

Japanese School of Dubai Inspection Report

Grade 1 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.

The Japanese School of Dubai 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 Arabic, English, Japanese, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Jumeirah, the Japanese School of Dubai is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Grade 1 to Grade 9, aged six to 15 years. The school follows the prescribed Japanese Ministry of Education curriculum. Grade 1 to Grade 6 comprises primary education under the Japanese curriculum, while Grade 7 to Grade 9 comprises junior high education. The school had experienced high student mobility in the two years up to the inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were 178 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 completed by parents. Parents' evaluation of the school was extremely positive on almost every count. All parents agreed that the school's teaching was good, that their child liked school and that staff encouraged their child to become an independent and responsible person. Almost all agreed that the school was well led. Parents were very happy with their children's progress in mathematics and science and happy with progress in other key subjects, though a minority did not know about their child's progress in Arabic. Parents were also very happy with the care their child received and with communication, consultation, and openness at the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Japanese School of Dubai was a good school with a number of outstanding features. Inspectors judged attainment and progress to be good or outstanding in three of the key subjects, the exceptions being English and Arabic. Students' attainment was almost invariably above the Japanese national average in the core academic subjects in the Japanese national curriculum. Their attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. In lessons, students were almost always attentive and enthusiastic, well prepared and readily working with peers. Outside class, they were respectful and cheerful, caring for one another and for the school community. Older students guided and cared for younger ones, and all students assiduously cleaned the school each morning. Students showed knowledge of and respect for local traditions and culture, including Islam, and valued the chance to get to know Emirati students through school exchange visits. They showed understanding of the ways in which Dubai's economy had prospered, of the challenges it faced and had a critical awareness of environmental issues which translated into action.

Teaching was good, especially in core academic subjects of the Japanese national curriculum; teaching in most lessons observed was good or outstanding. Most teachers were highly skilled, enthusiastic and dedicated to their students' progress. Students were skilled and intelligent learners who could speak confidently and articulately, writing accurately and creatively. Assessment of students' work was good. It was carried out in a multi-levelled way and was rigorous, yielding detailed insight into students' progress and weaknesses. The school followed the Japanese National Curriculum and this was supplemented by the school at the local level with additional provision of English conversation and Arabic. Health and safety policies and procedures were good and were followed carefully in most areas, though the cramped state of the science room contributed to a lapse in this respect. The support of staff for students was outstanding. Students respected and trusted their teachers, who dealt with problems sensitively and carefully, and consistently communicated warmth, to the extent that all teachers saw students' departure collectively at the end of the day.

The leadership and management of the school were good. The Principal had implemented a number of important initiatives contributing to school improvement. Management structures were well organised, so that teachers at all levels contributed to systematic efforts to improve the school. Communication with parents was excellent. The school had made significant progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous report, though further improvements were still needed in Arabic and English, in particular.

Key features of the school

- Effective leadership and robust management structures to drive improvement and meet the school's aims;
- Outstanding levels of care for students in a very warm and friendly community;
- High levels of competence and skill in teaching supported by professional development;
- Students' outstanding behaviour and attitude in a community that strongly promoted learning and personal growth;
- Outstanding relationships with parents, who supported the school by participation;
- Weaknesses in the curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic ;
- Restrictions in the current site impacting on the quality of learning for students;
- The high mobility rate of students.

Recommendations

- Provide Islamic Education for Muslim students.
- Continue to work towards raising attainment and progress in Arabic by ensuring Ministry of Education requirements are fully implemented for all students.
- Introduce greater challenge into teaching and learning for the more able students, especially in mathematics, English, and at secondary level, Japanese.
- Improve teaching and learning in English, especially at elementary level.
- Continue to tackle the problem of inadequate facilities, including exploration of redeployment of space within the existing school premises.
- Improve resources for teaching in English, mathematics and science.

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

The school did not teach Islamic Education as there had been no Muslim students on roll. However, Muslim students had recently joined the school and the school was developing arrangements to meet the requirements for teaching Islamic Education to these students.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable in the primary section and unsatisfactory in the junior high. In lower grades the majority of the students could speak simple daily phrases and could also pronounce new words with few errors. The majority of them could analyse and compose sentences. In higher grades the minority of the students could read and write the new words correctly. Few of them practised the skills of reading and writing of new sentences correctly.

Students made good progress in English although attainment was acceptable by international standards. This was because most entered the school with standards in English well below average and left at the end of Grade 9 with attainment which was in line with age-related expectations. The highest levels of attainment in all grades were in speaking. Students became more familiar with English by the end of their time at the school and had increased understanding of how to use different verb tenses and constructions. Skills in listening and reading were acceptable in all grades. Writing was often acceptable although there was little extended or creative writing. Students made good progress from Grades 1 to 9, especially with their understanding and use of a very different alphabet and grammar from those of Japanese.

