

# Al Ameen School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 11

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.

Al Ameen School was inspected in February 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

### Basic information about the school

Located in Al Nahda, Al Ameen is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 11, aged three to 16 years. The school followed an English curriculum which was taught in English. The school was judged as not providing a satisfactory education in its last full inspection in November 2009 but the Follow-Through Inspection reported that satisfactory progress had been made in addressing the recommendations. At the time of the inspection, there were 477 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 and almost all were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Parents acknowledged that the responses to any questions and concerns they raised from time to time were satisfactory.

### How well does the school perform overall?

Al Ameen School provided an acceptable quality of education for its students and had a strong capacity to improve further. Student attainment in each of the key subjects was at least in line with international expectations and students' progress in each subject was good. Islamic values were well developed and were reflected in the care and support provided for students. Students had good understanding of Islam, fulfilled their civic responsibilities well and demonstrated good economic and environmental understandings.

Teaching and learning were much improved since the last inspection and were acceptable. Assessment procedures had improved to an acceptable standard but staff did not always use the information at their disposal to good effect. For example, they did not use assessment information to adjust their lesson plans so that the teaching was better adapted to meet students' differing needs. The curriculum was good and students were benefiting from the measures the school had taken to address previous shortcomings. Positive features of the curriculum were the frequent educational field trips and the range of well planned extra-curricular activities. The school protected and supported its students well. Appropriate health and safety procedures and policies were carried out diligently, with a few exceptions. The quality of support was good and students' educational and personal well-being was a high priority for staff. Teachers demonstrated good relationships with students and there were only a few occasions when student behaviour dropped from a high standard.

Leadership and management were good and contributed greatly to the good progress the school had made since the last inspection. Staff members shared a clear vision and undertook their roles and responsibilities purposefully. Morale was high and the partnerships with parents and the community were much improved. Parents were strongly supportive of the school's leadership team and praised the way that the school had dealt with any concerns. All parents spoke highly of the progress the school had made over the last year and how improvements were impacting positively upon their families. The schools' links with the local community were strong. Governance was good and governors actively monitored and supported the schools' leadership team. Teachers were well qualified, experienced and well supported. The school was appropriately resourced in most areas although some resources were not as well used as they needed to be, notably information and communication technology (ICT) in the classrooms.

## Key features of the school

- The good progress students were making in key subjects;
- The effective leadership and management that brought about the many improvements in important areas;
- The outstanding links with parents and with the wider community;
- Students' good behaviour;
- The school's strong commitment to its Islamic values.

## Recommendations

- Further improve the quality of learning by ensuring that teaching more actively promotes practical, investigative and collaborative work;
- Ensure that students are given clearer and more precise guidance on what they need to do to improve and how they can best help themselves.

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

Progress in Islamic Education was good and attainment was acceptable. Most students in all grades could memorise chapters and verses of The Holy Qur'an, and the majority could recite The Holy Qur'an with few errors. Most students performed prayers correctly. In the lower grades, the majority of the students showed knowledge about the principles of Islam such as how to perform Hajj, and how to look after animals. They understood the story of Prophet Ibrahim with the king who believed that he was a god. In the higher grades most students knew the impact of truthfulness in life and after death, and the majority of them could mention the advantages of fasting in Muslim life. They showed belief that Islam is a religion of purity.

Progress in Arabic was good and attainment was acceptable in all stages. In the lower grades, most students could pronounce new words correctly. The majority of students could read phrases and short paragraphs with few errors, and the majority could participate in short conversations with few errors. Most students could write words correctly after practicing. In the higher grades, most students could read paragraphs and write sentences appropriately. The majority accurately distinguished between singular and plural correctly, and could mention the opposite of a particular word correctly.

Attainment in English was acceptable across the school. In the Foundation Stage children acquired the basics of English in speaking and were forming words and short phrases. By the time they reached Year 1 most could write their names and spell common words accurately. In the Secondary school, for the first time, students were preparing for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). They conducted debates and class discussion with confidence in their speaking abilities. This in turn supported a level of writing that was creative, lively and rich in vocabulary. Progress was good at all stages. In Key Stage 4 students were making up the deficit of skills that had resulted in unsatisfactory attainment a year ago. When they started school children spoke English as an additional language but, during the Secondary phase, they accessed the whole curriculum in English, reaching levels broadly in line with 16 year-olds internationally.

