

Greenfield Community School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 9

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.

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

Basic information about the school

Located near to the Springs Community on the Dubai Investment Park, Greenfield Community School is a private school currently providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 9, aged three to 13 years. It is an establishment undergoing rapid growth, and there are plans for it to develop into a school running from KG through to Grade 12. The school follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum and it currently offers a KG and the Primary and Middle Years Programmes (PYP, MYP) from the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). At the time of the inspection, there were 525 students on roll. This was an increase of 45 per cent from the time of the previous inspection in 2009. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to an on-line questionnaire completed by parents. Overwhelmingly, the parents who responded to the questionnaire were enthusiastic, positive and supportive of the school. Almost all agreed that their children liked school and that the progress in the key subjects, except for Arabic, was good. They reported that their children were expected to work hard and do their best and were growing up in the school to become independent and responsible people. Parents agreed that the teaching was good, that their children were treated fairly and that there was a good range of enjoyable and stimulating activities. A few parents believed that the school was not good at consulting them on matters affecting their children; they disagreed that the information about their children's progress was adequate and did not feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or a complaint. Almost all agreed, though, that staff showed concern for the welfare of their children and that the school helped to keep their children safe and healthy. A few parents reported that they were unsure about how to help their children with their homework.

A majority of parents agreed that the school was well led and that there were good links with parents. Almost half, though, were unsure about the quality of the links with the local community and they did not know how well the school had responded to the recommendations in the previous inspection report.

How well does the school perform overall?

Greenfield Community School provided a good quality of education for students. Children in KG and students in the primary years achieved well in the key subjects and at secondary level attainment and progress were generally at least acceptable. In Islamic Education both attainment and progress were good at primary and acceptable at the secondary phase. In Arabic lessons the great majority of students were learning Arabic as a second language and in the primary years attainment and progress were good. This level of achievement was not maintained in the secondary phase and many of the older students struggled even to give basic greetings. In English, progress was good throughout the school since many of the students, for whom English was not their first language, mastered the language quickly. Oral skills were consistently good, and most students were able to converse extensively and freely using a wide vocabulary. In mathematics, progress was good in KG and primary and acceptable in secondary; attainment was good in KG and acceptable in primary and secondary. Students could use mathematics to solve problems and skilfully manipulate numbers. In science, children's knowledge and understanding of the world was established well in KG and their attainment and progress at primary and secondary were acceptable. Students' capacity to understand science in the context of everyday life was a major strength throughout the school, but their basic scientific knowledge at the secondary phase was a weakness. The attitudes and behaviour of students at all levels were good. They were courteous and polite towards each other and to guests. Relationships were outstanding and they were marked by students' calmness and maturity. Students' awareness of their civic responsibilities and their understanding of the significance of Islam in Dubai were acceptable and their economic and environmental understanding was rather general and lacked detail.

The quality of teaching was good at KG and primary phases, but only acceptable at the secondary phase. Over half the lessons seen throughout the school were good or outstanding and a high proportion of these were seen in the KG and primary classes. Almost all teachers were expert practitioners in respect of the learner-centred and inquiry-based methodology of the IB but, at the secondary phase, it was teachers' lack of deeper and more extensive subject knowledge which was the major limitation. The curriculum throughout the school had a clear and ambitious rationale, based on the IB learner profile that defined a well-rounded and educated global citizen. The only limitation on the curriculum was the relatively weak subject knowledge at the secondary phase, which did not provide a sufficiently strong base upon which to build the school's ambitions to offer the IB at the Diploma level. The arrangements to ensure the students' health, safety and welfare were exemplary throughout the school. The school provided a safe and well-maintained learning environment where all risks were well managed. Support and guidance arrangements were good, but there was a lack of specialist counselling for secondary-aged students.

Leadership and management were outstanding. Distributed leadership responsibilities resulted in a school which was highly self-evaluative and responsive to the needs of the learners. There had been an excellent response to the recommendations contained in the previous report. The recently established Friends of Greenfield School provided an excellent focus for developing the good parental links with the school. Arrangements for governance were good with appropriate representation and accountability. The excellent facilities and resources were a complement to the skilled teaching workforce, whose only shortcoming was a lack of detailed subject expertise for secondary school aged students.

