

The Kindergarten Starters 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.

The Kindergarten Starters was inspected in October 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim Students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Garhoud, The Kindergarten Starters is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary to primary, aged three to 11 years. The school follows the CBSE curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 4839 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most parents were highly supportive of the school and its leadership and were satisfied with the quality of education. The majority felt that children's progress in English and mathematics was good or better but that it was not as strong in science. The majority also expressed a view that teaching and opportunities for learning were good or better and that children enjoyed their lessons and showed an enthusiasm for learning. Around half of the parents who completed surveys felt that the school provided good support for children with special educational needs. Almost all parents agreed that the school kept their children safe. Parents reported high levels of satisfaction relating to the school's reporting system, the quality and amount of homework set, and the school's ability to respond appropriately to parental concerns. A minority of parents felt that they not were involved effectively enough in the work of the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Kindergarten Starters provided an acceptable quality of education with some good features. The school had responded well to the recommendations from the last inspection report. Good progress had been made in improving provision for children in Kindergarten, in the quality of teaching throughout the school including the tracking of students' progress. The school had a good capacity to improve.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good across all phases of the school. In Arabic, attainment and progress were both acceptable. Students' attainment and progress in English were good in all grades, but acceptable in mathematics. In science, attainment and progress were good in the Kindergarten but in the primary grades they were acceptable. The attitudes and behaviour of the students were outstanding. The school provided a good standard of care, ensuring that students were safe and supervised at all times. Students with special educational needs were supported well. Both the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum were good in Kindergarten and acceptable in primary phase. The quality of school leadership was good and the senior leadership's vision was understood by staff and students alike. The school had an accurate idea of its strengths and weaknesses and showed a clear agenda for future improvement.

Key features of the school

- Happy children who were polite and well behaved;
- A highly positive partnership with parents including good communication;
- Several improvements since the last inspection in particular the improvements within Kindergarten;
- The independence and self-direction of children in Kindergarten;
- Clear values that led to a caring school environment.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching in primary grades; specifically the match of work in lessons to the needs of students at different levels of ability;
- Improve the teaching of mathematics in Kindergarten classes;
- Create more opportunities to share the good practice that has developed since the last inspection.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education was good in the primary school. Students made good progress in their knowledge of prayers, the rules of etiquette and the values of Islam, and understanding of The Holy Qur'an. In Grade 1, most students showed a good understanding of The Pillars of Islam and the times of prayers and by Grade 2 most could read short Chapters from The Holy Qur'an. Students showed a secure understanding of the effects of pollution on the world and how Islam encourages the conservation of natural resources, such as water. Most students followed the rules of recitation especially Idgham and Idh'har during recitation. Students made good progress in developing knowledge and understanding about right and wrong. By Grade 4, almost all had developed secure Islamic knowledge about facts such as the practices of Friday, the parts of a mosque and the name of the three holy mosques.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable. In Grades 1 and 2, most students showed good progress in speaking and listening in relation to their starting point; they understood what the teacher said and could pronounce letters of the alphabet and words correctly. Almost all students in Grade 1 could repeat sentences and answer simple questions. Grade 3 students participated in dialogue using short sentences and by Grades 4 and 5, most students were able to speak using appropriate Arabic, however they would often resort to using English to complete sentences. Students made acceptable progress in reading. In Grades 1 and 2, most students could read and write letters, words and sentences with some support. In Grades 3 and 4, most students had progressed to reading more complex new words correctly and were also able to name pictures correctly. By Grade 5 students demonstrated skills in speaking and listening at the expected curriculum level although they found it difficult to distinguish between different pronouns. They could write words and simple sentences and use these purposefully; for example, a few had undertaken writing an invitation to a friend.

Attainment and progress in English was good in Kindergarten and throughout the primary school. Kindergarten students showed that they were developing listening and speaking skills and the progress they made from the time they entered school was considerable. In Kindergarten 1, for example, children could write in small letters, which by the time they reached Kindergarten 2 had progressed to capital letters, words and sentences. In the primary grades, the majority of students could listen, speak, read, write and use their skills purposefully in other subjects. They displayed a rich use of vocabulary, good comprehension and a flair for creative expression, both verbal and written. In school tests they attained at levels which were in line with international standards and demonstrated confidence and independence in their reading and writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics was acceptable across the school. The students made acceptable progress in acquiring basic mathematical skills such as measuring, recognising and manipulating number. At the early stages, they could distinguish between sizes and made connections with real life situations. They could write numbers one through four as numerals

and words. In the primary classes, most students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in line with expectations. In Grade 2 for example, most children could identify ordinals through ten by counting and sorting objects. They could identify faces, edges and corners of cubes, spheres and cylinders. In the upper grades most students could identify a line, segment and ray and they could also identify angles in the classroom where two sides met.

