

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai English Speaking College

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai English Speaking College

Location	Al Ruwwayah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.descdubai.com
Telephone	04 3604866
Address	P O Box 125814, Academic City, Dubai
Principal	Andrew Gibbs
Curriculum	English National Curriculum
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	11-18 / Year 7 to 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	737
Number of Emirati students	14 (2%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 24th to Wednesday 26th October 2011

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?.....	13
What happens next?	14
How to contact us	14
Our work with schools.....	15

The context of the school

Dubai English Speaking College is situated in Al Ruwwayah. The school opened in 2005. At the time of the inspection, there were 737 students on the roll, aged 11 to 18 years.

The school followed the English National Curriculum. Students were entered for GCSE at the end of the secondary phase, for AS level at the end of year 12, and for GCE Advanced level at the end of the post-16 phase.

There were 67 full-time teachers, including the Headteacher and the senior management team, and six part-time teachers. All had appropriate qualifications. They were supported by seven teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 36 classes, six at each year group from Years 7 to 10, five at Year 11 and seven in the sixth form. Fourteen students were Emirati. Sixty nine students, approximately nine per cent, had Arabic as their first language.

At the time of the inspection, the Headteacher had been in post for only six weeks. Seventeen teachers were newly appointed.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai English Speaking College provided a good quality of education. The ethos of the school was outstanding. All staff and students shared common goals, which essentially led to the pursuit of excellence, socially and academically. It had a number of outstanding features, including attainment and progress at both stages in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching and learning was overall outstanding, though some individual lessons in Arabic were less successful. Weaknesses in the interim management of the school had become apparent since the previous report.

The school had made good progress in addressing three of the four recommendations from the previous report. Attainment in Islamic Education, previously unsatisfactory, was now acceptable. While there were improvements in Arabic, they were not yet sufficient to improve the earlier grading of acceptable. There had been significant progress in ensuring consistency in students' learning. Parents were involved purposefully in the life and work of the school. However, the school and the Governing Board had not

ensured compliance with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic, which was a major and significant omission. Under new leadership, the school had the capacity for further improvement, and the will to ensure compliance.

Key strengths

- The high attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science throughout the school;
- Students' outstanding behaviour, self-discipline, consideration for others and attitudes towards learning;
- The outstanding teaching, learning and assessment in most subjects;
- The supportive caring and learning environment;
- Partnership with parents.

Recommendations

- The Governing Board and the school should, with some urgency, ensure compliance with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic;
- The school should take more positive steps in its efforts to improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, with a timetable for progress and agreed criteria for success;
- The school should refine its procedures for self-evaluation to ensure an accurate, analytical, objective report, focusing on impact and outcomes of teaching.

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

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

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable. It was outstanding at all stages in English and mathematics. In science, attainment was outstanding at the secondary stage and good at post-16. In Islamic Education, students had a secure knowledge of key Islamic concepts and beliefs. There were weaknesses in recitation of The Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth. Students learning Arabic as a first language could read and recognise known words and phrases but had limited oral communication skills. In Arabic as

an additional language, they could effectively use previously learnt vocabulary in simple sentences. Students had developed very good skills in critical understanding of English literary texts, and in analysis of form, structure and language use. Almost all students in mathematics could apply learned knowledge to set questions. At all stages, in science, students performed very well in theoretical aspects of their work. They demonstrated very good recall and could apply their knowledge in context.

Progress was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic, and outstanding in English and mathematics. In science, progress was outstanding in the secondary classes and good thereafter. Students in Islamic Education showed steady development of the links between Islam and everyday life, and in Arabic, of reading comprehension and translation skills. Progress in speaking was limited in Arabic as an additional language. In English, progress in speaking and listening was exceptionally high. Students in science could build effectively on what they had learned earlier and could apply their knowledge to real life contexts by the sixth year. Students with special educational needs made outstanding progress.

