

# German International School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 10

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.

The German International School was inspected in February 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, German, English, mathematics and science.

## Basic information about the school

Located in Al Quoz, the German International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 10, aged two to 16 years. The school follows a German overseas curriculum. It moved into its current premises in September 2009, at very short notice, and was admitting secondary students for the first time. At the time of the inspection, there were 289 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most respondents were positive about the work of the school. A minority of parents expressed concern regarding the limited range of extra-curricular activities. A few felt that the school facilities required improvement.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The German International School provided an acceptable quality of education overall. The students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. They were able to recite a large number of prayers, together with verses from The Holy Qur'an and understand their meaning. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable throughout the school; progress was acceptable in primary phases, but unsatisfactory in secondary. Excellent listening skills were evident in all sections of the school, whilst the levels of speaking and reading were acceptable. Students with Arabic as a first language participated well in debates. Progress in English was good throughout the school. Students' attainment was acceptable in KG but good in primary

and secondary. The students spoke and wrote accurately. Their listening and reading skills were good, but they found writing more challenging. Attainment in German was acceptable across the school; progress was good in KG and primary and acceptable amongst secondary students. All students communicated with fluency, and literary analysis was a strength in the senior section of the school. In mathematics, students' attainment and progress were acceptable. The students could confidently use the four mathematical skills by the end of the primary phase, and the oldest students, those in Grade 10, were able to show and explain their mathematical reasoning and demonstrated good understanding of key concepts. Attainment in science was acceptable in all phases; progress was good in KG, but acceptable in primary and secondary. The key scientific concepts and theories were understood and students in the secondary phase could carry out investigations into, for example, the principles of electrical forces. The behaviour and attitudes of the students were good in KG and secondary and outstanding in the primary sector. Relationships were good and the students were responsible, self-disciplined and punctual to lessons. The spiritual and civic understanding of the students was good in all phases. Students' understanding and respect for Islamic culture were noteworthy, and they considered it a privilege to be living in Dubai. Almost all students were aware of environmental issues, and they recognised the role everyone can play in finding solutions to problems of an environmental nature.

Teaching was acceptable at all stages. The teachers were well trained in the German curriculum and their lessons were generally well planned, but the use of resources was restricted and the computer room was under-utilised. There was a strong relationship between teachers and students, so that the students' needs were clearly understood by all. The quality of student learning was good in KG, acceptable in primary and secondary. The students showed great independence and were capable of being challenged further. Assessment was good throughout the school, and results were communicated well to parents and students. The curriculum was acceptable throughout. Though provision for Arabic did not comply with the Ministry of Education requirements in Grades 9 and 10, there was otherwise a wide range of subjects with a suitable balance. The school recognised the need for further curriculum development and for an annual review. Cross-curricular work enhanced the KG and primary children's learning. There was limited participation of students in the extra-curricular activities. The arrangements for ensuring the students' health and safety were good. The well-ordered canteen was clean and offered a selection of healthy food. Students received lessons on living healthy lives. The transport system was punctual and efficient. The students were well supported, and there was a guidance counsellor at the school. The less able students received some support, but there were no classroom assistants beyond KG classes.

The school's leadership and management were good. The staff had a clear focus, effective teams were in place and appropriate performance management arrangements had been established. Improvement planning was also good. All of the previous year's recommendations stated in the report had been addressed, and there was evidence of improvement targets being met. The school's links with the parents and the German community were good. Parents gave their support to the school's management, and the German business community and Consulate had given the school their tangible support. Governance was outstanding. The

governing body, which included representatives of all the stake-holders, gave outstanding support to the leadership team and met regularly with the Principal to evaluate all progress achieved. Facilities and resources in the new premises were barely adequate and improvements were necessary to the library and the facilities for sports, information and communication technology (ICT) and music.

