

INSPECTION REPORT

The Kindergarten Starters

Report published in February 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Kindergarten Starters

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemskgs.com
Telephone	04-2824090
Address	P.O.Box 4973, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Principal	Asha Alexander
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	5-11 / KG1-G5
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	5417
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	29th September to 3rd October

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The context of the school

The Kindergarten Starters School is situated in Al Garhoud, and caters for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) through to Grade 5. At the time of the inspection there were 5,417 students on roll, aged 3 to 11 years. There were 153 classes across the school and just under half of the students were in the Kindergarten age range. There were twelve nationalities represented, with 96 per cent being Indian. There were no Emiratis on roll.

The school followed the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. Students participated in International Benchmark Testing (IBT) and externally set assessments in English, mathematics and science. The staff included 217 full time teachers, the Principal and Headmistress, and a large administration and support team. Almost all teachers held a first degree, and most held a recognised teaching qualification. Forty two students, less than one per cent of the roll, had been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). These students were supported by a team of staff including the counsellor and special educators.

The Principal had been in post for eighteen months and around twelve per cent of the teachers were new. Less than half of the staff had completed more than 2 years' service in the school.

Student numbers in the kindergarten classes exceeded the advised limit and in Primary, they were above the recommended maximum figure. This added to the challenge facing staff as they delivered the curriculum.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and English remained good;
- Good personal development across the school was based upon strong relationships between students and staff;
- Students displayed strong community and environmental responsibility;
- Senior staff and middle managers demonstrated a clear vision and had highly focused plans for improving learning;
- Relationships between parents and the school were positive.

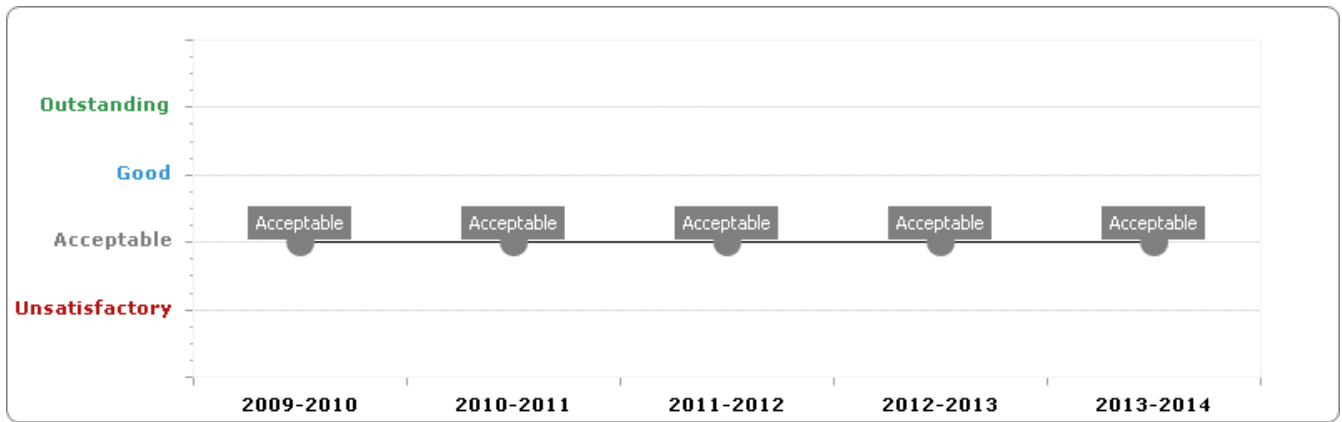
Recommendations

- Develop and implement plans to improve attainment and progress in mathematics, science and, in particular, Arabic;
- Improve the consistency of teachers' class management skills;
- Make more and better use of the extensive assessment information available, to provide appropriate levels of challenge in lessons to match students' abilities;
- Further improve the support in lessons for students with special educational needs.

Progress since the last inspection

- The curriculum had been developed to provide more varied and interesting learning;
- Major additional facilities had been added particularly for ICT, practical science, P.E, medical and the library;
- Self-evaluation and action planning had improved;
Assessments have included international benchmarking;

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

	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	Good
Science		
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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	KG	Primary
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable

[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	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

Attainment in Islamic Education was good. Students could explain the key elements of faith in detail and showed strong understanding of Islamic values. Students' recitation skills were better than their skills in other areas. They were less good at applying their developing understanding in real life situations. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable. Students could hold short conversations and pronounce simple words, but writing was weak. In English there was good attainment in both phases. Kindergarten children could converse and listen well and followed stories with interest. Primary students showed good skills in their speaking and reading comprehension. By Grade 5 they could identify poetic devices such as rhyme schemes and repetition. Mathematics attainment was acceptable with kindergarten children showing competent number skills, reinforced by using practical resources. In Primary, students demonstrated a wider understanding of the use of number in everyday situations and were beginning to show an improving grasp of problem solving. In science, attainment was acceptable throughout. Kindergarten children could make simple observations and relate cause to effect. For primary students, theoretical knowledge was stronger than understanding; the skills of reasoned prediction or designing fair tests were underdeveloped.