Attainment and progress in Japanese were outstanding in Grades 1 to 6 and good in Grades 7 to 9. Students were able to speak articulately in a variety of ways, such as in conversational role-plays and presentations and about literary analysis, listening attentively and with understanding. Their reading aloud was fluent and accurate, consistently showing good understanding. They could write in a variety of genres, including creative writing, poetry, letters and short stories. They also wrote using word-play such as riddles and palindromes.

In mathematics, attainment and progress in all grades were good. Students achieved above the Japanese national average scores. Students were very keen to learn and showed good mathematical knowledge and problem-solving skills. They were able to understand and compute increasingly complex concepts thoroughly and complete problems individually and collectively in relation to all four number processes in Grades 3 to 9, and in relation to addition and subtraction, in lower grades. Students in Grades 1 to 6 were mastering number recognition, writing place values of double digit numbers and carrying out single and double digit multiplication and division problems. They were becoming familiar with basic geometric shapes and their similar and dissimilar properties. Students in Grades 7 to 9 were solving problems related to two-dimensional and solid geometric shapes, including measuring volume, and solving increasingly difficult mathematical equations.

Attainment and progress in science were good. Students demonstrated a sound understanding of the topic that they were studying and attainment records demonstrated good knowledge.

Students could follow procedures during practical work. The investigations were carried out well by the students themselves, their energetic enthusiasm causing some concern where hot liquids and naked flames were in use. Notebooks were used well as they were neat and well-illustrated.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. A sense of sharing and caring for the communal spaces was instilled through the daily morning sessions, teachers and students joining together to clean the classrooms and surrounding areas, sweeping and mopping the floors. Students were friendly and outgoing and were happy to talk to visitors, sometimes showing a maturity beyond their years. Displays showing photographs of student activity around the school and student posters contained messages intended to motivate and support and such confirmed the sense of being in a caring environment. At the end of the day there was a homeroom session where reflection was encouraged. Older students took care of younger ones. Students arrived punctually for class and, overall, attendance was acceptable.

Students showed a good understanding of traditional and modern features of Dubai and a good appreciation of Islam and its importance in society. Students knew some of the most significant aspects of Islam such as The Five Pillars and the significance of Ramadan. They could name the main developments in buildings and transport, as well as knowing something of local tradition and heritage. They appreciated the fact that living in Dubai enabled them to be able to mix with and learn about people from other cultures. Their displays showed their understanding of aspects of Arabic culture.

Students had a good understanding of the rapid transformation that Dubai has undergone and some awareness of recent financial challenges. They counted oil, tourism and trade as the major industries of Dubai and believed that these have been affected in the economic situation. Students showed awareness of environmental issues and how they could contribute positively.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The overall quality of teaching was good with outstanding features. However, there was variation between grades; the most effective teaching was in Japanese and mathematics, and the least effective in Arabic and English conversation. Many teachers had good subject knowledge and collaborated with each other in research lessons where they observed each other and shared good practice. They used it to ensure that lesson content and teaching styles were reflected upon thoughtfully. Teachers usually used time well and deployed resources effectively to facilitate learning, although such resources were often only adequate. They engaged students through question and answer strategies but gave more limited opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, though these were notably evident in social studies lessons and project work. Textbooks were plentiful but teachers also used other methods and resources to facilitate learning. While in some lessons, teachers matched work set to students'

differing abilities, in practice, overall this was uncommon. Teachers sometimes used didactic methods to direct the learning process, reducing opportunities for extended discussion and reflection. In a few lessons teachers directed learning, followed by recall of knowledge through teacher-led questions. Teachers did not use computer equipment enough in lessons.

Throughout the school, most students exhibited positive attitudes to their learning and collaborated effectively. Individual students took it in turns to bring their peers to order to start the day, and to close each lesson. In group work during lessons, the students were exuberant but stayed on task and quickly quietened and became attentive whenever the teacher wished to share information. Students liked and respected their teachers and, in the best lessons, the learning culture included both humour and challenge. Teaching encouraged students to learn through practical activities for example in Japanese, mathematics and science. Consequently, students were often engaged, listened well and were enthusiastic about their learning. They were most enthusiastic and assiduous in Japanese and mathematics lessons. Their oral skills were usually good and they spoke fluently about what they knew and understood.

In Grades 1 to 6, assessment took place after each textbook unit covered, using commercial tests. In Grades 7 to 9, in-house tests were used to monitor progress and improve teaching and learning, alongside external tests related to national performance. Teachers met monthly to discuss any concerns about students' progress and to give feedback to improve learning. Following this, parents received summary reports each term and elementary students took home reading and multiplication tables records regularly so that parents could assist in their learning. However, marking strategies did not often provide students with comments on how well they were doing or next steps to learning. They were generally just a tick. Small class sizes allowed the teacher to know the students well and to monitor their progress.

