

Al Shorouq Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report published May 2010

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report	2
Basic information about the school.....	2
How well does the school perform overall?.....	3
Key features of the school	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?	4
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?	6
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	7
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	8
Summary of inspection judgements	10
Next Steps.....	14
How to contact us.....	14

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.

Al Shorouq Private School was inspected in February 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 Jumeirah, Al Shorouq Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1955 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Overall, parents were happy with almost all aspects of the school. They thought that teaching was good and said that their children liked school. Students were encouraged to work hard and do their best. Parents believed that students made good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science but were less confident about progress in English. A minority of parents felt that the school should offer a greater range of activities to stimulate students and enrich the curriculum. A few parents expressed their concern about students' behaviour. Parents felt comfortable about approaching the school with a question or complaint. They thought that the school enjoyed good links with parents but felt that communication could be better. A minority of parents reported that they were not sufficiently well informed about their children's progress or what they might do to help them with their school work.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Shorouq Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. The school had made considerable progress in addressing the recommendations raised in the last inspection report. Attainment and progress was at least acceptable across the key subjects and good in Islamic Education in Grades 1 to 9, in Arabic from Grades 1 to 5 and in English in the Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 5. Improvements in all subjects were the result of the school's greater focus on teaching and learning. Students' attitudes and behaviour in the school were good, except in Grades 6 to 9, where low level disruption inhibited learning. Students had a good awareness of their responsibilities as citizens and showed an understanding of and a respect for Islam. They had a good knowledge of the local traditions and customs and could talk confidently about the impact of living in a multi-cultural society but had less involvement with environmental issues.

The quality of teaching was acceptable throughout the school. Teachers knew their subjects well, how to teach their subjects and how students learn. Good lessons started promptly and continued at a brisk pace, which kept students focussed. However, in too many lessons teacher talk dominated and teaching did not always cater for the spread of ability in the class. The students had age-appropriate learning skills and were engaged in lessons and involved in their learning. Younger children worked effectively with objects, counters, and play materials in mathematics, science, and language lessons but lacked sufficient opportunities to do so. Students made limited connections to the real world in a majority of lessons. The quality of assessment was acceptable and improvements in the school's ability to analyse data were beginning to have a positive impact on learning. However, teachers did not sufficiently use such information on a day to day basis for lesson planning. Detailed records for all students were kept. The arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of children and students were unsatisfactory because of dangers present at the end of school day when students left the school. Hazardous practices on the school buses were remedied immediately by the school but overcrowded classrooms and unsuitable furniture were identified as still needing attention. However, arrangements were in place to provide suitable care and support with effective procedures to manage attendance. Parents received regular reports which identified students' academic and personal progress. The curriculum was acceptable but did not offer students sufficient breadth of study. All subject areas had developed curriculum outlines which ensured that teachers took students' prior learning into account. Students were given opportunities to participate in external competitions; extra-curricular activities made a strong contribution to students' personal and social development.

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. Distributive leadership was beginning to empower staff as evidenced in the significant progress made in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Self-evaluation was acceptable and the Principal and senior staff knew the strengths of the school well. Governance and the partnership with parents and the community were acceptable. All staff were suitably qualified and well deployed with clear job descriptions but there were insufficient support or specialist

staff to assist teachers and students. Most subjects were sparsely resourced which often limited teaching and learning.

Key features of the school

- Focused and distributed leadership which had successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection report;
- Evidence of improving attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science in Grades 1 to 5;
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour, harmonious relations and their respect and appreciation of Islam.

Recommendations

- Work with parents and the community to improve arrangements for students' safe exit at the end of the school day and address other health and safety issues identified in this report;
- Improve teaching and learning by identifying and sharing effective practice and providing on-going professional development;
- Extend the curriculum to provide for creative and expressive subjects, and better meet the needs and aspirations of all students in preparing for their future lives;
- Improve economic and environmental education for students in Grades 1 to 9 by creating opportunities for them to take initiatives in these areas.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good from Grades 1 to 9 and acceptable in Grades 10 to 12. Most students were able to memorise and recite chapters from The Holy Qur'an confidently but only a minority of students were able to apply the recitation rules correctly. Students in Grades 1 to 9 had good knowledge of Islamic principles and could apply those learnt to real life situations. For example, the students made good links between concepts learnt in science about the universe and what is mentioned in The Holy Qur'an. However, as students moved to Grades 10 to 12, they focused more on learning the content of the lesson and recalling the facts and knowledge for tests. Most students worked in line with expectations for their age.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic in Grades 1 to 5 were good. Students were confident readers and able to read both familiar and unfamiliar text with few mistakes. They had a good understanding of the text and were able to construct good questions around it. Most wrote short answers to text book questions independently with clear and legible writing. From Grades 6 to 12, students' attainment and progress were acceptable. Most students were able to write a short story or essay but the lack of a writing frame or writing standards meant that students had few opportunities to plan, draft and edit writing before finalising their work. Students across the school had a basic understanding of grammatical rules and could, in most cases, apply these rules to short familiar sentences.