Progress in Kindergarten was acceptable in mathematics and science. Children steadily increased their awareness of the vocabulary of shape and their understanding of relative size and quantity. They successfully extended their knowledge of their environment. In Arabic, progress was acceptable, mainly seen in the areas of listening for understanding and acquisition of simple vocabulary. Reading development was slower. In Islamic Education and English, students showed good progress. They developed their insight into Islamic morals and values and were beginning to develop their understanding of the implications of these in everyday life. In English, progress was good as children improved their understanding of instructions and developed the capacity to speak in full sentences. Primary students' progress in mathematics was good but in science was acceptable. The development of knowledge and understanding was significantly better than their practical and investigative skills. By Grade 5, most students had progressed well to become fluent and confident speakers and readers in English. Writing skills, whilst adequate, were not as strong.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable in both Kindergarten and Primary. Most students showed a positive desire to learn and they worked hard when they were motivated by interesting tasks. They were encouraged to assess their own efforts in their lessons and were beginning to judge how other students in the class were learning. A minority of students could become distracted when lessons did not engage them or the teachers' behaviour management skills were insufficient. Most students were developing skills of collaboration and cooperation in their learning; they shared ideas and solved problems as a group. In the best lessons, students were encouraged to think for themselves and make links between what they were learning and the world beyond school. Students were beginning to use enquiry and research skills to find

out things for themselves but were sometimes restricted by limited access to technology resources in the classroom. These resources were part of a planned development programme and were improving.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Most primary students showed good behaviour. In Kindergarten, behaviour was outstanding, despite the large numbers of children in classes. Teachers and teaching assistants were well respected and treated the students in a caring manner, ensuring that they felt welcomed and supported. Students were aware of the healthy choices they needed to make in their diets and there was a good understanding of what is needed for a healthy lifestyle. Attendance and punctuality were good. In Kindergarten and primary, students' understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness was good. Students developed a thorough knowledge of global cultures through many shared activities with schools across ten countries. Students had a clear understanding of Islamic values and respected the heritage and culture of UAE and its spirit of internationalism, while having a good understanding of their own culture.

Community involvement, work ethic and environmental awareness, were good in Kindergarten and outstanding in Primary. Almost all students were proactive and responsible members of the school community. Kindergarten children demonstrated their knowledge about water and electricity conservation to others. Primary students from the Green Team had initiated impressive projects on environmental sustainability and supported charities. They contributed towards the preservation of the endangered hawk-billed turtle and were enthusiastic supporters of the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) conservation drive.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in Kindergarten and Primary. Teachers had a good understanding of their subjects and curriculum content, which they used to question students in class to promote lively discussions. There was an acceptably broad range of teaching activities and a variety of tasks to help involve students fully in their learning so that they could make better progress. Teaching was sometimes less effective in the lower primary phase because of ineffective class management and an inability to present work to students in interesting ways. Lesson planning was undertaken jointly by all teachers in each grade and was beginning to take account of the learning needs of students of different abilities in order to promote better progress for all students. In the best lessons there was good involvement of all students because teachers asked a range of searching questions that provided different challenges. There was consistent encouragement for students to be involved actively in their learning, work independently and cooperatively, and to work hard. Consequently students made good progress. When teaching was less successful, learning tasks did not engage students and they became distracted.

In mathematics, English and science, the school had adopted rigorous external testing which was used alongside internally set and moderated assessments. In Arabic and Islamic studies, assessment was not as rigorous or effective. Good self- and peer-assessments were seen in English but in other subjects their use was inconsistent. Students' work was tracked well and parents were informed of the assessment criteria and of their children's progress. However, the rich data on student achievement was not consistently understood by teachers or fully used to provide effective feedback to students on how to improve. Analysis of assessment data led to curriculum changes in key subjects and, at grade level, was used to support planning. This information was used well in only a few lessons to plan for the needs of individuals.

[View judgements](#)

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

The good quality curriculum emphasised the importance of practical activities and learning through first-hand experiences with opportunities for critical thinking and enquiry based learning. It had a clear rationale, supporting the school's vision to promote good learning values. The kindergarten curriculum focused on skill-based activities and the primary curriculum included peer and self-evaluations in its plans. The curriculum had good breadth and variety, achieving a balance between academic and social aspects and providing sufficient choice. The curriculum was reviewed regularly to ensure good coverage of knowledge and skills. Plans contained appropriate cross-curricular links which helped students to use their understanding in one subject to support learning in another. Parents and students had useful access to enrichment activities online. Learning was enriched by participation in useful and award winning community development and conservation programmes. Students' exposure to many e-learning materials enhanced their learning skills through ICT. The provision of Islamic Education and Arabic in primary did not meet the KHDA time requirements.

