

INSPECTION REPORT

The English College - Dubai

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The English College - Dubai

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Location | Al Safa |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.englishcollege.ac.ae. |
| Telephone | 04-3943465 |
| Address | PO Box 11812, Dubai, UAE |
| Principal | William Johnston, Jane Ballard |
| Curriculum | UK |
| Gender of students | Boys and Girls |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups | 3-18 / Foundation Stage to Year 13 |
| Attendance | Outstanding |
| Number of students on roll | 1,031 |
| Students' nationalities | UK |
| Number of Emirati students | 7 (less than 1%) |
| Date of the inspection | Monday 8th to Wednesday 11th October 2012 |

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The context of the school

The English College, located in Al Safa, enrolls male and female students from Foundation Stage to sixth form. At the time of the inspection the student roll was 1,031, a nine per cent increase on the previous year's figure. Almost half of the student population had UK nationality, but the student body also included learners from a wide range of other nationalities. Seven of the students, less than one per cent of the student population, were Emirati nationals. Only a few students spoke Arabic as a first language.

The school followed the English National Curriculum, covering all key stages. It offered a number of courses leading to GCSE examinations in Year 11 and A-level in the sixth form. Students also took examinations at the end of key stages.

With the exception of the teachers of Islamic Education and Arabic, all staff members were UK qualified. The school made outstanding provision for the students, few in number, who had been identified as having special educational needs. The primary school principal was in his third year in post, while the secondary school had an acting principal who had recently been appointed, having previously been director of studies in the secondary school.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- Good or better attainment in some subjects at certain phases of the school;
- The responsible and positive attitudes of students towards adults, other students, the community and the wider environment;
- A high proportion of good or better teaching and learning across most subjects in all phases;
- The rich curriculum which consistently engaged students and provided enjoyable learning experiences;
- Academic and pastoral support for all students, including support for students with special educational needs.

