

INSPECTION REPORT

Grammar School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Grammar School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	No website
Telephone	04-2824822
Address	PO Box 1123, Al Garhoud, Dubai
Principal	Dr. Patricia D'Cruz
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	858
Number of Emirati students	30 (4%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 19th to Wednesday 21st March 2012

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?	10
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	11
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	12
What happens next?	14
How to contact us	14
Our work with schools	15

The context of the school

Grammar School is a private school located in Al Garhoud. At the time of inspection 858 girls and boys were enrolled. The school delivered a UK-style Curriculum across four phases, Kindergarten to Post-16.

The school employed 51 teachers, led by a Principal and an advisor from an educational consulting company. A further team of consultants provided support to the school regarding Islamic Education and Arabic. Only around one third of the teachers had specific teaching qualifications suitable to their deployment. The school had a wide range of nationalities with the majority coming from Indian and Pakistani families in Dubai and other nearby emirates. About four per cent of the students were Emirati.

The Grammar School was first inspected by Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) in 2009. The school was found to be providing an unsatisfactory quality of education overall. Subsequently, DSIB completed five Follow-Through Inspections of the school between 2009 and 2011. Inspectors found that the school had not successfully addressed all the recommendations from the full inspection of 2009. The inspection of March 2012 reviewed all aspects of the work of the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Unsatisfactory

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance of Grammar School was unsatisfactory. Students' attainment across most subjects and grades was below curriculum standards. Their progress, marginally better in a few areas, did not match expectations in lessons or over time. Outcomes for students in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language were acceptable. Despite a strong commitment of senior leaders to improvement, teaching strategies did not result in effective learning in the Kindergarten, primary or secondary phases. The assessment systems in the school did not accurately measure students' performance. Assessment information was not used effectively by teachers to meet students' needs in a majority of lessons. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum was underdeveloped.

Students were willing to learn and teachers were sincerely trying to improve their practice. Where students' outcomes were acceptable, teachers had succeeded in providing appropriate challenge and

activities that motivated students. Leadership was not effectively distributed to enable middle managers to help deliver improvements. The school had established processes for self-evaluation but their impact was yet to be seen. Parents were supportive of the school's efforts to modernise methods, but they did not play a meaningful role in raising attainment or making decisions that might contribute to school improvement. Governors failed to hold the school accountable for the changes needed. The school did not provide the required amount of time for students to study Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. There were insufficient resources to support good learning.

Key strengths

- A student body that was willing to learn, get involved and direct their own learning;
- A few examples of effective teaching in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language, English, mathematics and science in the higher grades.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in all subjects and phases;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that tasks are sufficiently challenging for students of all abilities;
- Develop a whole-school assessment system that accurately measures learning outcomes and informs teaching objectives;
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students;
- Revise the timings of the school day so that all students arrive before registration, begin lessons simultaneously and depart from school together;
- Ensure compliance with Ministry of Education time allocation requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Identify students with special educational needs accurately, modify their curricula, monitor their progress and ensure that appropriate support is provided in lessons;
- Improve leadership at all levels by ensuring that leaders clearly understand best educational practice and are equipped with the skills to implement and manage change;
- Provide more practical resources in lessons, especially information and communication technology (ICT), to facilitate better learning.

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	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

Attainment, apart from in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language, was unsatisfactory overall. The majority of students did not display knowledge, understanding and skills in examinations or in lessons that were in line with curriculum expectations. In most lessons, students' skills in reading, writing and comprehension were underdeveloped. They lacked the necessary skills to express themselves independently of the teacher. In the early years, children could not communicate confidently with appropriate grammar and punctuation. In mathematics and science, too many students did not understand the work to an expected standard. The application of their knowledge and critical thinking skills were weak. Students of Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language did have the ability to use their understanding in a familiar context and could communicate their thoughts clearly.

Progress for students, overall, was unsatisfactory. Students made acceptable progress in certain areas of their work, such as Islamic morals and the application of their understanding of Islam to their own lives. Students of Arabic as a first language were beginning to develop better skills in writing and listening. Older students displayed practical scientific skills that were in line with expectations over time. In English and mathematics, however, progress was not secure. A majority of students did not reach expected standards in writing, reading, speaking and problem-solving which were appropriate to their ages and development. In lessons, students did not progress sufficiently well because tasks lacked challenge or were not well matched to their learning needs. The progress of students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory. Students made slow progress because they were often required to do the same work as other students across most subjects. As a result, their understanding of concepts did not develop adequately. Secondary students with specific needs made acceptable progress in their reading and writing skills.