In mathematics, attainment was acceptable in each phase. Progress was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the Primary and Secondary phases. By the end of the Foundation Stage most children could count, match groups of objects, make patterns, name simple shapes and accurately use language associated with place and comparison. By the end of Year 6, students showed their understanding of place value by converting decimal numbers to fractions and could measure length accurately. However, students' skills in mathematical investigations were under-developed. By the end of the Year 11, students had developed a good range of mental and written calculation skills in algebra and geometry. From Years 1 to 8, the progress of the more able students was limited because lesson planning did not take sufficient account of their abilities.

In science, attainment was acceptable in each phase. Progress was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the Primary and Secondary phases. In Foundation Stage children could talk in simple terms about the features of animals and describe activities that take place in the home. By the end of Year 6 they showed understanding of how plants grow and could describe how to keep themselves healthy. By Year 8, students had developed their scientific vocabulary well, could describe human respiration effectively and the effects of exercise on respiration. The oldest students could understand more complex processes such as how molecules combine to make polymers and transpiration in plants. Throughout the school, students' opportunities to collaborate to carry out practical investigations in their classrooms and in the science laboratories were limited. The quality of their written work was good but their oral skills were less well-developed.

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

Attitudes and behaviour were good at all levels. Good behaviour and relationships were evident throughout the school. Students' relationships with each other and with adults were positive, co-operative and respectful. Students showed concern for and tolerance of others. Most students were making good progress in the development of personal skills and self-confidence. Senior students made an increasing contribution to the school and wider community as they progressed through it. Almost all students arrived in good time for lessons. Attendance was acceptable.

Students had a good understanding of Islam and fulfilled their civic responsibilities well. They spoke of the ways that their faith guided their lives and its place in the world as a promoter of peace. Members of the school council were active in bringing about changes, citing an improved menu in the cafeteria as an example. Prefects assisted adults with the supervision of younger students in school and on the buses. Students were very proud to live in Dubai and spoke of its iconic buildings and achievements. They enjoyed the variety and richness that living among so many different nationalities brought to their lives.

Most students' showed good economic and environmental understanding. For example, they could explain how and why Dubai was changing and even younger students understood the importance of the need to use water wisely and use the earth's resources with due care. Environmental education and understanding was well developed in social studies lessons and economic understanding in economics, business studies and commerce lessons.

### How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable at all levels. Almost all teachers demonstrated appropriate knowledge of their subjects and effective ways of teaching them. Many of the best lessons involved enquiry, collaboration, challenging tasks and higher order thinking skills. Lesson planning and presentation were generally acceptable or better. Objectives were presented at the beginning of lessons but not frequently reviewed at the end of each lesson. In the least successful lessons teachers talked for too long and did not provide enough opportunities for students to ask questions or share their knowledge with one another.

Often in these lessons students were not given sufficient time to reflect on what they were being asked to do. At times teachers provided students with objects to manipulate for exploring mathematics and science concepts, but such provision was limited. Teachers commonly gave assignments of varying degrees of challenge, but modifications of teaching to meet the needs of all students within classroom lessons was seldom seen. Only rarely were the most successful students given more challenging assignments.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable at all levels. Students typically enjoyed lessons and were responsible and fully engaged in learning. Students were eager to participate and most experienced success in learning what the teacher had intended them to learn. In most lessons, engagement was through teacher-led discussions and the associated whole class assignments. Paired and small group work was relatively rare. When undertaken, it was typically brief which limited opportunities for extended learning. When students worked together they were not often given a question or task requiring cognitive skills such as applying, analysing, evaluating or creating. Applications to the real world were only evident in a minority of lessons. Learning through enquiry and research were underdeveloped, as were opportunities for critical and higher order thinking. Students very rarely used ICT during lessons.