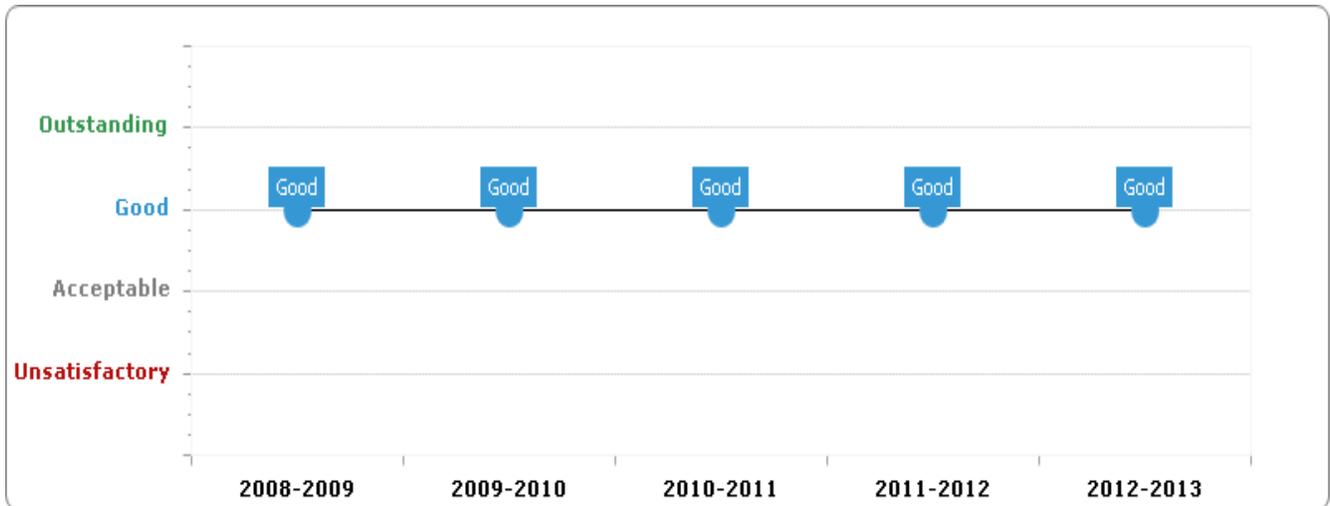
Recommendations

- Build on and spread the best teaching to ensure greater consistency in meeting students' needs, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic, and for higher-attaining students in all subjects;
- Improve attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic, including meeting more effectively the needs of students who speak Arabic as a first language;
- Continue to develop a whole-school approach to assessment of students' progress from Foundation Stage onwards;
- Ensure that governance focuses more effectively on seeking improvement in the school's work.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had not built on previous improvements in Islamic Education and Arabic to ensure better attainment and progress in these subjects;
- Staff had been successful in developing more meaningful curriculum links between the primary and secondary phases;
- There had been some progress in implementing a whole-school approach to the management of assessment data to meet all students' needs;
- Broadening of the accessibility, role and impact of governance had been limited.

Trend of overall performance



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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---|------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Islamic Education | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as a first language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Unsatisfactory | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Unsatisfactory | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as an additional language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| English | | | | |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Mathematics | | | | |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Outstanding | Good |
| Progress | Good | Good | Outstanding | Good |
| Science | | | | |
| Attainment | Good | Outstanding | Good | Good |
| Progress | Good | Outstanding | Good | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness | Good | Good | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Community and environmental responsibility | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Quality of students' learning | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Assessment | Good | Good | Good | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Curriculum quality | Outstanding | Good | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Health and Safety | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Quality of Support | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

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 | Good |
| Governance | Acceptable |
| Management, including staffing, facilities and resources | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment at Foundation Stage was good in all key subjects taught. Student attainment at other stages was variable. It was acceptable in Islamic Education and in Arabic as a first language in the secondary and post-16 phases. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. At primary, students' attainment in Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was good at all stages, except for secondary mathematics and primary science, where it was outstanding. Students' knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts were appropriate for their stage, although recitation skills were less well developed. In Arabic as a first language, very few students in primary achieved the expected levels in all skills. At secondary and post-16, most Arabic speakers and learners were able to read texts, but skills in writing were less well developed. In English, younger students' reading was stronger than their written work; older students showed a higher level of competence with the skills of textual analysis. Most students had well-developed mathematical skills; problem-solving skills were particularly well developed in the secondary stage. At Foundation and primary stages, students were able to design, investigate and predict in science. At the secondary phase such skills were less well developed.

