

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Shorouq Private School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Shorouq Private School

Location	Jumeirah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.al-shorouq.net
Telephone	04-344 0765, 04-344 2026
Address	PO Box 11656, Al Wasl Road, Dubai
Principal	Fadwa Amin Hattab
Curriculum	MOE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,168
Number of Emirati students	985 (45%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 29th January to Thursday 2nd February 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Jumeirah, Al Shouq Private School had been in operation since 1986. At the time of the inspection, 2,168 students were enrolled at the school, 45 per cent of whom were Emiratis while the rest were mainly comprised from the Arab expatriate community. The school did not have an established process through which students with special educational needs could be identified and adequately supported and consequently their number could not be securely established.

The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum for students aged three to 18 years, from the Kindergarten phase to Grade 12. Boys and girls were in mixed gender classes at the Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 4, after which students were segregated. Starting at Grade 5, students sit for external standardized tests conducted by the Dubai Zone of Education. Students of different grades had also recently sat for other external tests such as the TIMSS and PISA.

At the time of the inspection, there were 124 teachers of whom only 29 were new to the school. Most teachers had university degrees. Only a minority held certified qualifications in early years' education or teaching.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Al Shouq Private School provided an acceptable level of education for its students and generally adhered to the school's set of values. These values included a commitment to respect one another, appreciate the contributions of members of the school community, and an understanding of the importance of collaborative work. Students of all phases continued to show a good understanding of Islam and appreciation of local culture and pride in their traditions. Attendance remained good and almost all students were punctual in arriving to school on time. Teaching and learning were of a better quality in Cycle 3, where they were good; often because students themselves were enthusiastic and responsible learners.

The school had effectively improved its arrangements to maintain and safeguard students' health and safety during the school day and these were judged to be good. However, a few parents did not always adhere to rules and regulations set by the school regarding the proper procedures for the drop off and pick up of their children. A minority of parents at the Kindergarten did not always respect the end of day timings which affected their children's learning. The quality of teaching was variable across the school. It remained good in Cycle 3, was of acceptable quality in Cycles 1 and 2 and deteriorated to an unsatisfactory quality in the Kindergarten. At that stage too, the curriculum was unsatisfactory as it was not sufficiently adapted to meet the varying range of abilities and needs of children. Although there were very effective systems in place for the day to day management of the school, staffing and resources were found to be of an unsatisfactory quality. Many classes continued to be crowded beyond the limits set by statutory requirements and the absence of qualified teachers' assistants limited effective teaching and learning in the Kindergarten.

Key strengths

- Students' positive attitudes to learning in Cycle 3;
- Students' good understanding of Islam and their pride in the local heritage;
- The improved provisions for maintaining the safety of students;
- The efficient procedures to manage students' attendance and punctuality which resulted in good attendance.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress for all groups of students, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, by:
 - The effective use of assessment information,
 - Using a wider variety of interesting and challenging teaching strategies,
 - Providing opportunities for more relevant independent and practical learning experiences,
- Improve the quality of all children's experiences in Kindergarten by reviewing the curriculum and developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of how children learn;
- Ensure effective practices are established across the phases for the early identification and support of students with special educational needs as well as the more able;
- As a whole community, identify strengths and weaknesses of the school through applying a rigorous self-evaluation procedure; and implement a more sharply focused improvement plan to address key priorities;
- Reduce the number of students in classrooms in line with regulations, especially in Kindergarten.

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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Attainment in Islamic Education was good throughout the school and students' recitation skills were a strength. In Arabic, students' attainment was acceptable in all phases, except in Cycle 1 where it was good. Across the school, students' reading skills were above curriculum expectations but not their writing skills, which remained mainly limited to textbook tasks. Students' attainment in English was acceptable throughout the school. However, in Cycle 3, girls' language skills on the whole were above expectations and better than the boys'. In mathematics, attainment was good in Cycle 3 and acceptable in the Kindergarten and Cycles 1 and 2. In general, students' attainment was better in knowledge than in mathematical reasoning, yet Cycle 3 students, achieved well using logarithms and graphs of function. Attainment in science was acceptable across the phases although girls outperformed boys in Cycle 3. Overall, students' skills in applying scientific methodology were below international expectations.

In Islamic Education, students made good progress except in Kindergarten, where progress was acceptable. Children did not always make the expected progress in their understanding of concepts as well as they did in acquiring knowledge. In Arabic, students' progress was acceptable except in Cycle 1 where it was good. Students' writing skills were less well developed in comparison to other language skills. In English, progress was acceptable overall; yet in Cycle 3, girls made good better progress than boys. In both mathematics and science, progress was acceptable in Kindergarten, Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3. In the lower grades, students made better progress in acquiring knowledge than in applying practical skills and using scientific reasoning.

