

Buds Public School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 11

Report issued February 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.

Buds Public School was inspected in December 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 Muhaisnah 1, Buds Public School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 11, aged four to 17 years. The school follows a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 626 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires, which were completed by parents. Overwhelmingly, the parents were very happy with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school, that the teaching was good, that their children were treated fairly and that they were being encouraged to become independent and responsible people. Parents liked the range of activities available to their children and almost all agreed that they were comfortable approaching the school with any questions or complaints, and felt that the school would act promptly to address any issues. They felt that their children were well cared for and that teachers were good at explaining to parents what they could do at home to help with their children's work. A third of parents who responded did not know if the school had good links with the community, and about one fifth of parents were unsure whether the school was good at consulting them on decisions which affected their child. Parents were happy with their children's progress in all subjects, although a minority of parents were unsure of progress in Islamic Education. A few parents commented on a concern about the time their children spent on school transport.

How well does the school perform overall?

Buds Public School provided an unsatisfactory quality of education, overall. Attainment and progress in Arabic, English, mathematics and science were unsatisfactory, whilst attainment and progress in Islamic Education was acceptable. At the end of the primary stage students knew number facts well, but their wider mathematical understanding was weak. They could read and write basic texts, but their independent writing was very limited. By Grade 10 students had learnt a body of knowledge but had little understanding of much of their work and had insufficient skills to cope with extended pieces of work. Attainment in Grade 10 exams was in line with rural schools in India, but substantially below international benchmarks. Attitudes and behaviour were acceptable. Students were attentive in class, tried to do their best, and behaved well around the school. Students took an active part in the school community. However, many students had only a superficial understanding of the wider community and of Islam. Students' knowledge and understanding about the traditions of Dubai and the UAE were unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, with an overemphasis on rote learning of factual information. A high proportion of lesson time included teachers questioning of students who responded with short answers. This did not develop students' conceptual understanding, critical thinking or problem-solving skills. The focus on whole-class instruction did not address the range of abilities and language levels in class. The purpose of lessons was often unclear or superficial, so that key skills were not planned for, and teacher expectations were often too low. Assessment of students' progress was made by questioning the class about facts and was insufficient in helping to plan for future work. Marking, which was often superficial, did not provide students with feedback about the next steps in their learning. There was regular testing throughout the school, including monthly and termly tests. The curriculum was unsatisfactory, with a lack of challenge and creativity. The school provided a choice of four languages in addition to English and Arabic. Extra-curricular activities were very limited, and there were few connections in learning made between different subjects. Health and safety was acceptable. The building was new and included the necessary safety features. Students were well-supervised around the school and on buses. There were evacuation procedures but these had not been rehearsed. The school provided insufficient encouragement of healthy lifestyles, but staff were attentive to the welfare of students in their charge.

The quality of leadership was unsatisfactory. Although there were good relationships throughout the school, insufficient attention was paid to teaching methodology and to raising attainment. Self-evaluation was informal and had not addressed learning sufficiently, and the school development plan lacked the clear outcomes and a timeframe to be productive. Partnership with parents was acceptable, but an informal advisory committee did not provide the school's leadership with enough guidance or sufficient requirement for accountability. There was a suitable number of qualified staff. A new building provided a suitable facility, although a lack of classroom resources throughout the school contributed to the emphasis on didactic teaching.

Key features of the school

- There was a limited range of teaching methods, with an overemphasis on closed questions and factual recall;
- Class instruction was not adapted to meet the needs of the different ability levels in each class;
- Expectations of students were low and there was a lack of challenge throughout the school;
- Assessment of students' progress was mainly undertaken by testing recall of facts, which did not help evaluate students' level of understanding;
- There was an informal advisory group, which did not meet regularly, nor provide for sufficient guidance, accountability or stakeholder representation;
- The school development plan listed some areas for development but did not indicate dates, outcome or strategies for development;
- The school lacked a robust performance management plan to outline training for all teachers in the delivery of effective lessons.

Recommendations

- Develop a culture of high expectations and challenge that celebrates student success rather than accepting their limitations;
- Extend the curriculum to include more challenge and higher order thinking;
- Address the needs of different students and identify clear learning outcomes in lesson planning;
- Improve the quality of teaching by using a broader range of teaching strategies;
- Develop assessment processes so that teachers are aware of students' understanding as well as their factual knowledge;
- Introduce performance management techniques that support and ensure teachers' professional growth;
- Formalise and broaden the role of the advisory group to ensure that it has stakeholder representation, provides regular guidance and holds the leadership of the school to account;
- Develop a school development plan which sets out measurable goals and time-frames to ensure that the school makes significant progress.

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

Progress and attainment in Islamic Education were acceptable. All students understood basic concepts about Islam and their Islamic duties and responsibilities. Grade 1 students knew the appropriate Islamic greetings and behaviour around meals. Students in Grade 5 knew the family tree of the prophet Yousuf. The majority of secondary students recited verses they learnt from The Holy Qur'an with acceptable skills. In Grade 10, students developed an acceptable understanding of the basic concept of trade and making profit in Islam. Most students had an acceptable understanding of the behaviour expected of a good Muslim and this was reflected in their own behaviour across the school.