## Key features of the school

- Good levels of oral communication in Arabic, German and English;
- The challenges presented by the governors' decision in mid-August '09 to occupy the present site in September;
- Strong staff-student relationships;
- High priority given to the care and protection of students together with very good levels of security;
- Students' good behaviour and high level of self-confidence.

## Recommendations

- Achieve full compliance with regard to Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Raise standards in German, mathematics and science throughout the secondary phase;
- Implement a system in electronic form to provide easy access of information about students' attainment and progress.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the primary and secondary phases of the school. Most students could accurately recite verses from The Holy Qur'an and understand their meaning, and all were able to build upon their previous knowledge. They could identify what was good and what sins were, and spoke about Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as the prophet of mercy. They made acceptable progress with learning about the forms of worship in Islam and a few students were able to recite a large number of prayers. All students were able to talk about the importance of the family unit and the necessity for obedience to parents.

In primary classes, progress and attainment in Arabic were acceptable. In the secondary phase, attainment was acceptable but progress was unsatisfactory. Children in KG showed they had made a promising start to their Arabic; they traced and recognised letters, and were able to give one-word answers to questions. At the later stages, the majority of non-Arab students knew the basic rules of grammar and also gave appropriate responses to teacher's direct questions. The majority could read words and short sentences and pronounced them correctly.

Senior students with Arabic as their first language debated fluently in Arabic, and responded carefully and accurately to their teachers' questions.

The attainment of children in KG in English was acceptable; in primary and secondary classes it was good. Progress was good in all phases. Children in KG were assimilating vocabulary from what they heard around them. In primary classes, the students were eager to learn this foreign language; they spoke and wrote accurately, and most children understood almost all they heard. In Grade 3 students knew the names of parts of the body, and sang in English without errors. They could tell the time accurately. In Grade 6, students understood the present perfect tense and could relate incidents that had just occurred. In the older classes, oral and comprehension skills were well mastered, though writing was not as well developed.

In German, attainment was acceptable throughout the school. Progress was good in KG and primary and acceptable in secondary. Students communicated confidently and fluently. Knowledge and skills in literacy, including both functional and creative writing, were in line with age-related expectations. In Grade 1 students of German as a foreign language were already able to formulate complete sentences and, by Grade 2, the students' writing skills were well advanced. Grade 8 students displayed discernment in their use of tenses to express different ideas and were able to analyse emotions with great clarity. The oldest students could discuss a novel and poetry with lucidity and could understand the literary representation of regional dialect.

Progress and attainment in mathematics were acceptable across all phases of the school. Students' skills in mental calculation required improvement in Grade 2 but, in the later primary classes, students became more confident with all four mathematical skills. In Grade 6, the students were able to compare and rank using decimal places and, in Grade 8, all students had a clear understanding of similar triangles. The students in Grade 10 attempted a mathematics examination paper on functions, and some were able to attempt it with confidence. They were able to demonstrate their answers on the board and explain their reasoning to the other members of the class.

Attainment in science was acceptable across all levels. Progress in KG was good, while progress in primary and secondary was acceptable. Most students had an understanding of key concepts and theories in science and had an acceptable knowledge of facts and vocabulary related to science topics. The children in KG were able to demonstrate the use of different muscle-groups when doing warm-up exercises and, in Grade 1, the students could label the different parts of birds and recognise the different species. By Grade 5, the students could make predictions about forthcoming lessons by looking at pictures of fish laying eggs. They were able to describe the phases and chronology of animal reproduction. Secondary students understood the concept of density in gases and could conduct investigations into the principles of electrical forces.

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

Students' behaviour and attitudes were good in KG and secondary and outstanding in the primary phase. This was the case in classrooms and around the school. Almost all students arrived in time for school, and all sang the two national anthems most respectfully. They displayed good relationships with each other and with the staff, and they were self-disciplined, responsible and punctual. Attendance and punctuality were good.

