas of responsibility across the school ;
- The vision and leadership of the Principal and his senior management team aimed at ensuring creative and lifelong learners;
- The wide achievements of students including their creative abilities in writing, art, dance and team sports;
- The lack of a formal Parents' Committee to represent the views of parents in influencing the priorities of the school;
- The limitations of the facilities and constraints of the afternoon shift resulting in uneven learning for students.

Recommendations

- Refine assessment arrangements to ensure consistency in setting individual targets for students across the primary and secondary phases and meet more effectively students' varying needs;
- Continue to develop active learning and independent thinking skills in science across the primary and secondary phases and from Grade 9 in mathematics
- Improve the teaching and learning in Arabic;
- Build on the positive interaction with parents to establish a Parents' Committee to contribute to school improvement;
- Implement the school's plans to address the issues of the limited facilities, time constraints and inconsistencies in students' learning in the afternoon shift.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in the primary and secondary phases. Most primary students had a good level of knowledge in relation to important facts about Islam. This included the significance of cleanliness and students understood the importance of the optional prayers within Islam. At the secondary phase, almost all students knew the reasons for the prohibition of alcohol and drugs in Islam and the negative impact of alcohol on the person, family and society. They were knowledgeable about the status of women in Islam. Almost all students had sufficient knowledge of The Holy Qur'an and were able to recite full

chapters using appropriate recitation rules and good voice intonation. Most could discuss in depth how the main principles of Islam impacted on their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable across the primary and secondary phases. Students' knowledge of the language and their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills were in line with international standards. Across the school most students listened and responded carefully and accurately to their teachers' questions. They read well and made few spelling errors when writing. By Grade 3, all students had clear legible handwriting. By Grade 6, higher attaining students expressed themselves with clarity and imagination. Across the secondary phase, most students had an acceptable understanding of grammar and applied the rules confidently.

Attainment and progress in English were good. Most students exceeded standards expected for their age. Many joined the Kindergarten with little or no English. Their rapid progress resulted in good standards of listening, speaking reading and writing. In the secondary and morning primary sections, a minority spoke, read and wrote to an outstanding level. By Grade 9, students used a wide range of vocabulary and phrases and wrote imaginatively using poetic devices. Their handwriting was well formed. Students' attainment and progress were weaker in the afternoon sessions in both the Kindergarten and primary phases. Secondary students wrote articles and essays using a neat cursive script and discussed and analysed a range of writing forms. In Grade 10, students' CBSE examination results were good. In Grade 12 results were lower than those of previous years but were good overall.

Both attainment and progress in mathematics were good across the school. Overall, students attained levels consistently above those expected for their age and scored well in CBSE examinations. Students made consistently good progress in most classes. It was more uneven in Grades 1 to 4 in the afternoon session. By Kindergarten 2, most students understood the concept of numbers from one to 20 and could match them correctly to number words. Across the primary phase students had a well developed understanding of number values, fractions and lines of symmetry. By Grade 8, they knew the properties of different geometric shapes and could use formulas effectively in simple calculations. Secondary stage students applied differential equations effectively to solve problems linked to science and sports.

Attainment and progress were good at all phases in science. From Kindergarten to Grade 12, students showed good knowledge and understanding of the main scientific concepts, theories and ideas. Senior students achieved high levels of attainment in CBSE examinations. Students at all phases were able to apply reason and observation well in response to the investigations they observed which were often led by their teachers. Most students could observe, predict, classify, interpret, record and draw conclusions to levels on or above those expected for their age. They had secure knowledge of scientific facts and vocabulary. Secondary students were comfortable working in a laboratory setting and followed safety rules. Although overall attainment was good, students showed relatively weak skills in conducting in-depth and rigorous independent research.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They were polite, well behaved and showed exceptional concern for each other and respect for adults. Students were punctual and their attendance was generally very high but had been significantly lower the previous term due to poor attendance in the Kindergarten. Students showed a highly developed understanding of healthy living. They made appropriately healthy choices about food and participated in regular daily exercise activities organised by teachers and senior students.

Students had outstanding civic understanding, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture. Students took responsibility through their involvement as prefects, house captains, girl guides or through supporting teachers at the high quality assemblies. They knew about the Pillars, the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and the miracles. Feasts and traditions were familiar to them including local dress and folklore. They understood the importance of Islam in Dubai and the region. All students appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and had friends from many backgrounds and faiths.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. Almost all students knew that Dubai had experienced rapid economic growth. They accurately described the early history of Dubai and the UAE. Across all grade levels, students understood the economic importance of Dubai in the region and around the world. Students recycled at home and in school and promoted conservation of resources through planning assemblies, developing projects and school initiatives about the environment.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was good. Teachers had good subject knowledge in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. In Arabic, teachers' subject knowledge was acceptable. Teaching in the primary grades had improved through more consistent use of extended planners to clarify what students would learn in lessons and what teachers would assess. Almost all teachers across all phases were using active learning methods and a good range of resources, including information and communications technology (ICT), to involve and engage students effectively in learning. In most lessons, teachers planned group and paired work for students to help them explore and collaborate as a part of learning. In Arabic, planning and teaching were insufficiently focused on extending and enriching learning beyond the textbook. In a few lessons, mainly in Grades 1 to 4 in the afternoon classes, the pace was slow due to too much teacher talk and teaching not being interactive. In most lessons, good questioning by teachers promoted higher order and critical thinking skills.