Attainment and progress in Arabic throughout the school were unsatisfactory. A minority of students were able to follow the teacher's spoken Arabic, but many found classroom discourse difficult to understand. Almost all students could use basic phrases and greetings, but only a few students were able to express their ideas in Arabic. The majority of students in Grade 5 could distinguish, read and write a few sentences about a few pictures in their textbooks. In Grade 6 a few students could read some new words and sentences from the textbook while most students could not read with sufficient fluency. Most students could form Arabic letters correctly and used them to write words, but with many errors. Only a few students in the higher grades could write extended texts in Arabic.

Attainment and progress in English were unsatisfactory across the school except in KG, where progress was acceptable. Most children entered KG with little or no English but, by the end of KG, they could follow instructions, express simple ideas, read and write letters with some accuracy and identify some letter sounds. Progress at primary and secondary stages was unsatisfactory. Primary students answered closed questions well, but had difficulty elaborating on answers. They could understand literal aspects of grade-level texts but could not understand any deeper meaning. Primary students had developed good handwriting and grade level spelling, but could not write extended pieces independently. Secondary students listened attentively and understood literal meanings, but they lacked fluency in reading and speaking. Their writing did not reflect the expression, innovation and independence expected for students of this age. Students could recognise several poetic devices, although few were able to use them.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were unsatisfactory. Although children in KG could count, they did not understand number concepts. Students made acceptable progress in arithmetic, but had little understanding of mathematical concepts or how to apply mathematics to solve problems, and made few connections to real life. Primary students knew their multiplication tables fluently, but had little understanding of measurement. In the upper grades, students found it difficult to complete tasks in a timely manner and could not discuss mathematical ideas. The majority of students made some links to prior knowledge. They had difficulty understanding word problems and using histograms to interpret data.

Attainment and progress in science were unsatisfactory. Children in KG and Grades 1 and 2 had a basic knowledge of hygiene, body parts and the role of exercise. By Grade 5, students had largely factual knowledge about the water cycle, weather, and solids, liquids and gases, but had not

developed skills in experiments or scientific enquiry. By Grade 10 students were able to observe and record simple scientific data. They had learnt appropriate scientific language, but many had little understanding about the concepts they related to, had limited reporting and interpretative skills, and could not research or investigate independently. Students' overall performance by Grade 10 was poor by international benchmarks.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were acceptable throughout the school. Students were well behaved around the school and their relationships with the staff were warm and positive. Levels of attendance were acceptable and students were punctual for school and for lessons. Buses arrived on time and Grade 11 students took responsibility for making sure all other students went to their classrooms promptly and on time.

Students' civic understanding was unsatisfactory. Students contributed well to the school community, but most had little awareness about their role in wider local and global communities. Muslim students had an acceptable understanding of Islam. Other students had only a superficial knowledge about Islam, and were not clear about what it meant to live in an Islamic society. A majority of students had little understanding of Dubai's cultural traditions, but all students valued the multicultural nature of Dubai and its tolerance toward the religions represented in the school.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was unsatisfactory. Students had little knowledge of Dubai's economy. A majority of Grade 10 and 11 students thought that most of Dubai's income still came from oil revenues, and their understanding of the construction sector was limited to knowing that there were many new tall buildings. They all knew about Dubai's rapid development and could contrast it to their home countries. Students took acceptable care of the school environment but the majority of students were not aware of environmental issues and did not know about how they could contribute to conserving the environment.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. The limited range of teaching approaches inhibited learning and failed to address the needs of most students. Most instruction was based on closed teacher questions that required recall of factual information with little higher-order thinking. This approach was successful in transmitting a limited range of factual knowledge, but it did not always engage or meet the students' interest or improve their problem-solving skills. Most teaching was focused on whole-class instruction and did not fully address or engage the range of students' needs, particularly in classes with a wide spread of ability and language levels. Most lessons were not planned well enough to teach key skills. Low teacher expectations contributed to a lack of challenge in almost all lessons observed, and few students achieved grade level standards. Although some teachers had to teach outside their subject expertise, most had sufficient subject knowledge for the lessons they delivered.

The quality of students' learning was unsatisfactory. Most students worked conscientiously, but they were frequently passive listeners or observers and, in a small number of instances, a few students

became disruptive. Most students readily sought the attention of the teachers when they had a difficulty. When students were seated in groups they did not work collaboratively, as teachers were unaware of how to support the collaborative process or the development of roles within the group. There was a lack of interaction and discussion amongst the students. Students made few connections with other learning and did not relate their learning to the real world. Students' learning experience rarely included higher order and critical thinking, but most students posed relevant questions and could recall prior learning.