The students' Islamic and civic understanding was good throughout the school. They were proud of their contribution to the community as class representatives. Students and staff worked together in an environment of mutual respect. The students' understanding of Islamic and local culture was well developed and age-appropriate. They recognised the importance of tolerance when living in Dubai's multi-cultural society, which they considered to be a privilege. Whilst appreciating the magnificent architecture of the city, students regretted the density of the traffic. They felt a lack of independence, as they always required adults to escort them to their destinations.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Students were well aware of environmental issues in Dubai and almost all cared about protecting their local environment. They described their contribution to supporting the environment by not using too much water or by riding a bike instead of using a car. Students had collected empty bottles and were in the process of making an armchair out of them. Students showed concern about finding litter in the desert when they were expecting to appreciate the beauty of nature. Their awareness of economic issues was not apparent, and their comparison of standards of living in Germany and Dubai remained superficial.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was at an acceptable level across all grades. Teachers were knowledgeable in their subject areas and well trained in the German curriculum. Their lessons were, for the most part, well planned and interesting, although often lacking in creativity. The use of resources was often limited to the textbook, workbook and activity sheets, except in the KG, where many other resources for teaching were used. The use of ICT was very limited and the lack of equipment was a limiting factor. Most teachers used a similar methodology, with major emphasis on individual, self-directed work and group activities after a brief explanation. There was evidence of collaboration between teachers and a desire to share ideas and techniques to improve student performance. Many teachers modified written materials to meet the different needs of students and used peer teaching and group work to enable both weak and strong students to learn from each other. The strong relationship between students and teachers assisted teachers in understanding the needs of their students and providing for them to the best of their ability.

The quality of the students' learning was good in the KG and acceptable in primary and secondary classes. Students enjoyed being at school and understood what they were being taught; they did well on both written and oral assessments. They were engaged in the process of learning and showed great independence and self-direction in the classroom. They functioned very well working in groups and in pairs. Most students were able to transfer their learning to real contexts and many were capable of learning more than they were asked.

Assessment was good in all sectors of the school. Students were assessed regularly using a variety of tests, quizzes, oral questions and answers, dictation, activity sheets, projects, round table discussions and peer- and self-evaluation. Assessment data were plentiful but rather limited use was made of them for curriculum planning and diagnostic purposes. Results were well communicated to parents and students and, at the end of the first term, students in Grade 1 were sent a personal letter from their teacher discussing their strengths and areas for improvement. Younger students were also encouraged to complete an evaluation form on different aspects of their work and performance in class. Teachers marked students' work inconsistently and with few notes for students about how to improve. There were no international tests used in the school and no measurements in place to compare students with those of the same age in different countries.

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

The curriculum was judged to be acceptable at all levels. The school followed the German overseas curriculum, which facilitated transfer back to Germany if parents wished. Although Islamic Education and Arabic in Grades 9 and 10 were given less time than Ministry of Education requirements, there was a broad range of subjects, with a suitable balance of time allocation and range of learning in most areas. The transition arrangements from KG through pre-school to primary were acceptable. Music, sport and art were provided but the limited facilities restricted their effectiveness. Similarly, restricted provision of ICT resources limited the range of teaching strategies used in teaching mathematics and science, for example. In line with the established practice in German schools, the curriculum was reviewed annually, and curriculum development was undertaken within the range permitted by the relevant German authorities. The school was successfully nearing its aim of teaching towards the German overseas school-leaving examinations. There was some support for students with learning difficulties, but few examples were observed of the more able students being challenged in their learning. Cross-curricular themes were observed in the KG and primary stages, and there was an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. However, many students were not able to take full advantage of these activities due to the demands of the mainstream curriculum. The school had yet to explore in full the opportunities for curriculum enrichment afforded by the local community in Al Quoz.