The attainment and progress of Emirati students matched that of their peers in all subjects and phases. Attainment in Islamic Education was good across the phases, while progress on the whole was good but only acceptable in Kindergarten. In Arabic, attainment and progress for Emirati students were acceptable in general, except in Cycle 1, where they were good. Attainment and progress in English were similar to those of other students, and Emirati boys in Cycle 3 did not achieve as well as Emirati girls in that cycle. In mathematics, attainment and progress were acceptable on the whole, except for the number of Emirati students in Cycle 3 who were achieving well and making good progress. This was also mirrored in science, where the attainment and progress of most Emirati students in Cycle 3 were good, but acceptable on the whole for the rest of students in this group.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Relationships throughout the school were warm, effective and respectful. Students demonstrated positive attitudes and appropriate self reliance and discipline, particularly in Cycle 3. In other cycles, a few cases of poor behavior were evident due mainly to learning activities that were not engaging or relevant to the learners. Most students had sufficient awareness of the importance of adopting a healthy life style; although only a minority of them actually applied this knowledge to their own choices in school. Across the school, students' attendance was good and students arrived to school and lessons on time. Students had a clear understanding of Islamic values and appreciated their impact on the local culture. They had a good understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai as well as the cultural heritage of the UAE. Student Council membership was mainly limited to Cycle 3 students with narrow roles and responsibilities in the school. Students had a good understanding of how Dubai had developed and succeeded economically. Despite their awareness of the importance of recycling, clean energy, sustainability and conservation in order to solve pollution issues, students had limited practical application in realistic contexts.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2, and good in Cycle 3. When teaching was good, teachers showed good subject knowledge, used questioning skilfully and structured the learning well. They put learning into context through good use of resources and links to real life. Often however, lesson objectives were not clear and lesson planning lacked detail. Teachers' expectations varied from good in Cycle 3 to unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten. Overall, teachers did not challenge students enough, especially the most able. They did not use assessment information sufficiently to ensure lessons met the needs of all groups of students. In the best lessons, teachers provided ample opportunities for students to learn in their own way. However, teachers frequently did too much for the students and did not promote independent learning, especially in the Kindergarten. Many teachers tended to spend too long consolidating existing learning; in the case of Kindergarten, this was evident through constant, choral repetition and uninspiring worksheets. In a few classes, progress was further limited by poor management of students' behaviour.

The quality of students' learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2, and good in Cycle 3. Most students enjoyed learning. They were happy to work and sustained concentration in lessons which were interesting, and were capable of working productively with others. They readily shared ideas in discussion and were respectful of other's views but did not have enough opportunities to take part in lessons and therefore, their learning was often passive. Older students, especially girls, had good self-discipline and a responsible attitude to learning; they were also good at working independently. Such attributes were less evident in younger students and with children in the Kindergarten because teachers tended to dominate the learning process. Students could readily relate their learning to real life but were not given enough scope to do so. They had limited opportunities to find things out for themselves and solve problems; this limited children's progress especially in the Kindergarten.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. The school had developed suitable systems to record students' progress through regular standardised tests. Routine analyses of this assessment information helped the school to identify students who were underachieving, and provide additional support outside lessons. The analyses did not, however, flag up the progress of all groups of students or identify specific areas of weakness in subjects so that appropriate actions could be taken to remedy them. Teachers made little use of assessment data to plan their lessons to ensure that all the work was at the right level for all students. Teachers were encouraging and supportive in lessons but did not consistently give specific guidance to students, verbally or through marking, to help students understand how they could improve.

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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other stages. The school followed the Ministry of Education curriculum which was regularly reviewed for enrichment and to incorporate the views of students and parents. However, this revision did not result in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students in lessons, especially the more able and those in need of support. The emphasis on direct teacher delivery of the curriculum in the Kindergarten was not balanced by opportunities for children to apply independently their new learning inside and out of the classroom. Additional time was allocated to Islamic Education and this was reflected in students' good recitation skills. Grades 11 and 12 students did not have the opportunity to pursue their studies in a literary stream but had to follow a science stream. Students' personal development was well promoted through the morning education period where classes discussed varied topics of interest. Cross-curricular links and opportunities for the development of students' independent learning and critical thinking skills were not systematically integrated in the curriculum, particularly in the lower cycles. The school offered some enrichment activities including educational trips, visiting speakers and activity periods offered on a weekly basis, but there were no extra-curricular activities outside of the school day.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of health and safety arrangements was good at all phases. All key aspects to maintaining a safe school environment were monitored regularly and appropriate action was taken where necessary to address problems. Supervision at breaks had improved, and transport procedures remained rigorous. The school had worked on improving arrangements for the drop off and pick up of students by parents, however, not all parents were committed to following regulations. Students received helpful advice about health and safety in a range of effective ways. Food sold at the shop was now appropriately healthy. First aid arrangements had been further improved, and medical matters were effectively overseen by the nurse and doctor. All staff were well supported and able to ensure that students were well cared for and protected within the school environment.