Progress in all key subjects followed the pattern outlined above for attainment. Where progress was acceptable, most students were acquiring knowledge at an appropriate pace. Better progress was achieved when students were challenged with tasks and support to develop understanding and reasoning skills; such practice was variable across subjects and phases. For example, progress in understanding in Islamic Education was restricted when students were not taught effectively to link concepts and sayings from the Holy Qur'an. Acceptable progress was ensured at secondary through broadly, well matched tasks in Arabic as a first language. Students made good progress in English, particularly when helped to develop the skills of creativity. In mathematics, progress was outstanding when problem solving and mental calculations were promoted well and integrated into lessons. Progress in science was good or outstanding when teachers developed high levels of expectations with explorations and analysis.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The small number of Emirati students demonstrated attainment that was broadly in line with their peers of other nationalities at the relevant phases. Progress similarly was in line with their peers. Attainment in Arabic for native speakers was unsatisfactory at the primary phase, as all students were disadvantaged by being taught Arabic in classes where others studied Arabic as an additional language.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school. They worked well with each other and with adults. They respected and valued other people and cultures. Relationships between teachers and students were strong. Students enjoyed school, and were aware of the need for healthy living and exercise. Attendance was consistently high. Students had developed a mature respect for Islamic values, particularly at secondary and post-16. For example, they believed that safety and security in Dubai was achieved partly because of the Islamic nature of the country. Through various units in the curriculum and through the events in school and visits to places of cultural importance, students had developed a strong understanding of and respect for the UAE and its multi-cultural nature. The school had developed effective links with local schools and other bodies to promote mutual understanding. Most students displayed a strong enthusiasm for all aspects of learning extended beyond the classroom. There was also a tradition of voluntary work in the community and students of all ages participated in a wide variety of fund raising projects. For instance, students were able to take initiative and influence their daily school lives through the student councils. The school's concern for their environment was notable. Students took the initiative and demonstrated their commitment through a variety of projects, including recycling and through their links with an Eco-farm in Africa.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good overall, with some particular strengths. In upper secondary classes, for example, teachers promoted high levels of concentration and effort. In all phases, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. They planned varied and enjoyable activities that were carefully designed to reinforce and extend students' understanding and engage their interest. Most teachers established a good rapport with students which encouraged good levels of enthusiasm and participation. Teachers questioned students' skillfully to probe their understanding and offered regular opportunities for them to take responsibility for their learning. Teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic was weaker than the other key subjects, which were, on the whole, consistently well taught. On occasions, a minority of teachers did not ask enough of their most able students, who completed the same work as others despite being able to do more, but expectations of students with special educational needs were usually high. Many lessons featured well-chosen resources such as video clips to enhance students' insight, and teachers frequently offered more than one level of challenge in order to match students' needs. Teaching in other subjects including, for example, physical education, drama and geography was good and often outstanding.

Learning was good overall with some outstanding features. Students were hard working and keen to learn. They participated with confidence in a wide range of learning experiences, including collaborative work. Learning for children in the Foundation Stage was enhanced by the excellent environment which enabled

them to explore a wide range of practical experiences. From early primary years onwards, students were capable of reflecting on the quality of their own and others' work, and were increasingly aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Older students were adept at explaining their work. When asked to think critically, students rose to the challenge but these opportunities were not routinely available. Most students were encouraged successfully to draw upon what they had learned previously or in another subject to support their current work. When given the opportunity to do so, they could add relevance to their learning by explaining the connections between their class activity and real world situations.

Assessment was good in all phases and had improved by the development of a whole-school approach to data management, in response to the previous inspection recommendation. In Foundation Stage and primary, children were reflective about their learning. Peer and self-assessment was a feature of the majority of lessons in upper primary, secondary and at post-16. Feedback from teachers was particularly informative to students in some subjects and classes, but lacked consistency across the school. Most teachers in each phase used data to set targets with the students, although these were not always sufficiently challenging for all students. Data was used particularly well to identify students with special educational needs and teachers were well supported to enable them to meet the needs of almost all students. The leadership teams acknowledged the importance of achieving consistency across year groups and departments, which they were seeking through their own monitoring and that of middle managers.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in most phases and good in primary. It had a clear rationale and was balanced across key components. It was enhanced by a wide range of other subjects, for example French from Foundation Stage onwards, and various subjects and studies in the arts, languages, business, social, technological and media spheres. Regular review and development had led to improvements in the primary curriculum and opportunities for continuity and progression in students' learning. However, a small number of Arabic native speakers were taught with Arabic learners, which led to weaknesses in their progress. Provision for different groups of students was a positive feature, although higher-attaining students were not always as fully challenged as they should have been. Good organisation ensured a smooth transition between the different phases of the school. Programmes in secondary and post-16 prepared students well for progression to university although there was some scope for the broadening of vocational programmes. Students benefited from a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sports, visits and visitors, arts activities, work placements and environmental and charity projects.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Procedures for the health and safety of students had improved and were outstanding overall. All policies and procedures were appropriate, including new arrangements for the safe arrival and departure of buses. The school site was secure and the buildings were well maintained. Since the last inspection facilities for post-16 students had improved, although there was no indoor space for students to eat snacks or lunch. The school provided a programme of study which was valued by students and helped enhance their learning about healthy life-styles, and promoted respect for themselves and others. The student council had played a significant part in developing a healthier diet in the school. Child protection procedures were firmly embedded.

