

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The Sheffield Private School

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Sheffield Private School

|                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Location                              | Al Nahda                        |
| Type of school                        | Private                         |
| Website                               | www.sheffield-school.com        |
| Telephone                             | 04-2678444                      |
| Address                               | PO Box 92665, Al Nahda, Dubai   |
| Principal                             | Adrian May                      |
| Curriculum                            | UK                              |
| Gender of students                    | Boys and Girls                  |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups           | 3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13 |
| Attendance                            | Acceptable                      |
| Number of students on roll            | 1,505                           |
| Largest nationality group of Students | Pakistani                       |
| Number of Emirati students            | 48 (3%)                         |
| Date of the inspection                | 7th to 10th January 2013        |

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The context of the school.....   | 3  |
| Overall school performance 2012-2013 .....   | 4  |
| Key strengths .....  | 4  |
| Recommendations .....  | 4  |
| Progress since the last inspection .....   | 5  |
| Trend of overall performance.....  | 5  |
| How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....           | 6  |
| How good is the students' personal and social development? .....                   | 7  |
| How good are the teaching, learning and assessment? .....                          | 7  |
| How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students? .....         | 8  |
| How well does the school protect and support students?.....                        | 8  |
| How good are the leadership and management of the school? .....                    | 8  |
| How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....                        | 10 |
| How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?..... | 12 |
| What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....                         | 15 |
| What happens next?.....  | 16 |
| How to contact us .....  | 16 |

## The context of the school

The Sheffield Private School is located in Al Nahda and provides education for boys and girls aged three to 18 years, from Foundation Stage to post-16. The school had grown since its inception nine years ago and had an increase in roll by 369 students over the last three years. The students were from a very wide range of nationalities. About half of them were from Asian families and approximately a quarter were from Arab families. Just over half the students were in the primary phase and about a quarter in each of the Foundation and secondary phases. Only 29 students remained in the school after Year 11.

The school followed the English National Curriculum and offered IGCSE and Advanced level exams. Students had only sat for A2 Level exams for the past two years. The school followed the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic.

A new Principal had been appointed and had been in post for one term before the inspection. There were 84 teachers and 29 teaching assistants; the teacher-student ratio had improved. The majority of teachers were from the United Kingdom or Ireland and all were appropriately qualified. Just over a quarter of the staff were new to the school at the time of the inspection, including some of the subject leaders.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- Improved attainment in Arabic as an additional language in the secondary phase;
- Good attainment and progress in mathematics in primary and secondary phases;
- The good behaviour and attitudes of students in the Foundation Stage and primary phase;
- The good provision for the health and safety of all students.

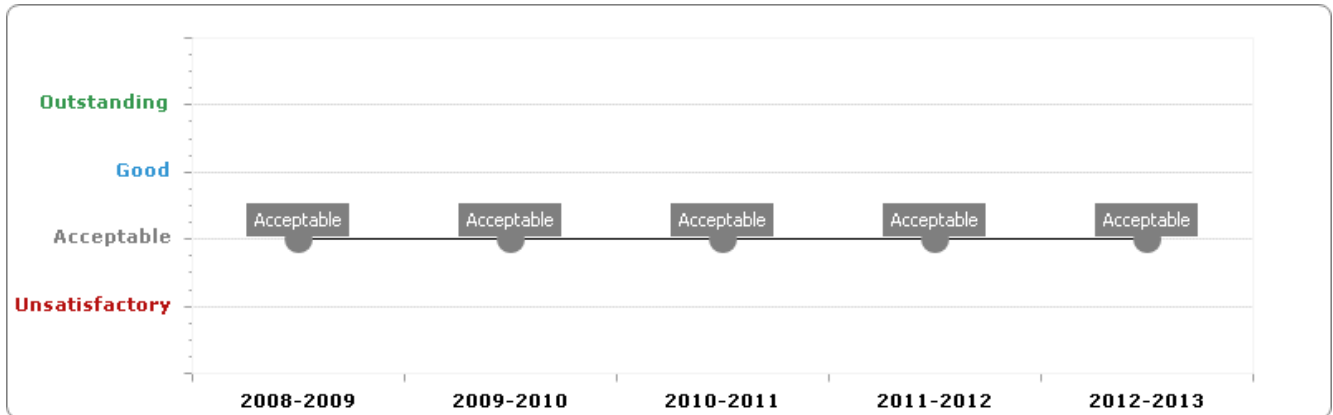
### Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that lessons include interactive learning and encouragement of critical and higher order thinking and that it is evaluated through the promotion of a more robust and accurate lesson observation scheme;
- Ensure that assessment in the Foundation Stage is accurate, shows the rate of progress and is used effectively in planning to meet the needs of all the children;
- Improve student attendance in Foundation Stage, upper secondary and post-16 phases and improve student punctuality particularly in secondary and post-16 phases;
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are given the time and support to carry out their delegated tasks and responsibilities and that regular leadership meetings are used to monitor student and teacher performance;
- Ensure that the school adopts a more realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses by adopting a more self-critical approach to school evaluation.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There was an improvement in the consistency and quality of teaching in the primary phase of the school which had led to better attainment and progress compared to other phases;
- More effective assessment systems were beginning to emerge in all phases apart from Foundation Stage where assessment was unsatisfactory;
- Insufficient progress had been made in making the curriculum more diverse, imaginative and skills-based and more engaging to students so that they could better relate their learning to real life;
- Leaders at all levels had the delegated independence to be fully involved in the school's development but still lacked the time to carry out their responsibilities;
- The school's owners had taken steps to:
  - constitute a governing body which involved a range of stakeholders in the school;
  - provide more training and support for staff. However, more training of classroom assistants was required regarding the teaching of reading and supporting students with special educational needs (SEN);
  - make the curriculum for Islamic Education fully compliant with statutory requirements.

