

INSPECTION REPORT

The Sheffield Private School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHEFFIELD PRIVATE SCHOOL

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.sheffieldprivateschool.com
Telephone	04 267 8444
Address	PO Box 92665, Dubai
Principal	Robin Campbell
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Grades	3-18 / Foundation Stage to post-16
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,401
Number of Emirati students	44 (3%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 14th to Thursday 17th November 2011

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The context of the school

Located in Al Nahda, The Sheffield Private School is a school that provided education for students aged three to 18 years, from Foundation Stage to post-16. At the time of the inspection, it had 1,401 students which represented a considerable increase from the previous year. The students were from a variety of nationalities; about half of them were from Asian families. Approximately a quarter were from Arab families, of whom 44 were Emirati. Sixty-six students received learning support.

The school was divided into 54 classes with an average of 26 students in each class. The school followed the English National Curriculum and offered IGCSE and AS/A2 Level exams. These exams had been progressively introduced; students were entered for A2 Level for the first time in 2011. The school followed the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic.

There were 71 teachers and 24 teaching assistants; the teacher-student ratio was 1:20. Most teachers were British or Irish and all were appropriately qualified. Over half of the teachers were new to the school at the time of the inspection, including some of the subject leaders. The Principal had been in post for three years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Sheffield Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. Students' attainment and progress were acceptable in almost all subjects, which matched the quality of teaching. There was an inconsistency in classroom practice, although teaching was good in a minority of lessons seen during the inspection. Students were generally happy at school, behaved well for the most part and enjoyed learning when it was challenging and stimulating. More often than not, the curriculum was not sufficiently inspiring or finely tuned to the students' needs, although it was acceptable. Students were safe and suitably looked after at school, but the quality of care sometimes lacked sensitivity.

The senior leaders had worked hard to maintain the school's provision since the previous inspection. However, a high proportion of teachers had left the school by the end of the school year and staff morale

had suffered. The new teachers, including many in their first year of teaching, were keen to perform well, but there was insufficient training and collective will to drive forward improvement with urgency. Much of the school's provision was not as good as it had been. There had not been enough development of student-led learning. The extra tuition for students with English as an additional language had been started but then discontinued. However, new appointments for the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic were having a good impact on these subjects. The owners of the school had done little to involve stakeholders more systematically in the school's development and were not ensuring that the school was able to function to the best of its ability.

Key strengths

- The recent improvements in teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic that have resulted in better progress by students;
- The behaviour and attitudes to learning by most students;
- The understanding by most students of Islam and local culture, as well as their civic, economic and environmental awareness;
- The improved range of activities beyond the classroom;
- The commitment of the teaching staff to improve their practice and learning outcomes for students.

Recommendations

- Improve the consistency of teaching across the school in order to improve the quality of students' attainment and progress;
- Develop a more effective system of assessing students' progress, including analysis of data, so that teachers are better able to provide work that is suitably challenging for all groups of students;
- Provide a more diverse, imaginative and skills-based curriculum in order to engage students fully in lessons and enable them to relate their learning to real life;
- Ensure that leaders at all levels have sufficient time, opportunity and independence to be fully involved in the school's development;
- Ensure that the school's owners take urgent steps to:
 - involve all stakeholders in the development of the school,
 - hold the school to account for its actions with greater rigour,
 - provide more training and support for staff,
 - make the curriculum for Islamic Education fully compliant with statutory requirements.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Attainment was acceptable in almost all subjects. This represented an improvement in Islamic Education for secondary students, and in Arabic as an additional language for primary students; these had been unsatisfactory at the last inspection. However, the attainment of secondary students in Arabic as an additional language remained unsatisfactory. The improvements in teaching had not had time to influence their standards enough. The majority of attainment in the other key subjects was lower than in the previous year, although it remained the same in secondary and post-16 English and mathematics. Students generally had competent knowledge and skills, yet did not use them well enough. For example, students could write at a functional level, but did not do so expressively. Scientific enquiry was not an integral enough part of students' learning. Children in the Foundation Stage had too little independence and scope to explore for themselves to ensure purposeful learning.