The quality of support was acceptable in all phases. In general, staff-student relationships were acceptable, but in some classes, relationships were too formal or rigid, which impeded students' participation. Teachers knew the academic needs of their students. There were effective procedures for dealing with behavioural issues, which were implemented well by teachers and supervisors. In Cycles 2 and 3, there were good arrangements for giving general and individual careers advice. Support for students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory, as the school did not have procedures for identifying these students and therefore, was not able to offer targeted support. Systems for dealing with student absence and lateness, as well as the overall management of attendance and punctuality, were highly effective.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school's senior leaders, through the Vice-Principal, provided a direction for the school community with a mission of driving improvements. Leadership roles had been extended by assigning key responsibilities to members of the staff. Middle managers were chosen from identified, capable staff and this had resulted in a growing commitment to the school. Although professional relationships prevailed throughout, communication between all levels of leadership was not systematically developed to ensure a vertical alignment of improvement objectives and strategies. Although the school's success in raising standards, notably in the Kindergarten, had been limited collectively, senior and middle managers demonstrated sufficient capacity to bring about further improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was unsatisfactory. The school had set up the process of self evaluation by analyzing the previous inspection report in detail. The action plan put forward to address weaknesses and recommendations did not include focused and measurable objectives, but rather included many of the expectations in the DSIB handbook. Thus, progress in addressing the recommendations from the last report was limited. Self-evaluation, as an internal and ongoing process, was not yet established uniformly across the school and did not emanate from students' results and needs. Moreover, performance management procedures in place were not uniform and robust or comprehensive.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents in general were very positive about the school and its leadership. They were always made to feel welcome and appreciated the prompt attempts made by the school to communicate with them as necessary. Progress reports were regular yet these usually included grades or comments about behaviour and attitudes. However, they seldom pointed out achievements against curriculum expectations, nor did they highlight aspects requiring improvement and next steps in learning. The school had established some productive links with the local community through frequent field trips and excursions. Guest speakers and lecturers enhanced the overall school

experience for students who, in Cycle 3, were also exchanging visits with students from other nationalities enrolled in other curriculum schools.

Governance was acceptable. The school had an established governing body whose members represented a good range of stakeholders, especially now that a few selected parents had joined the board this year. Members met regularly with students and parents and were well informed about the improvement plans in the school. Governors were aware of the duties and responsibilities entrusted to them and had set in motion the mechanism to hold the school accountable for its performance. However, these arrangements had had a limited impact on improving overall standards as well as the statutory requirements regarding the number of students in classes.

Management, staffing and resources were unsatisfactory overall, although the management of most aspects of the school's procedures and routines were effective and efficient. Staff numbers were sufficient to ensure adequate delivery of the curriculum. However, not all teaching staff were suitably experienced to meet the needs of all groups of students, especially the young children. Absence of trained teaching assistants in Kindergarten limited the effectiveness of lessons. The premises were adequate but somewhat restricted for the proper accommodation of over 2000 students. Moreover, a number of classrooms were cramped where the number of students exceeded statutory limits.

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	88	6%
	Last year	326	24%
Teachers	53		38%
Students	213		61%

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey, a significantly lower proportion than last year. However, a number of parents reported problems in accessing the KHDA website, and thus were unable to participate. Most of the parents who responded were very positive about their child's experience in the school on the whole. However, a few parents expressed concern about the progress their child was making in English, especially in Cycle 3. The majority of students in Cycle 3 participated in the survey. Most students thought they were making good progress in their subjects and were positive about the quality of teaching and learning. A minority of students did not agree that school leaders listened to their opinions or that they had good opportunities to be involved in the wider community. Out of all teaching staff, a minority responded to the questionnaire. Most strongly agreed that students were looked after and safe in the school and that they had someone in school they could trust. Furthermore, most teachers thought school inspections had helped improve their practice.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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