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

The mission of the school was to provide a good education following the Japanese National Curriculum, allowing Japanese students moving to Dubai to continue their education within the Japanese system. This core curriculum was challenging and relevant and sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of students, with attention to many areas of learning, from the mathematical and scientific to the communicative and creative. Progress from one stage of education to the next was well planned and smooth. The curriculum was appropriately supplemented by the school for the local context with regular planned opportunities for students to interact with and learn from the local community and environment. A cross-curricular study component was used flexibly to meet local needs, in this case being used for project learning about Dubai and the region. In addition, the school had supplemented its core curriculum with additional curricular content to meet the needs of the local context. This took the form of two periods a week of English conversation, and one period a week of Arabic. Following the recommendation of the previous inspection report that the quality of Arabic teaching be improved, the school had added an optional period of additional Arabic to meet

the needs of students who had recently moved to Dubai and needed supplementary teaching. However, the time allocation for Arabic remained below Ministry of Education requirements.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Protection and provision for the students' health and safety was good. A security guard was stationed at the main entrance to the school. Fire safety equipment was regularly checked and drills were conducted twice a year to maintain a safe, secure learning environment. Toilets were clean, well maintained and well resourced with soap dispensers, toilet paper and electric hand dryers. Older students and electronic surveillance cameras provided supervision of students on the main playground. Buses were well supervised and student safety was assured by effective supervision by school staff, transport personnel and bus attendants. Teachers and other staff escorted students as they boarded the buses. The school nurse provided a wide range of services in accordance with Department of Health guidelines and maintained extensive medical records. Dental and medical exams were conducted annually. Medical checks related to body mass index, weight, height, and nutrition were conducted. Medications were administered with parent consent. A doctor from a local clinic came once a week. A child protection policy and procedures had been developed and were understood by all students and staff members.

Support for students was outstanding and student-staff relationships were consistently very positive. The classroom teacher co-ordinated student behaviour, progress, learning support and put in place any counselling needs. Administrative support was provided to students and teachers, as needed. Student attendance and punctuality were both well managed and detailed records were kept. The school nurse checked the daily attendance report and followed through on reasons of non-attendance. Academic progress was effectively tracked and results were analysed to offer guidance to students on their progress. Additional academic and personal support was provided after school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management at the school were outstanding, with dynamic, focused, yet collegial leadership being exercised by the Principal. A series of highly significant, yet manageable, initiatives to improve school structures and practices had been implemented with a clear focus on improving the working of the school and enhancing students' learning and school experience. A re-organised school management structure enabled the development, sharing, and implementation of clear aims. Good, robust processes were in place for staff evaluation and to ensure goal-setting and self-evaluation by teachers.

A revised system for regular and ongoing school self-evaluation was effective in delivering positive change. This system was rigorous and involved parents and students on a regular basis. The school had responded vigorously to the recommendations in the previous inspection report and had made significant progress, for example, in improving the quality and quantity of Arabic teaching and learning, as well as improving the library facilities.

There were excellent relationships with parents and the community served by the school, fostered by very frequent and in-depth communication between school and parents using a variety of means including written, face-to-face and electronic communication. Parents felt that the school was open and enthusiastically supported the school in enhancing students' learning through, for example, reading activities, extra-curricular clubs, and enhancement of library resources. Extremely high levels of parent satisfaction were expressed in regular surveys conducted by the school, and this was supported in interviews with parents. Very good relationships were also evident with the local non-Japanese community, especially in the regular exchange visits arranged with a range of local schools.

Governance was good. A board of trustees included members from the Japanese Association, the Japanese Consulate and the Parent-Teacher Association, as well as the Principal and Vice-Principal. It regularly met and reviewed plans and budgets, as well as providing strong support in carrying the school's mission forward including, for example, seeking out new and improved premises. The lack of continuity due to one-year terms for members was a problem that was under review.

Staffing was sufficient and of high quality in most cases. All teachers were appropriately qualified and experienced. Premises were sufficient in most cases, though in the case of the science room, as noted in the previous inspection report, the facilities have become cramped due to the rapid expansion in the number of students during the last few years. Resources were generally sufficient and were effectively used to meet students' needs; however, resources were not sufficient for teaching and learning in English or for the more able students in science and mathematics.

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:	Primary	Junior High
Attainment	Not applicable	Not applicable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Not applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Primary	Junior High
Attainment	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Japanese?		
Age group:	Primary	Junior High
Attainment	Outstanding	Good
Progress over time	Outstanding	Good

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

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

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

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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Primary	Junior High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

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

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

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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