Students, including those with special educational needs, made acceptable progress in almost all subjects. They made good progress only in the primary phase in Arabic as a first language. Here, the improved teaching was having a particularly good impact. In the Foundation Stage, children made good progress in their social skills, but the provision was often too formal for them to develop other learning skills swiftly. In English, most students developed their listening and speaking well but this was not matched by progress in reading and writing. In mathematics and science, students lacked the opportunities to fully develop independent learning skills.

Emirati students had similar attainment and progress to those of other students. They did well in Arabic, making good progress in lessons and over time to attain standards that were above average for their age. Their knowledge of Islamic Education was acceptable. They developed their speaking and listening in English well; like other students, they were not so effective in reading and writing.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

The attitudes and behaviour of most students were good. In secondary, however, students' behaviour was acceptable because of instances of inappropriate language and boisterous behaviour, as well as a lack of punctuality for lessons. Most students had respect for members of staff and generally had positive attitudes towards learning. They understood the benefits of wholesome food and were well aware of healthy life-styles, although they often found it hard to make the right choices. Attendance was acceptable overall, although it was unsatisfactory for the older students. During the inspection, it was unsatisfactory for all students. Punctuality was also a problem. Not all families ensured that their children arrived at school on time. Most students demonstrated a good understanding of Islam in the multi-cultural context of Dubai, and valued the traditions of the UAE and its national identity. They showed good civic awareness and had developed a solid understanding of Dubai's economic progress and its position in the world. They demonstrated good knowledge of the UAE's main revenues and could draw a clear picture of its economic future. Students' knowledge and understanding of local and global environmental issues were good but only a minority was involved in conservation and recycling activities. In the Foundation Stage, children's understanding of Islam and local culture and their civic, economic and environmental awareness were acceptable. This was mainly due to lack of appropriate curriculum provision.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching was acceptable across the school. There was a reasonable proportion of good teaching in all phases, but especially for the older students in primary. The quality of teaching had improved in Islamic Education and Arabic yet, overall, it was still inconsistent and at times unsatisfactory, as in other subjects. Most teachers had a good rapport with students and engaged them positively in lessons. In the better lessons, teachers were knowledgeable, had good expectations of students and made learning challenging. Too often, though, teachers' planning was brief and not focused enough on the different ability groups of students. Most teachers did not expect enough of students both in their work and in the timescales for learning. As a result, the pace of learning was often too slow. Teachers tended to direct students' learning too much and did not allow them to take responsibility for their own learning and to learn at their own speed and in their own way. This was frequently the case in the Foundation Stage.

Most students had positive approaches to their work and were quite capable of managing their own learning. They interacted and worked productively together when the opportunities arose. Often, though, teachers did not generate enough such opportunities. As a result, students relied too much on adults and were not proactive enough in their learning; they did not have a clear enough picture of how they could improve their work. Although students were capable of connecting their learning to the real world, such activity was not an intrinsic part of their work. This was compounded by a lack of planned and regular opportunities for student to solve problems for themselves and carry out basic research. However, older students were good at this.

Through regular assessments, the school had an adequate range of information about students' progress. Teachers used such information to group students and vary their expectations of them, but this practice was not consistent enough across the school. In addition, the school did not analyse the assessment data

thoroughly enough to determine trends or underlying issues. The quality of teachers' marking reflected the inconsistency of teaching. Some was helpful in helping students to improve but there was not a cohesive enough approach by staff.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable although it did not fully comply with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education in Years 1, 2, 3 and 12. The curriculum was consistent across year groups, developmental from year to year and met the needs of the students with a few exceptions. In the Foundation Stage, there was little choice and few opportunities for children to learn through play. The Proficiency in English programme set up to support second language learners in primary and secondary had been discontinued and no alternative had been offered. The post-16 curriculum was limited because of the small number of students and, as yet, there were no vocational qualifications on offer. Following the last inspection, the curriculum had been reviewed and changes were made which had had a positive impact upon outcomes for students in Islamic Education and Arabic. The curriculum had been enriched through an improved range of extra-curricular activities. However, few visits were arranged to and from the school in order to maximise students' learning experiences in the real world. The curriculum understandably had a UK character but it was not enhanced enough by the local context and the students' backgrounds. However, students in Year 10 and 11 had useful opportunities to develop their business flair through several opportunities, most notably Industry Day.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The provision for the health and safety of students was acceptable. Staff ensured that students felt secure around the school. Accidents and injuries were uncommon; medicines and student health records were managed effectively. Maintenance and repair of the site, safety checks and safety routines such as fire drills were carried out regularly and effectively. However, the school was not as clean and as hygienic as it

should have been. Transport arrangements were satisfactory, although there was not a strong enough staff presence during the arrival and departure of students to monitor potential problems. The school strove to promote a healthy life-style but only with mixed success. There was an inconsistent understanding amongst staff and students of child protection procedures.