Attainment and progress in English were good in the Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 5. Students listened well and answered questions in simple sentences. They were reading and writing at appropriate levels. Attainment and progress were acceptable in Grades 6 to 12 and most students demonstrated progress in listening and speaking. Students made acceptable progress in their reading and, by Grade 12, were able to obtain information from text books to prepare responses to questions. Most could write simple sentences accurately without errors in spelling. However, students' writing skills were underdeveloped with little extended writing or writing for different purposes.

Attainment in mathematics was acceptable and students' work confirmed acceptable progress. In the KG children could count objects in the classroom up to the number nine. They used vocabulary about size such as big and small, and a few other comparatives. In Grades 1 to 5 students responded well when asked to explain practical examples involving number bonds to twenty and the concept of time, including hours and minutes. In Grades 6 to 9 students showed confidence in the four rules and fractions and, in Grades 10 to 12, students could correctly solve simultaneous equations and indefinite integrals. Assessment data confirmed that progress was acceptable overall and boys' results showed a marked upward trend over time.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. In the KG and primary grades, students learned about plants and animals and investigated objects that sink and float. Students in Grades 6 to 9 precipitated salt by boiling a saline solution and learned that air has weight and volume. Students in Grades 10 to 12 made acceptable progress in developing knowledge and understanding of such topics as genetics, electron rings, photon emissions and the measurement of starlight. The quality of students' investigative skills was acceptable, although not as strong as their factual knowledge and understanding. Students' learning involved a balance of theoretical and practical work. Their examination scores indicated an acceptable level of attainment.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour in the school were good, except in Grades 6 to 9 where they were acceptable. Students were mostly well behaved, polite, helpful and courteous to each other and to their teachers. However, in Grades 6 to 9, low level disruption and poor behaviour during lessons meant that students were not able to focus on learning and were distracted by their peers. In a few lessons, poorly structured activities with little challenge meant that students were easily bored and restless. Almost all lessons started and ended on time. Attendance levels during the week of the inspection were acceptable though good in the term prior to the inspection.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and cultures were good. Most students took pride in their responsibilities and could talk about how they would contribute to the future of Dubai. They had a good understanding of the impact of Islam on their daily lives. For example, they could talk about the celebrations during Islamic festivals. They had a good knowledge of the local traditions and customs and could discuss the impact of living in a multi-cultural society.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in the KG and in Grades 10 to 12 but unsatisfactory in Grades 1 to 9. Students in Grades 1 to 9 had a limited knowledge of the features of Dubai and some of its main attractions and industries. Their environmental understanding was poor and their awareness of current environmental issues was limited. In Grades 10 to 12 students were more confident talking about the aspects of Dubai's progress and environmental campaigns but opportunities to engage further in environmental issues such as recycling were limited.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning were acceptable. Teachers knew their subjects well and demonstrated a secure understanding of how students learn. Lessons were well planned including lesson objectives, although these were typically statements of activities rather than planned learning outcomes. Lesson endings did not always include a discussion of the lesson to confirm what had been learned. The better lessons were imaginatively planned with provision for strong student engagement, active learning and collaboration between students. However, too many lessons were characterised by didactic teaching with teacher talk dominating the lesson and limiting opportunities for students to be more actively involved. Younger children worked effectively with objects, counters, and play materials in mathematics, science, and language lessons but lacked sufficient opportunities to do so. Classrooms throughout the school were typically bare of displays to support learning and celebrate students' achievements.

Teachers enjoyed good relationships with students, which motivated and engaged them to work hard and do well. Teachers were dedicated, enthusiastic and courteous. They gave their time freely outside lessons to help students. Work was adjusted to meet a range of needs but seldom was teaching adjusted during lessons to meet the needs of all students in the class, especially lower and higher attaining students. Students did not typically engage in extensive

enquiry activities requiring planning, researching, drafting, and editing of findings. Trips to local businesses and medical facilities enhanced student learning, especially when students engaged in follow-up activities, but students made few connections to the world outside school in a majority of their lessons.

Assessment was acceptable throughout the school and teachers had a good knowledge and understanding of their students. Recent improvements in assessment had positively impacted on learning but were not yet sufficiently used as a basis for lesson planning or to set targets. Detailed records for all students were kept and subject departments had begun to analyse test data although they were at different stages of analysing results. For example, the mathematics department had begun plotting results of individual test questions to identify areas for development. A majority of teachers had begun to give constructive oral and written feedback to their students.

