

INSPECTION REPORT

The Kindergarten Starters

Report published in January 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Kindergarten Starters

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemskgs.com
Telephone	04-2824090
Address	PO Box 4973, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Principal	Asha Alexander
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 5
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	4,938
Largest nationality group of students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	23rd September to 27th September 2012

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The context of the school

The Kindergarten Starters School is situated in Al Garhoud, and caters for male and female students from pre-primary Kindergarten (KG) through to Grade 5. At the time of the inspection the school had 4,938 students on roll, aged three to 11 years. There were 141 classes across the school. Almost half of all students were in the kindergarten age range. Sixteen nationalities were represented with 97 per cent being Indian. There were no Emiratis on roll.

The school followed the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. Students participated in the ASSET skills analysis and GEMS CASE assessments.

The staff included 197 full-time teachers, the Principal and Headmistress, and a large administration and ancillary support team. Almost all teachers held a first degree, and most held a recognised teaching qualification.

Forty-seven students, fewer than one per cent of the roll, had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN). These were supported by a team including the counsellor and special educators. A further 27 students had been identified as gifted and talented.

The Principal had been in post for six months and 15 per cent of the teachers were new to the school in the current academic year.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and English were good;
- Students were extremely well motivated and had an enthusiastic attitude to learning;
- Relationships between the students themselves and with the staff were excellent;
- The students were prepared well for the next stage of their education;
- There were outstanding links with parents and the broader community.

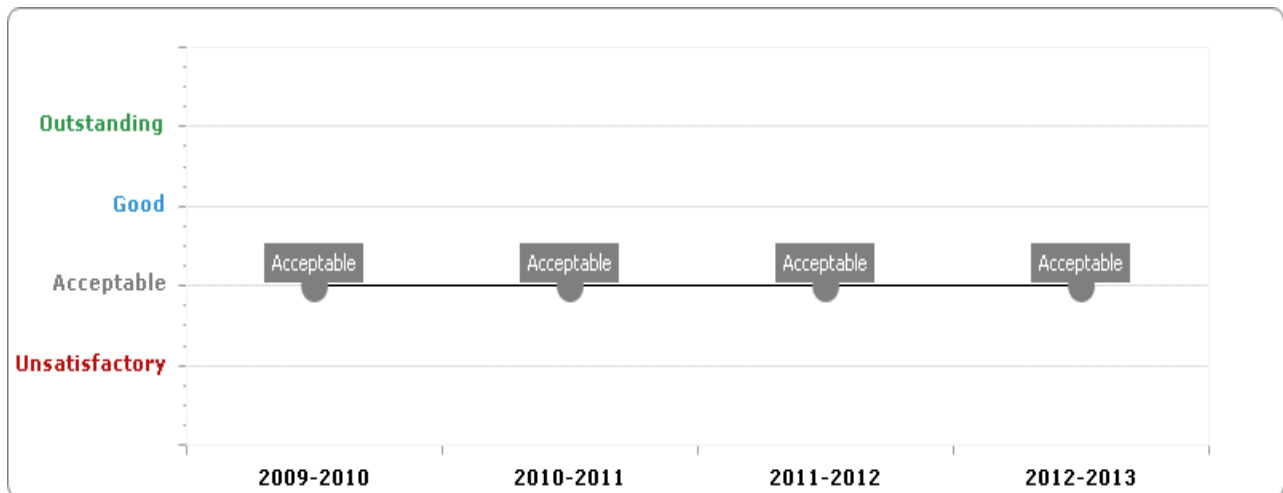
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in all key subjects by employing effective teaching strategies to engage all learners;
- Further develop assessment systems at the school to ensure that teachers have accurate, comprehensive information regarding students' attainment and progress against international standards;
- Improve the systems for identifying and supporting for students with special educational needs;
- Ensure the monitoring of classroom practice by senior leaders is more accurate, rigorous and linked closely to the quality of students' learning, thereby correctly informing school self-evaluation and improvement priorities.