## Trend of overall performance



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

|   | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16        |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| <b>Islamic Education</b>                |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable     |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as a first language</b>       |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable     |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Good       | Acceptable | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as an additional language</b> |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| <b>English</b>                          |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Unsatisfactory |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Unsatisfactory |
| <b>Mathematics</b>                      |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Good       | Good       | Unsatisfactory |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Acceptable       | Good       | Good       | Unsatisfactory |
| <b>Science</b>                          |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable     |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable     |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

|  | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16    |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour  | Good             | Good       | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness | Good             | Good       | Good       | Acceptable |
| Community and environmental responsibility                               | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

|                                 | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16    |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Acceptable       | Good       | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Quality of students' learning   | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Assessment                      | Unsatisfactory   | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)



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

|                    | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16    |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Curriculum quality | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

|                    | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16    |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Health and Safety  | Good             | Good       | Good       | Good       |
| Quality of Support | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in key subjects was mostly acceptable. The majority of students could explain Islamic rules at an age-appropriate level. Most students in Arabic, as a first and additional language, had strongest skills in listening. Students' attainment in Arabic as an additional language was within the expected level overall although those learning the language for more than four years had unsatisfactory attainment. In the Foundation Stage students were able to form letters correctly and in some cases were beginning to read simple text in English using picture clues. However, their use of language in a variety of situations was limited. Students at primary and secondary phases demonstrated effective speaking, listening and reading skills. Students in the post-16 phase had unsatisfactory attainment and relied too heavily on teacher support. Primary and secondary students had good attainment in mathematics. The majority of these students could relate some mathematical concepts to practical examples. In the Foundation Stage, children had acceptable attainment and were beginning to recognise number and could devise simple patterns. At the post-16 phase, students did not achieve in line with international expected standards for their age. Attainment in science was good in a few lessons when there was an emphasis on developing investigational and research skills which fostered enthusiasm and a desire to find out more. Children in the foundation stage learnt practically what plants needed to grow but their enquiry skills were poorly developed. Post-16 students' understanding of the relevance of science in their every-day lives was limited. The attainment of Emirati students across all phases in all subjects was in line with their peers.