Key features of the school

- The strong, effective and collaborative leadership with a clear commitment to high standards and equality of opportunity;
- The high quality and the maturity of relationships between and amongst staff and students;
- The high levels of engagement in learning, especially in the Kindergarten;
- The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) for learning and teaching;
- The limitations in teachers' subject knowledge and expertise which limited learning for the secondary students in mathematics, science and Arabic as an additional language.

Recommendations:

- Raise the levels of attainment and progress in the MYP and improve the quality of teaching there by:
 - providing a high quality professional development programme to reinforce the IB method and subject expertise at the secondary level;
 - enhancing the staffing expertise by adding specialists with suitable degree-level qualifications in the subjects taught;
- Improve arrangements for social guidance and careers counselling in the secondary phase;
- Raise students' awareness and appreciation of local cultures and traditions.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in primary and acceptable in secondary. Most students in lower primary grades could recite short chapters from The Holy Qur'an with few errors. Students had good knowledge of the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and they had a good understanding of the importance of Hadeeth in Islam. By Grade 5 students understood how to link Islamic values learnt to their daily lives and could give relevant examples of application. Students in the secondary phase developed their understandings of the behaviour expected of a good Muslim and their duties toward other people.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were good in primary and unsatisfactory in secondary. In the lower primary grades students learning Arabic as an additional language could correctly identify, write and pronounce some letters of the alphabet. Whereas students learning Arabic as a first language could read familiar text confidently and could correctly apply grammatical rules learnt to their writing. In the secondary phase, the progress of students learning Arabic as an additional language in all key skills was limited. However, they made better progress in listening and speaking than they did in reading and writing. Students could copy words from the board, but few could independently and correctly construct and write simple sentences. The overall attainment and progress of the few students learning Arabic as a first language were acceptable.

Attainment in English was good in the KG and in the primary phase and acceptable for secondary age students. Writing was of good quality. Almost all students by the end of KG were able to form letters correctly, most could write their name, and a few could write full sentences. Almost all students could read basic words, and most could articulate full sentences. Reading was also good, a strong feature of both the KG and primary phases. Despite wide differences of ability between new arrivals, native and non-native English speakers, students with special needs and the very talented, all were able to read, and almost all had acquired a love of reading, so that individual reading lessons were highly popular, and the library was well used. Writing in the primary phase was strong. By the end of this phase most students were producing extensive written pieces on their own. Writing was acceptable at the secondary phase, where creative writing and writing for different purposes was evident. Progress was good in all three phases. New students were assimilated easily into the school's English-speaking environment and most students were able to express themselves orally with confidence.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in the KG. In the primary grades attainment was acceptable and progress was good, whilst in secondary attainment and progress were acceptable. Students in KG developed a secure knowledge of number and by KG2 students could do simple addition and subtraction problems using manipulative objects, match numerals to corresponding objects and match like objects on the computer. Almost all primary students could articulate mathematical ideas clearly, solve problems and they met

appropriate benchmarks for mathematical development. By Grade 5 students could multiply decimals accurately. Secondary students displayed a wide range of attainment. A few students' understandings of significant concepts were insecure, but several could work independently on challenging investigations. By Grade 9 a majority of students could solve simultaneous equations by substitution or using addition and subtraction.

In science, attainment and progress in KG were good. Students successfully applied scientific procedures while conducting simple experiments and they developed good questioning skills to try and understand natural phenomena. Attainment and progress in primary were acceptable. Primary students demonstrated strong scientific procedural skills and were able to produce good scientific reports and diagrams. However, their scientific knowledge of key understandings, concepts and basic science information required improvement. At the secondary phase students' attainment and progress were good in respect of investigative skills and their ability to place science in a social context. However, many of them lacked the knowledge and understanding of basic science and scientific systems to be able to substantiate the elaborate project work in which they were frequently involved as part of the IB units of inquiry. Taken as a whole, therefore, their attainment in the secondary phase was only acceptable and their progress was wide-ranging, but only acceptable overall.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and observed behaviour amongst the students were good at all phases. Almost all students arrived to lessons on time, and there was a positive atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation between students, as well as between staff and students. The most significant feature of the relationships throughout the school was their maturity and concord; minor conflicts were resolved calmly and reasonably. The students were treated as responsible young citizens and, for the most part, behaved accordingly.