The support given to students was of an outstanding quality. Teachers had a good rapport with students and exemplary behaviour was a notable feature. Attendance and punctuality were outstanding, partly as a result of the school policy of an immediate reaction to a student's first day of absence. Those with particular talents were encouraged but not yet sufficiently extended in all areas, although all students were well prepared for the next stage of their education. Students had an exceptional bond with the staff, expressing strongly that they felt safe and well cared for in school.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for students requiring additional pastoral and academic support was a strength of the school. Their needs were identified systematically and at an early stage in their education in this inclusive school environment. Teachers, within the Enhanced Studies Centres for those with additional needs, ensured a high quality of learning for the students, who made outstanding progress. When students with additional needs were in classes, teachers were well aware of their needs and made effective provision for them. As a result, those students could take part in lessons alongside their peers, and their progress was in line with what might be expected.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The headteacher of primary, and the acting headteacher of secondary, had a positive working relationship, and were increasingly setting a consistent and clear vision for school improvement. New leadership structures at senior level offered potential for delegated leadership to make an impact on outcomes for students. Leadership at subject level was broadly effective, with some variation across subjects in the effectiveness of the leaders' impact on students' attainment. Cross-phase working parties were helping to develop more continuity in students' learning. Relationships and communication were professional and effective, contributing to the success in building their collective capacity to improve the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school used an appropriate range of processes for evaluating its work. The quality of teaching and students' learning was monitored systematically, although feedback to teachers was not always sufficient to help them know what they needed to do to improve. Peer assessment alongside review by the senior staff helped many teachers to identify their professional development needs. As a result, improvements to aspects of the curriculum and teaching at certain phases had been achieved. Improvement in the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic had not made the same progress. A detailed school improvement plan was in place. Senior leaders were aware of the need to reduce the number of priority tasks and involve all staff in setting focused success criteria and measuring progress towards targets.

Relationships between staff, parents and the wider community were good. Parents were supportive of the school, and were very keen to help with a range of aspects, including fund-raising. They had positive views about most aspects of the school's work and were very happy with levels of communication about general school matters and reporting on their children's progress in particular. A significant minority considered that the governing board did not involve parents sufficiently in decision-making in the school, or in other ways of supporting it. Links with the local and wider community were extensive and strong.

Governance was acceptable. The board had achieved some improvements to the provision and use of facilities. Senior leaders were working with the board to improve accountability. However, neither parent, student nor class teachers, were represented on the board. As such the governing body continued to seem remote to many representatives of the school.

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The management of staffing, facilities and resources were good. Well qualified and experienced staff used the facilities, some of which were limited, to good effect. A sixth form common room had been established adding a further dimension to resources and facilities for this age group. Classrooms and library provision for Islamic Education and Arabic were limited, and science accommodation was cramped. The school campus was, on the whole, well maintained, and day-to-day management of the school was carried out efficiently.

[View judgements](#)

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 | 218 | 29% |
| | Last year | 217 | 30% |
| Teachers | 19 | | 23% |
| Students | 87 | | 49% |

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

Almost one-third of parents responded to the survey, a return rate which was almost identical to the previous year. Around one-quarter of teachers, and half of the students surveyed, responded. Almost all parents and students agreed that the quality of teaching and learning was good, and that students were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. The responses on progress in Islamic Education and Arabic were less positive. Almost all parents and students, and all teachers, agreed that students were safe and well looked after in the school. A few parents had concerns about security at the entrances, and the provision of facilities and resources. Almost all parents, most students and all teachers agreed that students were treated fairly, respected and valued. While almost all parents, most students and teachers thought that the school was well led, only around half of parents and students, and three-quarters of teachers, thought that they were sufficiently involved in decision-making in the school.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

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How to contact us

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

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