

Al Khaleej National School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report published May 2010

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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.

Al Khaleej National School was inspected in October 2009 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, Al Khaleej National School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12, three to 18 years. The school follows an American curriculum. The school has a high proportion of UAE national students as well as those from other countries. The majority are Muslim and most have English as an additional language. The turnover of staff was high. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,375 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most parents reported that their children liked school and felt that they were getting a good Islamic Education. A minority felt that their child's progress in Arabic was not as good as it could be but a majority agreed that progress in English was good and reported this to be the most successful subject area of the school. They mostly thought that behaviour was good and that their children did their best and became independent, responsible people. A majority of parents thought that the teaching was good in the school and that their children were treated fairly. A few parents did not feel that the school gave them enough information regarding the progress of their children and wished to be consulted more on school decisions and wanted greater support with educating their children. Most parents felt that the school was well led and that there were good links with parents.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Khaleej National School provided an acceptable education for its students. The school equipped students with the ability to use English language skills well throughout the curriculum, supporting good attainment and progress. Attainment and progress of students was not consistent, especially in the KG. Islam underpinned all the work of the school and was evident in the outstanding behaviour of the students. Students demonstrated a responsible approach to their roles within the community of the school. Students had high aspirations relating to their future place in the development of Dubai.

Teaching and learning were acceptable and progress for the development of higher quality provision was evident in the good to outstanding lessons. Monitoring of lessons to promote good teaching in the school was in place but was not rigorous enough to have an impact on learning. Acceptable progress had been made in measuring the attainment of students; however, it was not sufficiently focused on effecting future learning. The curriculum provided an acceptable basis for learning. It was broad and balanced for all age groups and was enriched by choices in the high school and by activity based programmes in the middle school. The school protected and supported its students to an acceptable level. School staff responded well to the needs of students. Health and safety arrangements were all in place providing a secure environment.

The quality of leadership was good and the focus on sustainable improvement was appropriate for long term success. Partnerships and communication with parents were good. There were plans in place to include representation of the parents and members of the school's local community in the process of governance to provide greater formal accountability.

Key features of the school

- Good Islamic ethos underpinning all the work of the school.
- Capacity of leadership for sustainable school improvement.
- Students' attainment and progress in English.
- The outstanding behaviour of students from elementary onwards.

Recommendations

- Ensure that teaching approaches across all stages and particularly in KG, include a sufficiently wide range of strategies to meet students' learning needs;
- Improve the arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and ensure that students' progress is more consistent throughout the school;
- Create more formal links with parents and the local community to enhance the effectiveness of the school's strategic direction and ensure that the school is fully accountable to all stakeholders.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable overall. Most students recited The Holy Qur'an correctly and had sound general knowledge about Islam. Grade 12 students discussed and explained the qualities of a successful marriage and related the topic to their lives. Most students could relate Islam to their lives and their personal experiences. In Grade 5 students discussed the difference between mandatory and optional duties in Islam. Grade 8 students understood conditions of fasting in Islam. Grade 9 students explained the different types of Sunnah and how the actions, teachings and the life of the Prophet affected our lives. Children in the KG could understand Islam eating customs.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable across the school. Children in the KG could understand basic sounds and symbols. Grade 1 students identified alphabetical letters joined in different positions; they read single simple sentences correctly. Grade 3 students had acceptable reading skills; most students read aloud from age-appropriate texts and answered related questions correctly. Most students had acceptable knowledge about grammar and most applied grammatical rules to single words or sentences. Grade 12 students accurately identified elements of a short story. Students' progress in speaking and listening were good. Grade 3 students had acceptable reading skills; most students were able to read aloud an age-appropriate text and answer related questions correctly.

Attainment and progress in English were good, as seen in the results of standard US tests. For most students, throughout the school, it was an additional language, but they could all access most of the curriculum through English. In the KG, children could listen and respond to teacher's instructions and, from Grades 1 to 12, they could read and write in English, in line with expectations. Students could speak fluently, coherently, and express their thoughts without prompting. Whilst the handwriting and presentation in student workbooks was good, students' skills in original writing were less well developed in elementary and middle school. Students in Grades 6 to 12 conducted literary analysis effectively and a good standard of writing was evident in Grades 10 to 12.

Overall, attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable. Results were broadly in line when compared with standard US tests. Students were able to operate number and carry out calculations that were in line with their age expectations. In Grade 1, students could solve mathematical problems involving number patterns and could link this to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) software. Grade 4 students were able to talk about their experiences of using addition and apply this. Grade 11 students could use graphed functions and could share techniques for problem solving with their peers.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. In the KG, children understood the concept of animal movements and started to classify certain species. In Grade 1 the students could identify parts of a plant and, by Grade 3, they could describe the difference between animals and plants. Students in Grade 5 had a good understanding of cell parts and their functions as well as the differences between animal and plant cells. In Grade 7 students could tell the difference between physical and chemical change. Most Grade 10 students could safely use scientific apparatus to separate constituents of mixtures and by Grade 12, they could categorise and discuss the five types of human social behaviour.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of the students were outstanding. Students especially from the elementary section demonstrated excellent self-discipline. Older students were exceptionally mature and able to assert their perceptive views on the quality of teaching. They were extremely respectful to teachers even when lessons did not fully engage them. Relationships between students were very good. Attendance overall was outstanding throughout the last academic year and school systems to control lateness were effective in ensuring students arrived at school on time.