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

The quality of arrangements to support students' health and safety was good. The building and grounds were clean, well maintained and secure. There was a full-time security guard who monitored the gate at all times and teachers and other adult supervisors were visible throughout the day. There was sun protection in the KG area and rubberised mats on the play area, although not in other outdoor areas. Medicines and chemicals were kept under lock and key, and there were no visible hazardous materials or debris on school property. There were three-part recycling containers throughout the building and outside. The canteen was clean and well-run with adequate seating and an excellent selection of healthy foods and snacks. The transport system benefitted from having trained drivers who were punctual and efficient and the new buses were all fully equipped with seat-belts for students. The school held regular fire drills and had exit signs and instructions clearly visible throughout the building. Fire extinguishers were in evidence. Healthy lifestyles were promoted by the teachers and other staff and students received lessons on aspects of living healthily. Child protection was handled in an appropriate manner and records were kept of any incidents.

The quality of support for students was good, and the relationship between staff and students was one of mutual respect and caring. The students felt safe, secure and cared for. The school had recently appointed a guidance counsellor to provide advice on careers and in relation to progression into the next stage of education. Incidents of misbehaviour were isolated. The Principal and teachers handled such incidents effectively and monitored students involved with appropriate sensitivity. Tracking of student academic progress and well-being was good, although only in hard copy. There was no electronic student information management system in place. Attendance and punctuality were efficiently managed. Students who were absent or late followed established procedures and good records were kept. There was some support for students who were less able, but there were no classroom assistants beyond KG.

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

The leadership and management of the school were good. An effective management team had given the staff a clear focus, and they had established teams and partnerships amongst the staff, who were working together for the benefit of the students. The senior staff had achieved a great deal in a short space of time; they had overcome a number of important obstacles and had put in place several important systems. However, these had not yet become embedded and students' learning had not been the highest priority when safety, resources and staffing had all been issues. Performance management arrangements were in place, but more needed to be done to embed the system and ensure standards were raised.

Improvement planning was also good throughout. The school had taken into account the views of parents, students and advisors from outside the school to ensure prompt action had been taken as the initial problems of the early weeks in the new premises had occurred and been prioritised. All of the recommendations from the 2009 inspection report had been addressed

and significant progress made. There was evidence of considerable forward planning, and of improvement targets being met, both by teaching and administrative staff.

The school's partnership with parents and with the German community was good. Class mothers and elected representatives acted as links in the communication chain, and the elected parents sat on a steering committee which met regularly. Systems were in place for parents to consult staff on a regular basis, and parents used these opportunities to inform how they might help improve their children's learning. Parents spoke of their support for the school's management and were pleased to have been involved in developing new facilities. The German business community and the Consulate had also shown significant support for the school. The school overtly encouraged an awareness and understanding of the Islamic world in which its community operated, but a weakness, linked to the short time the school had been in its current premises, was the position of the school in the wider community. There was room for greater co-operation with the students, staff and management of other schools in Dubai for the greater enhancement of students' progress.

Governance was outstanding. The governing body had given, and continued to give outstanding support to the school's leadership. The Principal was held to account and had regular meetings with the board to account for progress achieved. The composition of the board included representatives of all stake-holders, minutes of all meetings were maintained, and the decisions taken had directed the many changes apparent during the current school year. Financial resources were carefully managed so that, although some resources were lacking, their implementation was planned on a timed basis.

Though the staff were well qualified and sufficient in number, the premises were not acceptable. The school had worked hard to improve the facilities and resources since the recent move to the new premises, but at the time of the inspection, they did not fully meet students' learning needs. The outdoor sports facility was used for assemblies, and consisted of a green carpet on an irregular surface. Whilst not openly dangerous, it was not suitable for organised team sports, and it lacked shade for students who used the same area for recreation at break-times. Whilst the classrooms were of an acceptable size for most lessons, music and ICT required more space than was possible in their current location. The room used for computing lessons was not well used, so that the students' learning needs were insufficiently met. There was a shortage of new books in the library.

## 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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	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	Outstanding	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

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

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

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

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

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

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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