In science, attainment and progress were good in Kindergarten. Children made good progress in developing ideas about science and in observational and practical skills. They could perform simple experiments, demonstrating simple scientific facts such as floating and sinking. The majority of students attained age-appropriate levels. Attainment and progress in the primary grades were acceptable. Students had sufficient factual knowledge but for most, their progress in developing critical thinking and investigative skills was uneven owing to inconsistent teaching quality. Students in Grade 4 had an opportunity to develop their research skills by watering the soil they had collected in plastic pouches and sowing seeds. Variations in the amounts of soil, water and seeds set them thinking early on about the right factors needed for germination and the development of investigative and critical skills was an emerging feature of their work.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of the students were outstanding. Movement in corridors, open areas, at break and dispersal times was orderly and disciplined. Attitudes towards learning were positive and students enjoyed learning. They were punctual for lessons and activities. Peer group interactions were good and relationships with teachers were based on mutual trust and respect. Overall, attendance in the last term was acceptable but the attendance of children in Kindergarten was a little lower than that of primary students.

Students' civic understanding was good. There was a well-developed school council with responsibilities and organisational capabilities. Students showed a good understanding of the principles of Islam, respect and appreciation of the local culture and traditions. This was evident from the well-organised assemblies, the UAE 'Marhaba day' celebrations, displays and art projects. Students could sing the national anthem and greet others in Arabic. The older students could speak with appreciation about Islam, describe the basic principles, name the pillars of Islam and describe the enshrined values such as respect for elders. They also knew about prayer, the two feasts of Id-ul-Fitr and Adha, some of the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the holy cities of Mecca and Madina. They felt that the school gave them opportunities to learn more about Islam through assemblies and the interesting UAE social studies lessons.

Economic and environmental understanding was good. Students said that they loved living in Dubai and commented on the city's beauty and cleanliness. They were aware of the impact of tourism and architectural developments on the economy of Dubai. Students displayed deep commitment to environmental causes and their awareness of the environment and activities campaigns and projects to sustain the environment were good. The 'Green Brigade' for

example, worked hard to conserve water and electricity, recycle paper as well as to reduce wastage, keep the campus clean, dispose of garbage and improve the school surroundings.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for learning was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the primary grades. Throughout the school, almost all teachers knew their subjects well and lesson activities were mainly purposeful. In Kindergarten, teaching strategies were often varied and designed to meet the needs of all children. Lessons included a variety of innovative and imaginative resources which kept children actively engaged in their learning experience with enthusiasm. In the primary grades teaching showed improvement since the last inspection, and in a greater number of lessons, teachers were encouraging students to think more deeply, ask questions and develop skills of enquiry. There was less reliance on a question and answer type of assessment so that teachers were gaining a better understanding of what students had learned. Lessons were managed well to ensure that there was time for varied and relevant activities which met the needs of most students. However, there was overall, a lack of challenge for some of the more able children.

The quality of students' learning in Kindergarten was good and it was acceptable in the primary grades. Students in Kindergarten enjoyed lessons and took responsibility for their learning. They were able to relate what they were learning to the real world and to make connections between subjects. For example, children learned how to read and write lists through role play in the 'supermarket' play area. Kindergarten children were confident, enthusiastic learners, who were eager to talk about what they were doing. In the primary grades, students were enthusiastic about learning and could explain clearly what they were doing and how much they had learned. Occasionally, students posed relevant questions but teachers did not consistently develop the students' independent and critical thinking skills. Students were seated in pairs and groups, but lacked the skills needed to co-operate or work collaboratively. The quality of learning in English lessons was better than in other subjects because students were led to develop more independence, collaboration and confidence. In a Grade 5 lesson, for example, students made posters to encourage environmental awareness. They evaluated their work and that of others, telling each other what was good about their poster and what was missing. Students shared information, found the meanings of words and enjoyed practical activities.