Students demonstrated a responsible approach to their roles within the community of the school. Both boys and girls had high aspirations relating to their future place in the development of Dubai. Students took on roles within the school which reflected the contribution they could make to society. Many could relate this to their potential future career. The students throughout the school appreciated the rich uniqueness of Dubai's diverse multi-cultural society, were highly protective of their own Islamic identity and were firmly resolved to preserve it.

Students had an acceptable understanding of Dubai's economic and social development. They were able to give examples of factors characterising the success of Dubai in relation to other Emirates. However, there were some inconsistencies in the students' knowledge about their responsibility regarding the ecological aspects of their developing society.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching throughout the school was acceptable but unsatisfactory in KG. Teachers generally knew their subjects well and taught with enthusiasm, which stimulated the students' interest and attention. In the best lessons they were using a range of teaching and learning strategies that included group work, problem-solving strategies and work in pairs and these matched the needs of most students. In the KG children were given insufficient opportunities to learn through discovery or play and the covered outdoor play area was not used. In the older classes, a few teachers were making effective use of questioning techniques to challenge the students' learning but too frequently students were given little time to think and reflect before answering. Lessons in lower grades had too much emphasis on revision work from the

previous lessons. Expectations regarding new learning was often not made clear in lesson planning or teaching in the classroom.

Students' learning was acceptable. The students were often too dependent upon the teacher to order their work. Students in elementary and middle school were not consistently encouraged to think critically, undertake original writing, and develop the life-long learning skills. Although there had been good progress in the development of various teaching strategies throughout the school, not all teachers gave students sufficient opportunities to work collaboratively or to discuss their work with one another. Students were not exposed to different forms of learning and challenge in order to foster active involvement in the learning process and provide opportunities for higher level thinking. In KG staff did not provide sufficient activity based learning that was appropriate to the needs of younger students.

Assessment of students' attainment and progress was acceptable, mainly carried out through external and internal tests and examinations. A system was in place to monitor results but the information gathered did not have an impact on teachers' planning for the next stage of learning. Students' books were marked regularly but teacher did not provide clear guidance as to how their work should improve. Students were infrequently involved in assessing their own and other's work.

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

The curriculum provided an acceptable basis for learning. It was broad and balanced for all age groups. It was enriched by electives in high school and by activity based programmes in the middle school. A review of parts of the curriculum had taken place and impacted positively on attainment. However, this was not part of a rigorous whole school strategic view and had not identified the need to have in place an overview of the curriculum that showed progressive development of students' knowledge, skills and understanding. There were no planned links between subjects and there were few opportunities to learn in the locality, although older students were encouraged to take part in enterprise schemes outside the school community. The curriculum had been enhanced by changes in curriculum time allocations to enable more study time for geography, history and social studies in Grade 9. Grades 1 to 5 had a year round dedicated timetable for music and art which was an improvement on an earlier time share arrangement between the subjects. Extra-curricular provision was a strength of the school and was appreciated by the students. However, older girls felt disadvantaged by the lack of physical education opportunities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of the school's arrangements for health and safety was good. The school environment was generally safe and clean. Fire procedures were good. Chemicals were stored safely in the science laboratories. Supervision was adequate in most situations. The school nurses monitored the students' health and kept updated records. However, the school canteen did not provide many healthy options to the students.

The quality of support provided by the school was acceptable overall. Strong positive relationships were evident between teachers and the students across the school based on strong school ethos of Islam and local culture. The school counsellor worked closely with the students to provide social and career support. Early identification of students' behavioural needs and positive strategies ensured that students' emotional health was supported. Teachers managed students' behaviour effectively; however a few teachers resorted to shouting to discipline the students. The school had extensive data regarding the students' academic progress. However, there was insufficient use of this information to monitor and improve academic progress. Although the school arranged regular meetings with parents to inform them about their children's progress, written reports to parents were not sufficiently informative. The quality of support offered to children in the KG was not based on a sufficiently broad assessment of their educational development.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Quality of leadership was good overall in the school. There was a clear sense of direction from senior leaders who were focused on school improvement. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined through a focused staffing structure. Staff professional development was a recent and appropriate priority. Leaders in the KG did not promote consistent activity-based learning across for the youngest children.

Self- evaluation was acceptable. The impact of school improvement was noted in the most effective lessons. Staff appraisal was in place, although not consistently, and did not ensure accountability across the whole school. School leaders considered the views of parents and students when implementing change. Improvement plans had been developed from the results of the last inspection and contained success criteria, however, these were not specific and rigorous enough and did not have clear goals against which they could be measured.

Partnership with parents was good. There were good systems of communication and a conscious drive to ensure that parents were informed of changes. The school was clear in its expectation that they would be partners in the learning development of students, for example, through a dual language presentation about developing early reading skills.

Governance in the school was acceptable. The governing body mainly consisted of representatives from Global Education Management (GEMS), the owners of the school, who provided a great deal of support for the school leadership. Since the last inspection they had organised and provided leadership training, which many staff members had attended. The governing body reviewed the performance of the school through regular meetings with the Principal and through this dialogue gave challenge and support to ensure continuous improvement. Governance of the school, however, did not have sufficient or regular representation from either the parent body or the community. The school was considering the development of a more formal parent council but were not yet sure as to what form it might take.

The school's facilities and resources were good. Teaching staff were sufficiently qualified and class sizes were appropriate for the needs of learners. Teacher mobility challenged school development despite good staff induction. In the KG each class was supported with a teaching assistant, however, these colleagues were mainly assigned for domestic care rather than to support the learning. The school had libraries and resource areas including ICT suites and a well maintained swimming pool. Older girls did not have sufficient facilities for sport. The KG had a range of apparatus and equipment but it was not effectively used to support their learning.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good is the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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