The school had made curriculum modifications for the relatively few students identified as having special educational needs. These were mostly in the area of language. Individual educational plans have been developed and implemented to meet the needs of these students. Some matching of tasks was in place to meet the needs and interests of all groups of students. However, too frequently, activities were offered at one level only and this reduced the appropriateness of the challenge for higher attainers in particular. There was choice and variety in the curriculum. More physical education had been introduced and students were offered a range of languages. The appointment of a new Head of Performing Arts and the 'zero' period at the end of each day signaled the school's commitment to offering students opportunities to fulfil their varied interests.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety was good. The focus on health and safety permeated the school's organisation and was supported by both the teaching and medical staff. There was a well-resourced system to ensure good student health. Healthy living and a healthy diet were systematically integrated into the curriculum and actively promoted. Records were kept of incidents and subsequent actions. The school premises were hygienic and in a good state of repair. Good management of the bus transport system helped ensure safe travel and appropriate checks on the background of new staff were undertaken. Staff were fully aware of the child protection policy. Fire evacuation procedures were well established and fire equipment was regularly checked and maintained. Detailed risk assessments for visits and other activities helped to ensure students' safety.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Good staff and student relationships were observed throughout the school. New students and children in Kindergarten were supported well in settling into school routines. Older students received helpful guidance which enabled them to make informed choices about the next stage of their education. Students were well supported by supervisors, teachers and counsellors who maintained positive links with parents to ensure continuity of care from home to school. Any behaviour concerns were quickly resolved with parents. Students' academic progress was recorded and results were reported to parents regularly. Students with special needs received some additional support although the systems to enable them to learn effectively at their own pace were at the early stages of implementation. Attendance and punctuality were good. Well organised systems were in place to monitor absences.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school remained acceptable, because the initiatives being driven forward by senior staff and middle managers had not yet had sufficient effect on raising standards. The Principal and senior staff had established a very clear vision for the development and improvement of learning and demonstrated determination to change practice. Responsibilities were devolved amongst a significant number of staff and focused upon the priorities of the improvement plan. This was clearly targeted at key areas such as raising the quality of teaching.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had implemented International Benchmarking to help it to analyse standards and progress in a wider context. The action plan was focused well on key areas for improvement and had achievable and measurable targets. Most staff with responsibilities undertook evaluation of standards and progress. There was an extensive programme for monitoring teachers' performance and mentoring for those who needed support. Professional development needs were also met by both in-house and external training and most teachers knew what they had to do to develop their practice, although not all improved at the same rate. The school had made progress in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection report.

The school had a good partnership with parents and the Parent Engagement Programme helped enhance students' learning. Home-school communication was widespread and frequent, and parents felt welcome and well informed about their children's progress. Most were confident in supporting their children's studies, but a few expressed concerns over the pace of change and the demands made on them.

Governance was good. The school had received significant additional resources and benefited from the wide range of support services organised through the Board representatives. There were systems in place for governors to acquaint themselves regularly with school outcomes and thus hold the school to account for its performance. The governors had not ensured compliance with regulations over class numbers and the school's oversubscribed roll was a limiting factor in its capacity to offer high quality education.

Management of staffing, facilities and resources was good and the school was efficiently organised. There were adequate numbers of qualified teachers and training was widely available. Buildings were dated but clean and well maintained. New resources to support ICT, practical science, art and library and medical provision were improving students' school experiences.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school welcomed students with diverse abilities, including students with special educational needs. The special needs policy was in place but more work was required to meet all of the objectives such as ensuring an accurate match of activities to the needs of students. The school had identified some students with special education needs although the full range of learning needs in the school had not been identified. Consequently, not all students' specific learning requirements were met. Resources to support students' effective learning were limited. The individual education plans (IEPs) were at the early stages of implementation. Consequently, monitoring of students' progress was inconsistent. During lessons, work was not always adapted to enable students to make the maximum possible progress. However, the majority of students made acceptable progress from their starting points. There were positive links with parents to exchange information on their children's progress.

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	1054	22%
	Last year	1116	28%
Teachers	22		10%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

Only a few parents and teachers responded to the surveys. Most parents who responded felt that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, and the majority felt the same in Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language. They considered that the school was led well and that it offered a wide range of subjects and activities to choose from. Although the majority felt that the school welcomed students with SEN, only half thought their progress was regularly monitored. Only a minority of parents were aware of the school's performance in international assessments but most knew the curriculum requirements. Around half felt that the school listened to their opinions. Homework was seen as appropriate and parents felt that reports and information meetings were regular and helpful. A majority considered that their children were well prepared for their next stage of education. Parents felt that their children were safe and well looked after and most said their children enjoyed life at school.

What happens next?

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

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

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

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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