

# JSS International School Inspection Report

Pre-Primary to Primary

Report issued February 2011

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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.

JSS International School was inspected in November 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 Al Barsha, JSS International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary to primary, aged four to 13 years. The school follows an Indian curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 554 students on roll. The student attendance during the inspection was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents were satisfied with the quality of education. A minority felt that their child needed additional help at home with their study. They felt that parents were not yet effectively involved in the work of the school. Most thought that communication between school and home was effective and the school responded appropriately to parental concerns. Most thought that the regular parent-teacher meetings were helpful. Most parents thought the school was well led. Almost all parents were satisfied about all other aspects of the work of the school including their child's progress in key subjects, teaching and learning and the safety of their child at school. Most parents expressed the view that extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school for their child were at least good. Almost half of parents thought that the equipment and resources available in the school were excellent.

## How well does the school perform overall?

JSS International provided a good quality of education for its students. It opened in March 2009 and this was its first inspection. There had been a rapid increase in roll from very low numbers to over 550 at time of inspection. Students had settled well and were happy. The formation of a good and effective new school, in such a short period, demonstrated the capacity of school leaders to direct further improvement.

Students' attainment and progress in almost all key subjects were good, with the exception of Arabic and attainment in Islamic Education, which were acceptable. Students' personal development was good. Teaching, learning and assessment were good. The curriculum was acceptable and was enriched by a broad programme of activities. However, the curriculum did not fully meet the wide range of students' abilities and there was insufficient variation to meet the individual needs of the less able and gifted and talented students. The safety and support for students was good. Good relationships between teachers and students promoted good learning. The school kept good records of academic progress and also pastoral information. These were used well to track performance, particularly of the more vulnerable students. The quality of leadership and management was good throughout the school. Roles of senior staff were clearly defined and there was a simple and effective line management structure. The ability of the school to know its strengths and weaknesses was limited by a lack of rigour in whole school self-assessment. The school had good systems in place to assess the quality of its teaching. Partnerships with parents and the wider community were acceptable. Communication between home and school was good. Governance was acceptable. The governing body had only met formally on one occasion but was keen to listen to parents and act on their concerns. The staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding.

## Key features of the school

- Outstanding facilities, staffing and resources, with good access for those with mobility difficulties;
- Excellent information and communications technology (ICT) resources integrated into most lessons;
- Good personal and social development, with good protection and support for students;
- Self-evaluation lacked detail and did not inform priorities for school improvement;
- Good enrichment programme was compulsory for all students, but there was a lack of engagement with the local and wider community, restricting the curriculum and partnership opportunities;
- Good attainment and progress in all key subjects, except for Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Good quality leadership had helped create foundations for good teaching and learning, with some examples of outstanding practice.

## Recommendations

- Ensure that the proportion of good or better teaching and learning increases and that unsatisfactory teaching and learning is eliminated by using outstanding teachers to coach and mentor other staff;
- Develop the role of school governors to take a more active role in setting the direction and priorities in strategic planning and to hold the school to account for the quality of teaching and learning and students' attainment and progress;
- Improve self-evaluation by adopting a more robust and detailed process which can better inform improvement planning;
- Strengthen the curriculum by improving cross-curriculum links and partnerships with the local community and extend opportunities to use the local environment as a resource.

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable and progress was good. Most primary school students could name the five pillars of Islam and could confidently perform ablution and prayers. Most students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic terminology in Arabic, such as the meaning of prayer and fasting. Most students showed basic knowledge about Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) life and his companions. Most students could read verses from The Holy Qur'an, but with errors and some lack of comprehension. Most students showed age-appropriate links between their knowledge of Islam and their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Most students made expected progress from their low starting points. They had good reading levels, good pronunciation and intonation and most demonstrated good comprehension skills of the studied text. However, the majority of students had limited conversational skills outside the context of their book and could not analyse the text to a level of extracting the main idea and the supporting details of the text. Although most students across all the school had good handwriting, the majority lacked the skills for independent writing beyond the confines of the set texts.