The Islamic and civic understanding amongst the students was acceptable across the three phases of the school. During conversations with students, however, significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding were evident. For example, students were able to say why they enjoyed living in Dubai, but were unsure about their role in making a positive contribution to the community. Although they showed respect for Islam, their knowledge was limited. The lack of adequate reading material in Arabic in the library, and the absence of Arabic signs and notices around the school meant the students had little encouragement to read and develop a degree of fluency in the language and a better understanding of the culture. There was a student council that allowed students to take on responsibility, and some members fulfilled their position on the council with a strong personal commitment to serve the school community.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable across the school. Students had a basic knowledge of Dubai's economic development in recent years, but were unable to give reasons for the current world economic difficulties. They were able to talk about their contribution to the life of the school, but not to the future development of Dubai. They understood the need for a clean, safe, healthy environment around the school, and some

contributed to an environmental club at school, but their knowledge of factors influencing Dubai's environment, including air pollution and the importance of water, was insecure.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good at the KG and primary phases, but weaker at the secondary phase. Although all teachers had a good understanding of the ideals of the IB systems and were good at planning project work, at the secondary phase the lack of subject expertise was a limiting factor. Most teachers planned their lessons well and used time effectively. A major strength was the continuity of learning over several lessons and across subject disciplines. Rather than relying on single texts to plan and deliver lessons, teachers used a wide range of resources and required a great deal of independent research work from the students to uncover new knowledge. Most teachers were expert practitioners in the use of ICT for both learning and teaching. The skilful use of interactive electronic whiteboards was a regular feature of most lessons. A significant number of the students who had recently joined the school had attainment profiles which were significantly below average; there were also a small number of very able and gifted students at all phases. Teachers, therefore, had to cater for a wide range of learning needs in many of their classes. For the most part teachers had a good knowledge of the learning needs of individual students and catered for these appropriately through the use of different resources and tasks. A few students were well-supported in class by dedicated teaching assistants, and both students and the assistants were well integrated into the regular lessons.

The quality of learning was, in the main, good throughout the school. Many of the students had been steeped, for most of their school years, in the learner-centred enquiry based approach to learning. This approach was implicit in IB programmes, and the students, as a consequence, were confident and self-motivated enquirers after knowledge. A minority of students were less able to learn in this inquiry-based way, and, at the secondary phase, it was the weak grasp of basic factual information which was the most significant impediment to an excellent and well-founded learning journey. This resulted in insufficiently substantiated project work in the secondary grades. For example, some students were considering high-level ethical issues such as stem-cell research without a grasp of the basic elements of cell differentiation in humans.

Arrangements for assessment were good in the KG and primary phases and acceptable at the secondary phase. A wide range of evidence was considered as part of assessment strategy and this provided the basis for the maintenance of an informative learner profile for all students. Additionally, standardised testing was employed to indicate students' skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to international norms in English, mathematics and in non-verbal reasoning. The analysis of this information helped in the planning of the curriculum for students with different learning needs. The assessment of learning at the secondary phase used an array of evidence, but there was not sufficient objective evaluation of students' knowledge and understanding, as opposed to their skills at research and processing and the presentation of information.