Assessment in Kindergarten was good and was used to plan the next stages of learning. The Kindergarten teachers carefully tracked each aspect of children's development; this included reading, recitation, conversation and writing skills. In numeracy they tracked oral and written number work. Assessment in the primary grades was acceptable. Data about students' performance in internal examinations was analysed but it was not used well to informing teachers' lesson plans

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

The Kindergarten curriculum was good. It was planned well to meet the needs of young children and helped them to make meaningful links in different aspects of their learning. A theme on fruit, for example, made links between mathematics where children counted the number of fruits, while in English they extended their vocabulary by naming and describing the taste and appearance of different varieties of fruit. Curriculum plans were reviewed each month and any necessary amendments were made. The overall curriculum content was revised annually and included the teaching of Arabic from Kindergarten 2 onwards. There were an acceptable range of opportunities for children to learn from experiences within the local community and field trips into the local environment. The curriculum for primary grades was acceptable. There was an annual curriculum review but the curriculum had no planned links between subjects through which students' learning could be meaningfully connected within topics. In the primary grades a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and displays provided effective informal learning. There was an acceptable level of scope for students to learn from the local community; for example through environmental groups such as the 'go-green brigade' and other similar campaigns. In both Kindergarten and primary phases, although the curricular theme for each grade was the same for all, planning accommodated the needs of students at different levels of ability; worksheets at three levels were made for the same topic and the children with special educational needs were supported by a specialist teacher during some lesson periods such as library sessions.

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. The school had a good range of fire and safety equipment and there was sufficient fire and first aid equipment throughout the building. Regular fire drills were carried out and recorded. Students and teachers were well aware of the procedures involved. All instances where medicine was administered were clearly recorded. The school promoted a healthy lifestyle through their programme in physical education. Students were well supervised at all times, and all teachers showed concern for their welfare. The school's child protection policy was published on their website for parents, staff and students.

The quality of support was good throughout the school. Staff-student relationships were very positive. The teachers monitored, recorded and tracked student's progress efficiently. Work was regularly assessed and students were guided to bring about improvement in their performance. All members of the school staff were supportive and were aware of each child's individual, social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Children with special educational needs were admitted into school and provision for them was good. Each child had an action plan which was regularly reviewed to ensure they were making good progress. Staff with

responsibility for leading provision in special educational needs and the school counsellor had conducted workshops for teachers and parents to ensure early identification of children with learning difficulties. There were good arrangements for children to receive special support during examinations to motivate them to perform better.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The senior leadership had a clear vision of the kind of school they wanted and the experiences that children would have during their time at the school. All staff and children understood the vision. This ethos of caring was coupled with a concerted effort to improve both teaching and standards within the school. Middle managers across the school were given clear direction by the Headmistress and Principal. Since the last inspection they had been encouraged to monitor lessons as part of their job descriptions.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Performance management was undertaken regularly and staff had experienced several professional development opportunities. Following the last inspection, the school highlighted the recommendations as priorities. Positive improvement was noted in several aspects including the quality of teaching in Kindergarten classes and the tracking of students' progress.

Partnerships with parents were outstanding. Parents had a clear view of how their children were doing at school. Parental meetings took place every term. The school was proactive in contacting parents through a variety of approaches including e-mail, diaries and reports. There was a parents' engagement week, which focused on aspects such as how to help children with homework. There were links with other schools through competitions and the hosting of music celebrations. The school had addressed global concerns through activities such as 'Earth Day'. There were a wide range of visits by students to the local community including a local school where most students spoke Arabic as a first language, beach cleaning.

Governance in the school was acceptable. The board ensured there were clear lines of accountability through the Headmistress and Principal. They ensured the agreed key priorities of the school were met. Parental access to the owners was limited and there was no parental involvement in the governance of the school.

Staffing and resources were acceptable. The school had sufficient support and teaching staff to ensure the safe efficient running of the school. The facilities were very well maintained. There was a large fleet of buses and the extensive home school transport system was efficient. The central library was well stocked with books relevant to the age range. Classrooms and furniture were appropriate to the age of the children. Higher numbers in the older classes led to restrictions on movement or group work. There were three computer laboratories. One of the laboratories was large enough to ensure that each child had individual access to a computer.

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	Good
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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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