Progress since the last inspection

- Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and English remained good;
- A broader range of extra-curricular activities had been developed;
- The library facilities had improved and a large number of books had been added to the school's resources;
- The number of specialist staff and middle managers had been increased.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Primary
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good
Arabic as a first language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
English		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good
Mathematics		
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science		
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary
Health and Safety	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in the Kindergarten was good in English and acceptable in mathematics and science. In the primary phase, students' attainment was good in Islamic Education and English, and acceptable in Arabic as an additional language, mathematics and science. In Islamic Education, most students in the upper grades showed good skill levels in applying recitation rules and had good knowledge of key Islamic concepts. Most understood the chapters they learned from The Holy Qur'an. Most students had acceptable listening and speaking skills in Arabic. Reading for comprehension was not well developed and most students' writing was limited to single words and very short sentences. In English there was a focus on developing speaking and listening skills in kindergarten, with students' attainment in reading and writing improving throughout the primary years. The majority of kindergarten children could demonstrate mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills, in line with expectations. Primary phase students were strong on the use of number, but were less well developed in using and applying their knowledge. In science, students' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts were strong, but the expected practical and investigative skills were underdeveloped.

As a result of higher expectations and challenge, progress was good in Islamic Education in the primary phase and in English throughout the school. Progress in mathematics and science was acceptable overall. Kindergarten children used resources to demonstrate progress in counting skills and making comparative statements, for example, bigger and smaller for shape and number. In science, and as a result of an appropriate lack of challenge for the majority of students, progress was acceptable in all phases. Students with special educational needs made good progress in English. Their progress was acceptable in the other key subjects, in many instances due to tasks being insufficiently matched to their particular learning needs.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

There were important strengths in students' personal and social development in both the Kindergarten and primary phases of the school. They were confident and highly motivated learners who took great pride in their school. Positive and supportive relationships prevailed throughout the school between the students and the staff. Almost all students had a clear understanding of what constituted a healthy lifestyle. There were lunch monitors who supervised the contents of the students' lunches. The punctuality and attendance rate was good. Most students had good appreciation of Islam and described their Muslim friends as kind and caring. They identified key Islamic practices appropriately. Almost all students participated well in the National Day celebrations. Students in primary had a good understanding of Dubai's heritage and presented accurate information regarding the Bastakiya in Dubai. Their understanding of their own culture, local culture and traditions was in line with age-related expectations. Kindergarten

children carried out social responsibilities and took care of school resources under the supervision of staff. Primary students made significant effort in improving their tasks and projects. Senior students understood the importance of protecting the environment both at the local and global levels. Students actively participated in several initiatives and community projects related to environmental sustainability such as the Green Team Club and DEWA conservation awards.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and primary phases. In all subjects there was a range in the effectiveness of teaching but it was strongest in the primary phase in English and in Islamic Education. The majority of teachers had secure subject knowledge and planned appropriately to meet the wide range of learning needs of the students in their class. Lesson objectives were regularly shared with students to place the learning in context and teachers promoted good speaking and listening skills. In the best lessons, teachers deployed a range of strategies to engage the learners in active participation and questioning was used effectively to develop critical thinking skills. However, as in the previous inspection, teaching remained inconsistent across the school. In the majority of lessons teachers were teaching to the middle ability range with insufficient differentiation for the least and most able students.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in both phases. Students had positive attitudes to learning and responded appropriately to their teachers. Most were confident in contributing verbally to their teachers' questioning and they worked well collaboratively when given the opportunity. In class, almost all students exhibited good behaviour for learning and listened respectfully to their peers. However, in a few lessons, students were restless, off-task and paid little attention to instruction. Across the school students were able to relate their learning to real life experiences but there were few opportunities in lessons for students to develop their research and enquiry skills to extend their learning through the use of information and communications technology.

Assessment was acceptable in both phases. Since the last inspection students now had a greater role in assessing their own learning. In the primary phase, a growing number of students were involved in self and peer-assessment. The school had a well-developed system of assessment and used this to inform parents of their child's achievements. This data was also used to inform planning. However, within lessons, assessment was rarely used to reshape a learning task or to extend learning beyond the plan. There was regular monitoring of achievement to track the progress made by students across the school. In Kindergarten though the assessment criteria used were not fully comparable to age-related expectations internationally. Assessments often measured the progress against taught units rather than application of