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were similar to those of their peers. A large number of these students were at the early stages of learning English, especially but not exclusively in the younger grades. The attainment and progress of these students across the curriculum were adversely affected by difficulties in English. Emirati students struggled to reach learning objectives, sometimes because of their weak comprehension of English and sometimes due to the insufficient support provided by teachers.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Students' behaviour was acceptable and most of them respected school rules. Relationships between students and teachers were respectful. Occasionally, students were not respectful to one another, particularly when the quality of teaching provided to them was weak. They enjoyed their lessons most of the time. Students generally followed the school's advice on eating healthily and taking exercise, but inconsistently so. Attendance was unsatisfactory during the inspection, but it was acceptable over the most recent full semester. Students had appropriate understanding of Islam and its impact upon society in Dubai and the wider world, and could give simple examples. They demonstrated age-appropriate appreciation of the traditions, heritage and values of the UAE that influence life in Dubai, and they could provide some examples to illustrate these as well. Most students valued the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and celebrated their own cultures. They were aware of their responsibilities in school and in their communities. Students' views regarding decision-making in the school required further development. Almost all students knew how Dubai's economic development has taken place. They took care of their immediate surroundings but did not regularly take part in sustainable environmental activities.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

The quality of teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, primary and secondary phases. It was acceptable in the post-16 classes. Teachers generally had appropriate subject knowledge but they lacked expertise regarding the curriculum offered by the school. In too many lessons, the teachers demonstrated weak understanding of how students learn. A few teachers had high expectations, but many lacked a realistic view about what students could achieve. Coupled with lack of pacing and undemanding tasks, their low expectations meant that learning was not challenging enough in many classes. In general, lesson objectives were not clear or sharply focused. Questioning of students was too general, and too many questions required only one-word answers. In primary and secondary classes, for example, there was often too much teacher talk and not enough opportunities for students to express their views. Teachers of English, in some cases, displayed good questioning skills, but across the school there was often poor modelling of the English language. There was little meaningful group activity or discussion in many classes. Teaching in other subjects, including art and library studies, was unsatisfactory, with important weaknesses in teachers' classroom management skills. In the post-16 classes, teachers' understanding of the examination requirements and their use of more reliable assessment information meant that teaching was more consistently of an acceptable quality.

Learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, primary and secondary phases. At the post-16 phase, students' learning was acceptable, mainly because they demonstrated age-appropriate skills working independently of their teachers. At other phases of the school, most students listened attentively, co-operated with their teachers and enjoyed learning. Most could persevere to complete their tasks. However, they were often too dependent on their teachers and had few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Most were passive learners with underdeveloped independent learning skills. They had limited opportunities for discussion, or for the development of collaborative

learning or research skills. Students had insufficient access to ICT and demonstrated significant difficulty applying their learning in new or unfamiliar contexts.

Assessment was acceptable at the post-16 phase but unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, primary and secondary phases. In a significant proportion of lessons, teachers did not accurately establish the prior knowledge of students. Lessons were delivered with insufficient regard of students' existing skills. Questioning during lessons was weak and did not help teachers to assess students' on-going understanding. Teachers in the Kindergarten linked their assessments to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, but they did not change the experiences provided for the children. In the primary phase, teachers' marking was of variable quality across subjects. Although a few teachers assessed students' work carefully against the English National Curriculum levels, most students did not have regular feedback on how to improve their work. The school had developed a number of assessment strategies to check students' progress over time. For example, at the start and end of certain units of work, teachers checked the children's acquisition of phonics and independent writing skills. Overall, however, this practice was at an early stage of development and the assessment data gathered were not always accurate.

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

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

The curriculum in all phases was of unsatisfactory quality. It lacked breadth and balance. In the Kindergarten, there were insufficient opportunities to learn through exploration and practical activities. In the primary and secondary phases, insufficient time was allocated to meet Ministry of Education requirements for the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. The programme offered from Grade 9 onwards was narrow, focusing almost exclusively on science and commerce. Consequently, too many students were not profitably engaged for large amounts of time during the day, because they had no lessons to attend. Curriculum planning did not ensure continuity and progression of learning. The curriculum took insufficient account of the wide range of students' needs. Thus, the curriculum did not meet the needs of all students including the gifted and talented, those with special educational needs and students at the early stages of learning English. For example, there were insufficient opportunities to develop listening skills and too few reading materials to meet the needs of those beginning to learn English. Throughout the school there was too much focus on consolidating or increasing knowledge and not enough on the development of higher level skills and the application of learning. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities were improving and were beginning to affect students' learning but were at a

very early stage of development. The organisation of the school day required review to maximise the time available for learning.