The quality of support provided for students was acceptable. Generally positive relationships between staff and students helped promote an inclusive ethos. Students' behaviour was mostly managed well, helped by their own self-discipline. These skills were impressively demonstrated by a completely student-led enterprise project that successfully raised money for international charities. Not all teachers understood how to manage behaviour without causing students undue stress. The support for students with special educational needs was adequate and they made acceptable progress. Classroom support was not yet fully effective across the school, as the role of classroom assistants had not been fully developed. The school's actions to promote good attendance and punctuality in the school were acceptable but lacked determination. Absences were not pursued with enough vigour. Lateness to school and to lessons was too readily tolerated.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

Senior leaders were well-intentioned and committed to school improvement. The firm leadership of the Principal was keeping the school on even keel during a difficult phase of staff changes. Senior leaders had clear roles and responsibilities, and these were well shared with middle leaders. However, leaders at all levels had too little time, scope or autonomy to carry out their duties as effectively as they should. The teaching staff shared the commitment of the senior leaders to improve the school, but there was not enough cohesion and dynamism to generate the momentum necessary to bring about significant change. There had been a few good improvements to the school, but other aspects had been allowed to drift. As such, the leaders' capacity to improve the school was acceptable.

Senior leaders understood the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They were increasingly using self-evaluation as a development tool but did not involve all leaders sufficiently in the process. Senior leaders regularly monitored and evaluated the work of the school but their judgements were not rigorous enough and, often too generous. The professional development of teachers was not addressed successfully enough nor sufficiently funded. This was especially an issue for the many newly qualified teachers. The school had addressed some of the issues from the last inspection, but not all.

Parents had a positive opinion of the school and were increasingly involved through a more active Parent Teacher Association. Communication between school and parents was acceptable. However, parents did not have information about their children's academic progress; termly reports were often too generic and did not give specific information about age-related progress. Furthermore, parents did not have enough guidance to help them support their children's learning at home; communication with teachers was too variable. Links with the local community were acceptable but underdeveloped.

The school did not have a governing body as such. The school's owners had not responded to the recommendations from the last report to involve stakeholders more in the decision-making of the school. They did not hold the school to account enough for their actions, nor offer specialist support to senior leaders. The owners did not ensure sufficient autonomy and resources for the school leaders to be able to develop the school fully.

The management of the school's day-to-day life was acceptable although there were weaknesses in the organisation of the start of the school day and in ensuring that all senior students attended all lessons. All staff were suitably qualified but there was a preponderance of newly qualified teachers who did not fully benefit from personalised induction. Training for all staff was underdeveloped. The staff:student ratio was mostly acceptable, but there were too many students in a minority of classes. The facilities and resources were sufficient to support the curriculum but the library was poorly stocked and there were too few resources for information and communication technology.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	105	12%
	Last year	176	23%
Teachers	13		18%
Students	7		7%

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Just under a sixth of parents responded to the survey; a significantly lower rate than last year. Similarly, only a minority of teachers and students submitted a response to the survey in preparation for the inspection. Of these, most parents had a positive opinion of the school and were pleased that their children were essentially happy and enjoyed school. However, weaknesses in communication with the school was a common concern expressed by a few parents, as was safety during break times and the quantity of homework given to students. Overall, satisfaction of the quality of education from teachers and students was also less positive. Students' additional comments showed concern about the extent to which they were self-disciplined and self-reliant; skills which they considered were not always acknowledged by the management of the school. Concern about school management was also voiced by a few teachers in relation to various aspects of provision, and to school development, including the limited amount of professional development available for teachers at the school.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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