Throughout the school, attainment and progress in English were good. By the end of Kindergarten most students were able to write neatly with appropriate formation of capital and lower-case letters. In the primary levels, almost all students were articulate and showed high levels of confidence in reading with expression and fluency. All students had a good knowledge of poetry and of different genres in writing. Most primary students could read simple poems based on Aesop's fables. Middle school students could read and discuss poetry and, by the end of Grade 8, the majority of students could summarise texts and could discuss

mood, theme and style of the poems. Almost all students were performing above international expectations and above ICSE standards.

The attainment and progress in mathematics in Kindergarten and primary were good. In school-based tests the majority of students attained levels that were above international benchmarks. Kindergarten children could identify the sequence of numbers. In Grade 1 the numerical value of numbers was understood by the students and they knew the difference between cardinal and ordinal numbers. They understood the differences between halves and wholes and made independent links with real life, identifying numbers for different times of the day. By Grades 4 and 5, the students had the conceptual understanding of fractions and their conversion to decimals. In Grade 8 most students could identify and draw corresponding angles in congruent triangles and solve problems.

Attainment and progress in science at all ages were good. Internal test results showed high attainment across the school. Kindergarten students were able to identify and name a few vegetables and could describe their shapes and colours confidently. Grade 1 students were able to differentiate between various types of plants. By Grade 5 they were able to understand the importance of a healthy diet and the harmful effects of bad eating habits. Grade 6 students were able to use scientific terminology and by Grade 8 they could understand the concept of the law of flotation and classify animals into vertebrates and non-vertebrates. Although Grades 6 to 8 had started to develop observation and enquiry, skills, in the laboratory their investigative skills remained underdeveloped.

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

The attitudes and behaviour of the students throughout the school were good. They had good relationships with staff and this supported learning in the classroom. They demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living by taking part in the planned activities for their fitness and health. Almost all students were punctual for the lessons. Attendance during the inspection was acceptable.

Almost all students enjoyed living in Dubai and could talk confidently about the culture, though their insights into the UAE traditions and heritage were less well developed. Almost all had knowledge of their local community and understood their role as good and active citizens. Some students took an active part in the school as members of the student council or as prefects. A few students lacked a deeper understanding of the impact of Islam in the contemporary society in Dubai and its relevance in the wider world. Most students had a good awareness of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and they knew that respect and tolerance was very important in UAE society.

Most of the older students understood some of the reasons for the changes that had taken place in Dubai over the last 30 years and could explain how they could contribute to its continued advancement. Most students had an understanding of the significance of environmental issues such as recycling and pollution. A majority of students knew how to

conserve water, but had limited knowledge about its availability and they lacked awareness of the desalination process in Dubai.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was good across the school. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge. In almost all classes learning objectives were clearly stated and shared with the students at the beginning of the lesson. ICT was used effectively. Hands-on experiential learning was seen in some of the lower grades. The good projection of bright, attractive images in Kindergarten classes engaged the learners. Examples of probing and open-ended questions promoted higher-order thinking among students. A minority of lessons were teacher-dominated, with little opportunity for interaction. There were missed opportunities for checking students' understanding, especially in the Arabic classes. In the more successful lessons students were given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. In the outstanding lessons students were effectively engaged in using the interactive whiteboard and teachers used a variety of activities to promote learning that included higher-order thinking skills.

The quality of students' learning was good throughout the school. Students were highly motivated and enjoyed learning. Students' high degree of application and dedication to their learning meant that, even in lessons where teaching was not well matched to their needs, they still made progress. They collaborated effectively with each other during the classroom activities. In science, for example, students worked together to produce displays to illustrate what they had learnt in a unit of work on food, health and disease. Students were able to make connections to real life in most subjects and in an English lesson they were able to use mind-maps to consolidate their learning. A few students in the higher grades effectively developed enquiry and research skills in science. They took responsibility for their own learning by asking their teacher searching questions, especially when preparing projects in science and mathematics.