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

Overall, the curriculum of the school was acceptable. The Ministry of Education framework provided balance and continuity. Opportunities for students to make use of information communication technology (ICT) in other subjects were seriously limited and students in Grades 10 to 12 were only offered a science-based curriculum. Most teachers provided their own resources to enhance subject areas. In the KG, teachers did not provide sufficient opportunities for children to choose from a range of activities. Procedures to review the curriculum annually had been established and this had led to improvements in provision. All subject areas had developed curriculum outlines which ensured that teachers took into account students' prior learning and ensured continuity from year to year. Students were given opportunities to participate in external competitions, which challenged them to learn and produce documents showing their learning at a high level of difficulty. A few higher attaining students had received more challenging work, especially in English, while students requiring remedial help were given additional support in lessons by their teacher as well as extra lessons before morning assemblies and on Saturdays. The doctor, nurse and social worker provided appropriate support for health education through subject workshops. The curriculum had been enriched to provide more active learning across all areas. Extra-curricular sports and other activities, such as visits to places of interest and local homes for elderly citizens made a strong contribution to students' personal and social development.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for the health and safety of the students was unsatisfactory as a result of the dangers presented to students of all ages as they left the school at the end of the day. Of particular concern was the unacceptable number of cars outside the school gates and the dangerous manner in which children wandered into the road to meet with parents or to avoid cars parked on the pavement. Teachers and other staff made a valiant attempt to instil some sense of order but, with cars reversing and departing at speed, their efforts had limited impact. Other concerns raised included hazardous practices on the school buses including students standing while the buses were travelling, but these matters were quickly addressed by the school during the week of the inspection. There were effective arrangements for medical care and the school's doctor and nurse maintained detailed records and had developed health programmes to support students and parents. The premises were clean, safe and well maintained with washrooms which were kept to a high standard of cleanliness. During the school day, students were well supervised as they moved around school. The social workers had systems in place to work with teachers and parents to support and encourage appropriate behaviour. Measures had been taken to reduce risks from fire and other hazards, but a few overcrowded classrooms and unsuitable furniture still raised safety issues. Science laboratories were too small for practical activities involving hazardous chemicals. Procedures for child protection were in place and written into the Teachers' Code of Conduct but there was no specific written child protection policy.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Teachers knew students well and arrangements for monitoring personal development were suitably considered. There were effective arrangements to manage attendance. Students received information on academic matters and progress was monitored, although this was not systematic. Parents received regular reports which indicated students' academic and personal progress as well as guidance from teachers and the social workers on how they might improve. The school provided few opportunities other than discussions in Grade 12 and visits from local universities and colleges for students to learn about careers.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable, overall. Senior staff and middle managers were competent and committed. Distributive leadership was beginning to empower staff especially those involved in middle management. Their clear sense of direction was evidenced in the improvements in attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science in Grades 1 to 5. However, inconsistencies existed and these had only just begun to be addressed. Leadership and management in the school were not complacent about the need for further improvement. All staff and school governors had job descriptions and clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal and senior staff knew the strengths of the school well and had identified the main areas of development for the school, particularly in recognising the need for an emphasis on developing staff and

improving teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom had contributed to improvements in many classrooms but the good practice which existed was not shared widely. The school had made considerable progress in improving the areas identified in the last inspection report and the school development plan provided a secure basis for further improvement.

The partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Most parents were strongly supportive of the school and spoke highly of the progress that the school had made over the last year. Parents received regular reports regarding their children's progress but they said that they would welcome better communication and more information on how to help with school work. Links with the community were developing and the parents' committee met regularly to discuss aspects of the school and suggest areas for improvement.

Governance was acceptable. The school had established a governing body whose members had offered advice and support on job descriptions, school policies and risk analysis which had helped to move the school forward. The governing body had met with the senior leaders on a number of occasions but their support for the school was at an early stage and did not include holding the school accountable for its performance and ensuring the school met its commitments to parents.

Overall, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. All staff were suitably qualified and well deployed with individual job descriptions. However, there was insufficient support or specialist staff to assist teachers and students. The premises included attractive learning environments in the KG and Grades 1 to 5. A large open area in KG for activities provided excellent space for assemblies, library, audio visual and play activities. There was an adequately equipped outside shaded area for physical education and specialist areas included a large hall, library, science laboratories and ICT suites. Buildings overall were spacious, but a number of Grade 6 to 12 classes were overcrowded. Most subjects were sparsely resourced which often limited teaching and 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:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	KG	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
Health and safety	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

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.

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