The quality of assessment was acceptable across the school. In most lessons teachers reviewed individual and group work during the lesson and therefore had a good grasp of students' progress. Records of individual progress and attainment were well maintained. Examinations were rigorous, requiring strong understanding and skills for a student to score well. Teachers reviewed test results for individual and group needs and possible adjustments in curriculum delivery. Test results were used to identify students who needed additional support in reading. Most teachers were aware of students' needs and strengths. However, they did not apply their knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses to adjust their teaching in order to better meet students' needs. Assessments were not used in a way which informed students about their strengths and areas for improvement.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good and upheld the aims of the school. The English National Curriculum was supported with course materials and text books aligned with the appropriate attainment targets. The range of subjects from Foundation Stage to Year 8 was broad, giving a variety of learning experiences. In the Primary phase, skills were developed progressively and at Secondary, the curriculum was aimed towards the IGCSE examinations. Students chose from science or commerce in Key Stage 4, meeting their needs and career aspirations well. Although there was a choice of modern foreign language, there were no opportunities to pursue creative subjects beyond Year 8. An annual review of the curriculum started with an analysis of students' attainment, leading to action plans, which identified the staffing needs and the requirements for books and resources for learning. Additional programmes were introduced for students falling behind in mathematics and English. The reading recovery

programme had been particularly effective in improving students' reading skills. Subject departments routinely identified where cross-curricular links could be introduced, but these were not yet firmly embedded across all lessons. Most teachers were using the commercial course text book with accompanying notes and software as the basis for their lesson planning. However, the school had a timescale for teachers to plan independently and so introduce original resources into their lessons. Themed weeks broadened students' access to a variety of additional learning experiences. Strong links with the local community enabled students to undertake educational field trips and facilitated involvement with the Emirates Environmental Group. Extra-curricular activities and inter-school competitions included sports, debating and taking part in the Young Entrepreneurs competition.

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

The arrangements for health and safety were good. The school was safe, clean and well maintained. Medicines were locked away and chemicals were kept in a storeroom in a laboratory that was locked when not in use. An evacuation drill was conducted each term, although not at the beginning of the autumn term. A nurse provided immediate care for illnesses and injuries, presented lessons on healthy practices, monitored obese students each month and advised their parents. Records of medications and procedures for administering medications were well maintained. Students were well supervised during bus unloading and loading. There were still some areas which needed improvement. For example, students in the front seats of busses did not use seat belts, and the school lacked a policy for handling appropriately any child protection incidents.

The quality of support was good at all levels. Students' educational and personal well-being was a high priority for staff members. Teachers had good relationships with students. Teachers and school leaders knew students well and were well informed regarding their needs. Students felt supported by staff. There were well developed systems for tracking students' academic progress and for giving guidance. Students received good advice and support. Year 8 students were counselled regarding upper school course options. Older students were given support regarding future career pathways. University representatives were invited to inform students of options open to them and encourage students to set their sights high. The school had clear and effective procedures for dealing with incidents of poor behaviour but there were few discipline problems.

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

The quality of leadership was good. Staff members worked with a common purpose and morale was high. The strengthened senior leadership team and others with management responsibilities had a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their work over the last year had a positive impact on all areas of school life, including attainment and progress, and contributed greatly to the school's improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. The school took into account the views of students, parents, the governing body as well as the teaching staff and, consequently, clear

and appropriate priorities had been established. The school action plan was well written, with clear lines of accountability and a timetable for delivery. The task of developing leadership roles across the school was proceeding well. Staff benefited from regular guidance and support to develop their roles and responsibilities, and an effective performance management policy was in place.

The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community were outstanding. The parents group played a constructive role in supporting and, where necessary, challenging the school to do more. Parents appreciated the caring and professional approach to the education and welfare of their children. They were actively encouraged to be partners in their children's learning and participated on educational visits and trips. Their support for fundraising causes was a notable strength. The school had developed an excellent network of links with the business and faith communities and with other schools.

The quality of governance was good. Governors had played a most constructive role in helping to shape and monitor the school's response to the previous inspection's recommendations, as well as helping to shape future plans. Regular meetings were held between the owners and the Principal to review progress on both educational and financial matters. Most governors were also parents, which helped the school governors to both take account of and share information with the parents' forum.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Sufficient qualified teachers were deployed with a good balance of expertise, age and experience. Staff members were appropriately deployed. A well judged programme of continuing professional development enabled teachers to work confidently and share concerns constructively. Premises and facilities provided a clean and attractive environment for learning and the facilities for sports, while limited in space, were well used.

## 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:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good	Good

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

## Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

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

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