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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Health and safety arrangements were of acceptable quality. Frequent checks were made and acted upon to make sure that a safe school environment was maintained. The school building and equipment were secure, in sound repair, well maintained and clean. Students were safe during the school day, in classrooms, playgrounds, as they moved around the school and on school transport. However, supervisory practices at the beginning and end of the school day required review. Students were given sound advice about healthy choices by the school nurse, who had developed acceptable arrangements to monitor the health of students. There was, however, an absence of systematic promotion of healthy living throughout the school. Staff members were trained in child protection and most were aware of the appropriate procedures to be followed.

The quality of support for students was unsatisfactory overall. Teachers showed an interest in and concern for students' well-being, encouraging and rewarding their efforts. Most teachers managed students' behaviour positively and established a calm and safe learning environment. There had been some improvements in the tracking of students' progress in English, particularly in the secondary grades. However, there was insufficient individual advice and guidance on how to improve for most students across a range of subjects. The students in the secondary and post-16 phases did not receive well-informed advice and guidance about their future education and career options. Students with special educational needs were not provided with the necessary support and modifications to teaching and resources. The screening and assessment procedures lacked rigour and precision. Individualised plans to guide progress were of a very poor quality. Most students with special educational needs did not receive appropriate support and challenge in lessons and tasks. The curriculum was not modified for these students and suitable resources were not available to meet their specific needs. Their progress was not monitored and reviewed systematically. Attendance and punctuality were recorded daily, but the procedures to improve poor attendance had had limited impact upon students' behaviour.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership at all levels was unsatisfactory. Leaders were committed to improving the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum in order to raise students' outcomes. The vision and actions to achieve these changes were unclear. Middle leaders, although equally committed, did not have a well-established understanding of the steps to be taken to implement the required improvements. The distribution of responsibility and decision-making was ineffective. While middle leaders knew their roles, there was a significant lack of the skills and understanding needed to make the necessary improvements in lessons. The capacity of the existing leaders to further improve the school was limited.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Processes to enable the school to know its key priorities were in place. Teaching was reviewed through a system of regular classroom visits and a minority of teachers had improved elements of their practice. With the support of a school consultant, appropriate improvement plans had been drawn up with clear targets and responsibilities set out. However, teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum, all central to the school's improvement over time, had not advanced significantly. The effects of the innovations were not as positive as had been hoped due to a lack of rigour and accuracy. The major priorities for change had only progressed to a limited extent.

Partnership with parents and the local community was acceptable. Established links between home and school were in place. There was regular reporting of progress in examinations, notice of important events during the academic year and quick responses to any difficulties arising with individual students. The school was insufficiently proactive in engaging parents. Parents were not routinely involved in the wider life and work of the school, and in supporting their own child's learning. A few links with the local community were in place including, for example, work placements for older students. Further expansion of these initiatives was planned.

Governance of the school was unsatisfactory. The governors demonstrated commitment to directing the improvements that were needed. However, the actions taken and the arrangements to hold the school to account for its actions were weak. The focus on raising standards and improving the key weaknesses in the school were not sufficiently effective. The governing body did not include a wide range of stakeholders. The access of parents, in particular, to key decision-makers and their influence upon actions for future improvements was limited.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Most daily procedures operated efficiently. About one-third of staff members held appropriate teaching qualifications. However, they were not always deployed effectively. The premises were adequate for the implementation of the curriculum. The physical learning environment for all students was insufficiently stimulating. In a majority of lessons and in all subjects, teachers and students did not have sufficient access to an appropriate range of resources, including ICT, to meet the learning needs of the students.

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	207	27%
	Last year	The school was not inspected in 2010-2011	
Teachers	15		33%
Students	65		34%

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

About a quarter of parents responded to the survey. About one-third of teachers and senior students responded to their surveys. Most students and teachers and a majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the quality of education provided. Most parents and students believed that progress in the key subjects was good. Satisfaction with outcomes in Arabic as an additional language and science was lower than in other subjects. A few parents were concerned about Islamic understanding, while all teachers and most parents thought that students had sufficient opportunities to take responsibility. Most parents and

students believed that the teaching was good, were happy with reporting of students' progress, the choice of subjects and the after-school activities. Most were happy with homework, safety and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. There was general satisfaction with advice on future careers, support for students with special educational needs and the quality of leadership. However, a minority of parents and students commented on poor quality teaching, unproductive field trips and insufficient resources. Concern was expressed over low challenge levels in lessons, some unhealthy food options and the school's weekly timetable. There was no survey conducted in the previous year.

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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