Progress in almost all subjects was acceptable. Recitation skills had improved over time for most students in Islamic Education. Post-16 students made limited progress in relation to speaking in standard Arabic. Students of Arabic as an additional language had improved their handwriting skills. In English, students generally made acceptable progress in reading, listening and speaking. At post-16, students' progress was unsatisfactory because writing was characterised by limited vocabulary, grammatical error and weakness in presentation. In the Foundation Stage progress was slow in mathematics when there was an over reliance on worksheets. In primary and secondary phases progress was often good because of successful links being made to previous learning and other curricular areas. Progress in post-16 mathematic was unsatisfactory. In science lessons there was inconsistent challenge for the more able students. Children's progress in the Foundation Stage was restricted by insufficient opportunity to explore and investigate through their play. Students with special educational needs made at best acceptable progress in all subjects because not all students were given enough individual support.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress in key subjects was acceptable overall. Progress was stronger in the primary phase. Most students began school with low levels of English, but their ability in other subjects was similar to their peers. Their progress through the school was generally acceptable. It was stronger in mathematics and Islamic Education. Attendance was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary classes and was unsatisfactory in the secondary phase. Lateness at the start of the day was a notable weakness. Engagement in lessons and homework was acceptable in all phases. Reports to parents of lower phase students were informative and accurate but some parents needed more support in understanding National Curriculum levels. Increased numbers of Emirati parents were involved in their children's education in the Foundation Stage.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in Foundation Stage and primary phase and acceptable in secondary and post-16 phases. Behaviour was mostly good throughout the school. Relationships between teachers and students were positive especially in the primary phase. Student leaders played an active role in supporting everyday school life and some decision making. Most students were well aware of the importance of healthy eating and exercise; the majority played sport regularly. Attendance and punctuality were unsatisfactory in secondary and post-16 phases. This had an impact on their personal development in relation to cultural awareness, particularly post-16. Most students showed great respect for Islamic values and they could explain their impact on Dubai culture. Students could explain how Dubai has improved over time in education, health, tourism and economically. Students were able to compare different cultures in Dubai and describe the advantages of a multicultural society. Students produced a variety of displays relating to work ethic, enterprise and care for the environment but there was limited understanding of their impact on their lives and others. There was limited opportunity for students to take a leading and active role in supporting the school community. Students kept their classrooms clean but there was evidence of littering during break times.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in all phases apart from primary where it was good, because teaching approaches in primary allowed students to be more active partners in their learning. This was not yet consistently the case in other phases of the school. Teaching was inconsistent in the Foundation Stage and the activities planned did not always meet the needs of the children. Teachers in primary classes

regularly asked questions that made students think more deeply and answer more thoughtfully. Across the school, teachers had improved the way they planned lessons to help students of different abilities learn better but, too often, teaching did not focus sufficiently on developing students' critical and creative thinking skills. The quality of teaching in non- key subjects had proportionally more unsatisfactory lessons than elsewhere in the school. Better teaching was seen in information and communication technology, social studies and art lessons where students were active participants in their learning.

Learning was acceptable across all phases of the school. Students in the primary lessons enjoyed taking on the responsibility of learning together through collaboration in activities. When given the opportunity to do so, students in the secondary phase enjoyed learning independently. For example, they researched their own information, and used information and communication technology appropriately, to share their findings to other students. Overall students across all phases had too few opportunities to learn independently, and develop their thinking skills. They did not consistently make links between their learning and how it applied to real-life circumstances.

The school had good systems for recording information on students' attainment. However, teachers did not use this information effectively enough to plan learning that met the needs of all groups and individual students. This had an adverse effect on students' attainment, particularly in the Foundation Stage and post -16 phase. Assessment in the Foundation Stage was unsatisfactory because it was not sufficiently reliable and robust to allow for effective planning. As a result, there were missed opportunities to teach key skills with stimulating activities which would support both teacher-directed and independent learning. In the primary phase, most teachers gave helpful feedback to students in the course of lessons about what they had done well. In the best lessons this happened frequently during the learning and included all students. Students, particularly in the primary phase, increasingly evaluated their own and each others' learning by making constructive suggestions on how to do better. Overall, from primary phase upwards, the quality of written feedback in student workbooks did not consistently tell students what they had done successfully and needed to do better.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was generally broad and balanced with provision for a wide range of subjects. Curricular breadth was narrower at upper secondary and post-16. The school was compliant with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and its curriculum was used for this subject and Arabic as a first language. The previous report recommended that the school 'provide a more diverse, imaginative and skills-based curriculum in order to engage students fully in lessons and enable them to relate their

learning to real life'. While an action plan has been developed to address the scope of this recommendation, it had only been partially delivered and with limited impact. Links with the local community were underdeveloped. Some planned activities met the needs of the Foundation Stage children appropriately but independent activities were not suitably organised to enable children to be active learners. This limited their understanding and slowed their progress.