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

The curriculum was good for the KG and primary phases and acceptable at the secondary phase. The curriculum throughout the school had a clear and ambitious rationale, based on the IB learner profile that defined a well-rounded and educated global citizen. This provided a holistic model with good breadth and balance, including a strong emphasis on personal development, higher-order thinking and creativity. In higher grades weaknesses in subject specialist teaching led to a lack of balance within some subjects, with significant attention paid to process skills, but insufficient attention to subject content. Processes of review and development were well-established in KG and primary phases, with end-of-unit and annual curricular reviews. The secondary curriculum was less well-established and the review process was hindered by a lack of subject expertise. Continuity and progression were good through KG and primary stages. There was clear progression of process skills at secondary level, and clear content progression in a majority of subjects. An integrated approach to learning provided extensive cross-curricular links throughout the school, particularly early years and primary stages. A particular strength was the integration of ICT as a learning resource. There was an extensive extra-curricular activities programme, with a broad range of sports, arts, and activities, which also provided support for several mother tongue languages. The school used the local community for regular field trips, and visitors such as the Dubai Drummers broadened the learning experience. These provided students with rich learning experiences, but there was an overall lack of attention to reflecting local and Arabic culture throughout the school. Good links with Dubai Investment Park supported initiatives such as 'plant a tree day'.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and students were outstanding. The maintenance of the facilities was excellent. The buildings and classrooms were modern, clean and the equipment and resources were very well suited to the needs of the students. Students were supervised by caring and supportive staff. Students reported that they felt safe at school. The school had a well-equipped clinic staffed by a nurse and a visiting medical doctor. Medical records were continuously updated. All new students and students in Grades 1, 4 and 9 received physical check-ups. The nurse promoted nutritious eating habits through lunch box checks and classroom instruction. The canteen offered nutritious snacks and lunches. Inspection of the buses and interviews with students showed that transportation arrangements were safe and secure and students wore their seat belts. The school had policies and procedures in place for emergencies, monthly fire drills and child protection. Staff understood and correctly implemented these policies.

Support for students was good. Teachers and staff knew their students and were aware of their individual needs. Teachers and students had positive, caring relationships. Although there were a few problems, staff addressed behavioural infractions with consistency. Provision for special education needs and gifted students was available. A new tracking system had recently

been implemented, although fine analysis and use of the test data was at an early stage of development. Test results served as a basis for referral to special programmes. Some class teachers modified student assignments based on this information. Three parent-teacher conferences were held yearly and teachers met with all parents during the first month of school. Attendance was monitored well and there were appropriate measures for intervention. Key staff members were available to provide advice and guidance for students. However, there was a lack of suitable staff to support secondary students' needs in the areas of personal counselling and career guidance.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management of the school were outstanding. The Principal had successfully established distributed leadership and collegial working at all levels. This had resulted in a shared commitment to the school's core values of promoting high standards with equality of opportunity. Senior leaders met regularly to ensure the smooth running of the school and teachers were empowered to take responsibility for the quality of their work and the progress of the students. Accountability was maintained through a well-developed middle management structure.

Excellent self-evaluation systems were in place to ensure that all members of the school community were reflective practitioners and continually sought to improve their work. Teaching and learning were monitored effectively and development planning was undertaken on the basis of identified successes and shortcomings. The school's response to the recommendations contained in the previous inspection report had been swift and comprehensive. The use of ICT was extensive and efficient; data gathering and analysis were better informing the curriculum planning; transport, health and safety arrangements were exemplary; outcomes were good in English, mathematics and science, although there was a recognition that the standards in the secondary phase were not yet high enough.

Partnerships with parents were good; the school worked hard to involve parents in the life of the school and as partners in their children's education. However, beyond a strong core of loyal and dedicated parents, many remained on the periphery. The recently formed parents' group called "Friends of Greenfield School", provided an excellent focus for improved parental engagement and had achieved some success improving the schools' partnerships.

Arrangements for governance were good; there was representation from relevant stakeholders at the board level and the governors were responsive to the needs of the school.

The facilities and resources were excellent. The school provided a well-resourced learning environment in spacious modern buildings with large classrooms and extensive circulation space. Computers were well distributed throughout the school, both in classrooms and in a dedicated suite adjacent to the library in order to facilitate information-seeking. Whilst plans were in place for seven specialist teachers to be appointed for the next academic year, there were certain shortcomings in teachers' subject expertise at the secondary level which were impeding students' progress.

Summary of inspection judgements

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

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable

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

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

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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

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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