The quality of assessment was unsatisfactory. Teachers' assessment of students' understanding during the majority of the lessons was mostly confined to question and answer sessions. Excessive reliance on the recall of facts did not uncover students' lack of understanding. Marking of student notebooks was inconsistent and items that were wrong were sometimes marked as correct. Marking of student work rarely contained constructive feedback. The KG class had monthly assessments for each child, which recorded progress across a variety of academic and personal areas. At primary and secondary stages, assessment comprised unit tests, monthly tests and end of term tests. These were not used effectively to improve learning, but provided an overall record of student progress.

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

The curriculum was unsatisfactory. In addition to English and Arabic, students studied a choice of Tamil, Malayalam, Urdu and Hindi. There was a limited choice of subjects in Grade 11. The KG curriculum included learning a core English vocabulary, but children had limited opportunities for making their own choices or gaining independence. The curriculum for primary and secondary students included art and a suitable range of academic subjects. Curricula within these subjects were underdeveloped, and provided little challenge and few opportunities for high-level thinking or independent learning. The school undertook an annual review of textbooks used and these were changed to address amendments to the CBSE syllabus. Other aspects of the curriculum were not regularly reviewed, so there was little consideration of the changing needs of the students in a contemporary society. The transition between grades and sections was smooth and the CBSE framework ensured that there were no gaps in students' learning; all followed the grade level curriculum content. Few links were made between learning in different subjects. There was not a regular extra-curricular activity programme, although the school ran occasional house-related activities, which included some with a sport or craft focus. Classes in KG regularly used the local community as a learning resource; for example, by visiting the zoo and local parks. Other grades made little use of the local community. Some wall displays represented several aspects of Dubai and helped link learning to the local environment.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's protection and support of students was acceptable. There were appropriate safety measures in the school building and buses. Students were effectively supervised throughout the school, and during their arrival and departure. The facility was newly built, with sufficiently sized

appropriately equipped classrooms. The school had qualified medical staff and an adequately equipped clinic. The school maintained health records for all students. First aid kits were provided in all buses, science labs and in the computer lab. Science laboratories were not yet operational at the time of the inspection and so did not have the appropriate safety equipment. There was a full evacuation plan, but fire drills had yet to be carried out. The school shared information regarding personal hygiene and healthy food with families. Child protection procedures were limited to some rules and regulation in the students' handbook, but the school leadership team were aware of child protection issues, monitored students' well-being closely and contacted parents when necessary.

There were supportive staff-student relationships and a positive climate throughout the school. A school counsellor and senior management team helped students with personal problems. There was little guidance for future education and career paths. Class teachers dealt with most behavioural issues effectively, but senior staff and the counsellor contacted parents whenever a serious issue arose. Students' academic progress was tracked through termly examinations, which were reviewed and shared during parent meetings three times a year. Personal well-being was monitored informally through the heads of primary and secondary sections, and through report card comments. Attendance was closely monitored, and parents were contacted when necessary. Punctuality was good because of effective monitoring when students moved around the school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was unsatisfactory. The Principal and senior leadership had good relationships with staff, students and parents. All senior leadership were committed to the school, which had contributed to having a new building, but insufficient attention had been paid to the impact of weak teaching methodology throughout the school. The school had core values of 'aspire, arise, and achieve', which were displayed around the school and were known by staff, but were not reflected in the daily life of the school. The leadership team were clearly committed to the values without taking practical steps to ensure that they affected the day-to-day work of the school and student learning. This allowed a culture of low expectations for students' progress that reduced attainment across the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was unsatisfactory. There was no formal process of self-evaluation, and informal processes had not addressed learning and teaching sufficiently. Although a school development plan existed, it had no dates or measurable outcomes. Progress had been made in some areas, most notably in building a new facility, but developments in learning and teaching had shown little progress, and few steps had been taken to address low attainment. A few staff meetings had focused on teaching and staff had attended three development seminars in 2009.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. There was no parent/teacher association but parents said they felt welcome in school and that the school management and teachers listened to their views and suggestions. A school diary was sent home daily. As many parents could not read English the school telephoned parents whenever a serious issue arose, and school management facilitated communication when parents and teachers did not have a common language. A report card with examination results and comments was issued after term examinations,

and there were three open days a year. The school provided counselling to parents and addressed financial and family problems when necessary.

Governance was unsatisfactory. There was an informal advisory committee that included three community members but no parental representation. They met casually every few months to discuss how the school should develop. The committee had helped facilitate the move to the current premises, but did not have a sufficiently clear role to provide the Principal with adequate guidance, and it demanded little accountability for student attainment.

Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. Teacher numbers allowed for relatively small classes. All teachers were qualified, although some taught outside their subject specialism or age range, which reduced their effectiveness. The school moved into new buildings in September 2009, which were sufficient for existing student numbers. There were classrooms, administration offices, a clinic, library, a computer lab and two science laboratories that were not yet equipped or used to support students' learning. Many library books were not relevant to students' age and interests. Most classrooms had few resources, which contributed to the over-emphasis on teacher talk in most lessons.

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:	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Economic and environmental understanding	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-11
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Unsatisfactory

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 will undertake a Follow-Through Inspection of Buds Public School within three months of the original inspection and report to parents regarding 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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