[View judgements](#)

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

The arrangements for the health and safety of the students were good. Comprehensive records were kept regarding the routine fire drills and the maintenance of equipment. The building was clean and the transport arrangements were effectively managed and supervised. The medical needs of the students were supported and good procedures in place for emergency situations. Staff were aware of child protection arrangements and children reported that they felt safe in school. They were confident to talk to staff about any issues of concern. Healthy living was promoted and the school and pupils were working together to further improve the quality of lunchtime provision. There was inconsistency in signing visitors in and out of the school and risk assessments for visits were not always checked by senior staff.

The quality of support was acceptable throughout the school. Staff-student rapport was strongest in the primary phase. Most teachers were good role-models, resulting in respectful and well-behaved students. Attendance and punctuality were not monitored rigorously enough resulting in unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality in secondary and post-16 phases. The school was inclusive and had worked hard to improve the identification of students with special educational needs. Almost all students with special needs had individual learning plans; these were more effectively used in Foundation Stage and lower primary classes. The student care desk provided an important listening point for students; a place where they could share any concerns with the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

Overall, support for students with special needs was acceptable in Foundation Stage and lower primary and less effective in other phases. The co-ordinator for special educational needs had focused on developing systems which allowed staff to identify and then refer students causing concern or who are finding learning difficult. Younger students received acceptable support from class teachers and teacher

assistants. Support for older primary students was variable with no teacher assistant support and support for students in secondary and post-16 phases was, at times, unsatisfactory.

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

Leadership was acceptable. The new Principal had improved staff morale by his inclusive style and the introduction of distributive leadership. Change had largely been limited to the introduction of heads of key stage posts of responsibility. Relationships between staff were good with the tone set by the Principal of calm reflection and careful consideration of issues of concern. Communications between staff by e-mail and meetings were good. There was a wide variation in the quality of leadership skills with young staff placed in positions of responsibility with insufficient time to carry out duties and without adequate support. As a result the capacity to improve was weak.

Self- evaluation was acceptable. A good consultative process was in place for self-evaluation which involved almost all staff. Unfortunately, most judgements were unrealistic, aspirational and frequently not based on convincing evidence or alignment with international standards. A good process for monitoring teaching and learning quality was in place but judgements were again too generous and school improvement planning was restricted to post-inspection actions. The school did not have its own agenda or plans for improvement. There had been acceptable progress in addressing some recommendations from the previous report.

Partnerships with parents and the community had been strengthened by the co-option of the chair of the parent-teacher association (PTA) on to the governing body and were acceptable. The Principal and chair of the PTA met regularly. Relationships between staff and parents were good. Some parents received communications late and the school website link was not always accessible. School reports gave details of attainment levels and next steps in learning but insufficient information was provided on progress.

A governing body had been put in place with representation from parents and the wider educational community in Dubai. Governors had visited the school and produced a very perceptive report. The governing body had only met on two occasions since its inception and had not yet held the school fully to account for standards and actions to improve. Hence, governance was acceptable.

The day-to-day management of the school was acceptable. Staff turnover had been reduced but there was a lack of qualified teachers for Islamic Education and there were no separate posts of responsibility for Arabic and Islamic Education. The school had been repainted, extra security measures installed and new

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي  
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

display boards were in place. Improved cleaning schedules had been introduced and the school was a pleasant learning environment. The school did not make efficient use of its information and communication resources.

[View judgements](#)

## What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

| Responses to the surveys |           |     |            |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|------------|
| Responses received       | Number    |     | Percentage |
| Parents                  | This year | 130 | 10%        |
|                          | Last year | 118 | 15%        |
| Teachers                 | 5         |     | 6%         |
| Students                 | 1         |     | 1%         |

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

A very low number of students and staff responded to the survey of their views about the school. The number of parental responses was also disappointing and the proportion involved fell compared to the previous year. Almost all parents who responded stated that their child enjoyed school, was respected and valued and was well looked after and safe at school. A similar proportion reported that the school treated their child fairly. One parent wrote that the teachers were friendly and approachable. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school and that it was well led. Just under a third of parents indicated that their child was not making good progress in Arabic as a first language. Over a quarter of parents reported that their child was not sufficiently involved in community projects in Dubai. Parents spoken to during the inspection had concerns about discipline but most parents who responded to the survey thought that the behaviour of most students in the school was good.



## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

## Copyright © 2013

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.  
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.