The quality of learning was good. Most students were enthusiastic and attentive. They collaborated very well in group tasks. Almost all students in the upper secondary phase were highly skilled in leading discussions in small group activities. In many lessons, students were making very effective connections between their course work and wider moral and social issues through, for example, discussing their personal views about history topics. They

demonstrated higher order thinking skills through imaginative activities. In a few of the afternoon lessons Grades 1 to 4 students were distracted and disengaged when teaching was not stimulating.

Assessment was good. Most teachers had improved their skills to monitor students' progress through using more informative records of test results and performance in class. They were using this information more effectively to plan suitably challenging lessons. Most teachers used worksheets designed to meet the needs of three ability groups. Less able students were supported in many lessons through being seated near teachers, working with their peers or in mixed ability groups. The extent to which more able students were given challenging work varied across grades and subjects. Students evaluated their own understanding across subjects and most knew their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers were now more skilled in identifying how students might improve their learning. They were sharing this more effectively with students and parents but were not yet consistent in agreeing targets with students to promote understanding of how they could improve their work.

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

The curriculum was good across all phases. Students at Grades 10 and 12 gained certification through CBSE examinations. Programmes were broad and balanced providing a variety of learning experiences beyond the CBSE requirements. The Kindergarten and lower primary programmes had been revised and improved after the last inspection. The school offered several languages including Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and French as well as English, which was the medium of instruction. At the primary phase, students had a choice of activities such as physical education, art, music and dance. At the secondary phase, students could choose from three different streams leading to examinations in science, commerce and the arts. Students chose from a wide range of subjects including psychology, fashion studies and political science. The curriculum was reviewed annually and structured transition meetings were held to maintain continuity between the phases and to bridge the gaps between different levels. School assemblies provided students with opportunities for personal development and environmental awareness. A majority of the students participated in extensive extra-curricular activities including a month long summer programme. The school had forged strong links with the community. Senior students were offered appropriate work experience. Students across the school participated in a range of sporting events and volleyball, basketball, table-tennis, swimming and athletics were promoted through special coaching. Students had also gained success in choral singing, dramatics, elocution, public speaking and fine art activities. They benefited from participating in a variety of environmental and health promotion events.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were good. Students were well supervised at all times. Transport arrangements were extremely well organised with each child monitored electronically when boarding the buses. Fumes from the buses remained a concern as they polluted the playground. A well-designed child protection policy was in place and practices met requirements. The school had trained doctors and nurses who were in school at all times and the children knew where to go if they needed help. Fire drills and evacuation plans were carried out appropriately. The school supported healthy living well by ensuring the sale of healthy food in the canteen and through health promotion initiatives. Risk management procedures had been improved since the last inspection and were now fully in place.

The quality of support was good. Teacher-student relationships were very positive. A well defined policy helped maintain outstanding behaviour. A range of recently introduced tracking and monitoring programmes helped teachers identify and support students' varying needs, pastoral care and academic progress. The school shared this information with parents through computer-based communications, formal parents' meetings and regular 'open house' events. Identified students requiring additional support attended extra classes scheduled after school. Senior students took responsibility for coaching students in younger classes and a Grade 12 challenge programme provided challenge for more able students. Well planned arrangements supported students with special educational needs. Where appropriate, these students received a modified curriculum and their progress was assessed and monitored regularly. Pro-active career counselling, workshops and seminars supported Grade 10 and 12 students in considering career pathways and in gaining admissions to international universities.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good with outstanding features. The Principal's vision combined well with the drive and commitment of the Headmistress to make improvements to the school and develop the curriculum. Their innovative planning utilised available staff expertise and experience to ensure a good level of distributed leadership. Supervisors showed a highly developed knowledge of their recently revised remits and had considerable autonomy to manage and develop their designated sectors. Recently created subject co-ordinators and leaders' posts in most key areas were supporting improvements at a subject level. These teachers were still developing their leadership and management skills.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior managers, supervisors and subject co-ordinators monitored teaching and learning. Subject co-ordinators were ensuring greater consistency in students' transitions through the school. Teachers' skills in self-evaluation were developing well and progress had been made in addressing weaknesses in teaching and learning. The school had established effective systems for gathering data on the schools' performance, including measuring students' academic progress more fully. This information was beginning to be shared more effectively with students and their parents.

Partnerships with parents and the wider community were good. Parents participated in workshops linked to themes of health promotion and environmental awareness. They accompanied students and teachers on external trips and career advice days and provided individual support to a few students. The school communicated very effectively with parents through regular informative newsletters, a well-constructed website, parental coffee mornings and formal parents' meetings. Parents received comprehensive information through an e-learning gateway and on-line information system introduced this session. While parents were consulted on aspects of the life of the school they did not have a parental forum through which they could regularly reflect their views.

Governance was acceptable. The representative of the governing body was very supportive in helping the school identify and meet its priorities. He held the school accountable through regular visits and had recently consulted with parents leading to improvements in traffic management outside the school. A questionnaire was also helping to gather views on what parents thought about the school. Despite these improvements the governing body had not established a formal parental forum or wider representation to hold it accountable.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. A few of the teachers were employed across both the morning and afternoon sessions. Professional development was helping ensure consistency in teaching and learning. The school had mostly good specialist facilities including well-equipped computer rooms and science laboratories. Large class sizes and limited external spaces resulted in cramped conditions for learning in some classes. Well stocked junior and senior libraries supported reading and research well. Teachers were making good use of recently improved ICT equipment.

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:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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