The quality of assessment for students of all ages was good. The school had consistent and effective assessment practices for monitoring students' progress. Continuous assessment was used throughout the year for Grades 4 to 6, along with summative assessments. In Grades 6 to 8, on-line assessments were taken by students. These were discussed in class by the teacher and individual feedback given to the students. Teachers had a good knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses and had high expectations of them.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. The school followed the ICSE Indian curriculum. The curriculum had clear rationale and offered good breadth and balance including arts, ICT, music, drama and sports. Hindi, French and Arabic provided a good range of languages. The curriculum was well designed with a range and balance of educational experiences which promoted progression. Each key subject team effectively planned and established good, sound schemes of work. An attractive and celebratory learning environment was created through colourful displays of students' work and good quality learning resources. The curriculum was reviewed regularly, but insufficient time was given to Arabic, especially in Grades 1 and 2. Progression was planned but cross-curricular work, including links between mathematics and physics, was by chance rather than planned. There was insufficient flexibility in planning the curriculum to meet the needs of students who were struggling or to provide sufficient challenge to the more able. Opportunities for students to learn about the local and wider community were limited. The curriculum was enhanced by an extensive and diverse range of extra-curricular activities such as science projects, environmental education and Holy Qur'an competitions. After the regular timetabled day, the enrichment programme provided a period for individual study and preparation. This was followed by a wide range of sporting activities such as cricket, basketball, badminton, swimming and table tennis.

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

The school's arrangements for health and safety were good. School transportation was well organised and buses were well supervised and maintained. Members of the school council assisted in directing their fellow students to their classrooms after leaving the buses. The school had a good range of fire and safety equipment available throughout the building. Regular fire drills were carried out and records kept and students and teachers had good awareness of the procedures involved. The school promoted a healthy lifestyle through, for instance, assemblies incorporating yoga. Students were well supervised at all times and all teachers showed concern for their welfare. Child protection arrangements were clearly defined and understood by all students, staff and parents. Staff dealt sensitively and effectively with students' needs and concerns.

The quality of support was good throughout the school. Staff-student relationships were very positive and teachers rarely had to employ sanctions to manage poor behaviour. All members of the school staff were supportive and were aware of students' individual, social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Teachers monitored, recorded and tracked student's progress efficiently and regularly assessed their work and provided appropriate guidance on how to bring about improvement. Students who reported late had to get a note from their parent in the school diary the next day. Every child with special needs had an action plan to help ensure they made good progress. The counsellor conducted workshops for teachers and parents to

ensure their early identification. The counsellor also encouraged all students to achieve their career aspirations.

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

The quality of leadership in the school was good. The Principal provided a clear vision, direction and guidance. There were good, active teams working in a coordinated manner under the direction of the headmistress and principal. However, these groups of middle managers did not address teaching and learning issues frequently enough in formal meetings. The school was well led and managed during a period of rapid growth in student numbers. Leaders at all levels had demonstrated the capacity to plan for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. The school improvement plan identified priorities for improvement and a range of action to support challenge and impact. However, it was not clear how self-evaluation was able to feed into this process, as it was not detailed and lacked rigour in the judgments made. Good processes were in place to evaluate teaching and learning, although some middle leaders had a tendency to overestimate the quality of teaching. Good use had been made of peer observations to support staff in improving their teaching skills. Improvement planning did not always have success criteria that were expressed in terms that could be measured. It was not clear who would carry out monitoring and evaluation of these plans and there was a lack of intermediate milestone targets to help assess progress.

The partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Communications between school and home were enhanced by informal links such as SMS text messaging. Written termly reports assisted parents keep track of their child's progress, but they did not provide clear targets for the next steps in learning. Parents wanted more contact with other schools for competitive events and there were few links with the wider community.

Governance was acceptable. Although the governing body had only been formally in place for a few months, it had already met with parents to hear concerns. Two parents and two members of the local business community were represented on the governing body and there were plans to extend stakeholder representation further. At the time of the inspection the governing body had only met once and had yet to influence strategic planning.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Almost all staff were suitably qualified and experienced. There was a generous provision of ancillary staff such as Kindergarten assistants, librarian and ICT technicians and they were in the main deployed well, but there was no formal evaluation of their effectiveness in improving learning. The premises were of a high quality with access to all, including those with mobility difficulties. There was excellent provision for ICT and this was blended well with more traditional teaching methods. The library was adequately stocked but was making limited impact on encouraging research skills and independent learning.

## 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
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	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
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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