acquired skills. In a minority of classes marking effectively provided students with their next steps in learning although this was also inconsistent across the school and across subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good across the school. Staff worked well together to review and improve the curriculum in key subjects, and this was particularly effective in the higher grades. Spoken English was developed through the Kindergarten phase, with improvements being seen in children's confidence in speaking in a variety of contexts. Reading and written work was developed well by the end of Grade 5, and children were well prepared for the next stage of their education.. The curriculum for Arabic as an additional language was well developed. The whole curriculum promoted Islamic values and was committed to the local community. Resources, though limited, were shared by staff who ensured access and inclusion for all. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) was variable across the school. Enrichment activities boosted children's engagement and success in their learning, with a significant number of students participating in after-school activities.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all students were good. Well organised systems were in place to ensure that all areas of the school were well maintained, clean and secure. Repairs were carried out efficiently and promptly. School transport arrangements and procedures were well supervised. Staff kept detailed records regarding the medical needs of all students and ensured their specific requirements were met. The school organised regular fire drills and all firefighting appliances held current certificates. Healthy lifestyles and eating habits were promoted. Food for lunch and snacks adhered to healthy eating guidelines. A child protection policy and reporting system was in place and all staff members were aware of reporting requirements to keep students safe.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Excellent staff and student relationships were observed throughout the school. New entrants to the school were well supported and students in grade five received helpful guidance on the most suitable school for their next stage of education. Students benefitted from good support from the counsellor who maintained positive links with parents to ensure continuity in care from home to school. The few incidents of inappropriate behaviour were quickly resolved with parents' engagement and support. Student tracking was in place. Students' academic progress was recorded and results were reported to parents regularly. Attendance and punctuality were good. Effective systems were in place to monitor absences and to promote punctuality.

[View judgements](#)

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

The system for identification of special educational needs was at the early stage of development. Most categories of special needs identified by the school were general statements rather than specific personalised requirements which identified the appropriate intervention and support that each student required. There was a regular exchange of communication between parents and the counselor and Principal to discuss concerns and students' progress. Parents were engaged in developing strategies for helping their children at home. A support group of twenty parents, who assisted students in reading skills, were coached by a qualified external trainer. Parents were supported well in understanding and accepting their children's special educational needs. Individual education plans required improvement because they did not provide a clear focus for intervention and support strategies to facilitate each child's personalised learning. The targets were not measurable and this made monitoring and evaluation of progress from starting points difficult. In almost all lessons, there were too few modifications of the curriculum to ensure that activities were sufficiently adapted to take account of the students' specific needs. Subsequently, such students did not make the maximum progress possible.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school was acceptable. The recently appointed Principal had raised the emphasis on improving quality outcomes for the students. A majority of the senior staff demonstrated capacity to secure further improvements. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined. Through more regular continuous professional development sessions, teams were making an increased contribution to ongoing school review and improvement. More coherent and concise direction from supervisors was needed if class teachers were to work in a consistent way to further improve attainment and progress in all grades. The school had sound management and organisational systems.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Formal processes for self-evaluation involving the leadership team and teachers were in place. Appropriate development priorities had been identified and strategies had been introduced to help the school improve. The leadership team monitored the quality of teaching and learning across the school and gave feedback to teachers about their performance. However, the impact of such activities had yet to be reflected in improvements to attainment and progress in key subjects. The school had made limited progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

The school's partnerships with parents were outstanding. The open-door policy adopted by the school meant that parents were able at any time to consult with class teachers or senior leaders about any matters of concern. A good communication system was in place, allowing the parents to have access to

the teachers and the school to discuss the performance, progress and welfare of their children. This was complemented with parents working as volunteers in the classrooms, invitations to the assembly events and special programmes of the school. Parents received regular reports regarding their children's progress and valued the opportunities provided by consultation meetings to understand what their children had achieved. The Parents' Engagement Programme demonstrated the school's commitment to parents' involvement and provided excellent links with almost all parents.

Governance was good. The school received support from the governors in key areas, for example, recruitment, training and strategy. As part of the strategic and advisory role of governance, the professional leadership of the school was held to account for its performance. However, the governors' monitoring of the school's most recent self-evaluation lacked rigour. Governance had promoted an effective variety of communication links with parents.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. There were adequate numbers of qualified teachers to cover classes. Staff turnover had increased the challenge of establishing more consistent and effective teaching. Facilities that supported learning, such as science laboratories, libraries and activity rooms were limited for the size of the school roll. There were acceptable information and communications technology (ICT) laboratory facilities and most classrooms were equipped with ICT hardware. The classroom dimensions, and class sizes, limited the range of activities within the classrooms. Almost all class sizes were above 30 students with 15 classes having 40 students.

[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	955	26%
	Last year	1166	28%
Teachers	2		1%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey. Most parents agreed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, except in Islamic Education and Arabic. Most parents were satisfied by the quality of education provided. Most thought that their children enjoyed school and were safe there, and that children's behaviour was good. Almost all parents indicated that the school was well led and that they had effective communications in place. Also, most parents believed that any concerns would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Almost all parents agreed that teaching and learning were good. A majority of parents agreed that the school leaders listened to their opinions about the school. Almost all parents agreed that school reports and parent-teacher meetings were regular and helpful. Very few teachers responded to the survey.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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