Overall, the attainment and progress of Emirati students were at least equal to all other students in all subjects. They had age-appropriate knowledge of The Holy Qur'an. As with other students, their appreciation and understanding of literary texts in Arabic was limited. Attainment in English was outstanding, with excellent control of both spoken and written language, and first-rate understanding in listening and in reading. At the post-16 stage, they could give an excellent, mature response to literary texts. They had a very good ability to apply their sound mathematical knowledge. Their understanding of scientific principles was very good.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Throughout the school, almost all students demonstrated excellent behaviour and self-discipline. They showed genuine respect to each other and to adults, and displayed sensitivity to the needs of others. Their attitudes towards learning were outstanding. Relationships with teachers were effective in developing students' self-esteem and in providing an environment where they felt valued and trusted. Students demonstrated a high level of responsibility and an excellent work ethic. They made wise choices about food, and participated in sport and activities. Most had a secure knowledge and appreciation of Islamic practices and of their impact on life in Dubai. They had broad awareness of local heritage and culture. However, their deeper understanding of the value of Islam and local traditions was less well developed. Their appreciation of the diverse, multi-cultural nature of Dubai and its impact was outstanding. Most students had a good knowledge of Dubai's economic context and its success. Their understanding of current global economic and environmental issues was secure. Their appreciation of local economic and environmental challenges was less well developed.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

Teaching for effective learning was outstanding at secondary and post-16. The majority of lessons were highly effective in engaging students. This was not the case in Arabic, where teaching was less effective. Elsewhere, a combination of excellent subject knowledge and a clear understanding of students' needs enabled teachers to plan and deliver challenging and, at times, inspirational lessons. Rich, interactive environments and varied resources, including new technology made an important contribution to students' excellent progress. Consistency in teachers' expectations and high levels of student participation were achieved through the implementation of an agreed teaching and learning charter. Guidance on questioning techniques had similarly improved teachers' ability to ask pertinent and differentiated questions which promoted critical thinking and higher order responses

The quality of learning was outstanding throughout. However, learning was weaker in Arabic. The development of learning and thinking skills had had a marked impact on students' acquisition of critical, reflective and analytical abilities. Students were able to reason, to solve problems and to formulate hypotheses. A culture of independence existed, with students taking responsibility for their learning. Collaborative group work promoted leadership roles, risk taking and the sharing of ideas. Students made meaningful connections with earlier learning and between subjects. Their attitudes were extremely positive and they were very mature, focused and enthusiastic learners.

Assessment was outstanding at secondary and post-16. There were weaknesses in the tracking of, and subsequent provision for, progress of students in Islamic Education and Arabic. Elsewhere, detailed assessments, regular testing and the use of predictive data to measure value-added progress all featured prominently. They were used to inform lesson planning and the excellent range of on-going assessment strategies. A comprehensive system enabled the school to track and record individual student progress accurately. Teachers could identify underachievement quickly and set personal learning targets which were suitably challenging. Careful analysis of performance data also enabled senior leaders and heads of

department to monitor the progress of specific groups of students. Teachers' pertinent questioning helped them to check on students' prior knowledge and understanding, to assess current learning and to promote next steps in learning. Assessment criteria and National Curriculum levels were displayed prominently within classrooms. Students used them when assessing their own work and that of others. Teachers marked students' work regularly and thoroughly, and gave constructive feedback, including advice on how to improve. Reports were clear and informative, with guidance to parents on how to interpret teachers' assessments and thereby support their children's progress.

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

	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

The broad and balanced curriculum had a clear rationale that met the school's aims. The review process allowed contributions from teachers, students and parents. It had resulted in improvements including, for example, increased choices for post-16 students and the introduction of the teaching and learning charter. Most key subject areas had a good curriculum. Transition arrangements were well planned and implemented at all stages. The carefully planned cross-curricular links enhanced students' learning in, for example, Islamic Education, science, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). They also emphasised links to real life situations. There was an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, available to all students. The school had good links with the local, national and international communities, providing further enhancement and enrichment. However, time allocations were not sufficient in Islamic Education and Arabic, and did not meet Ministry of Education requirements. The curriculum offered by the school in Islamic Education and Arabic did not fully meet the needs of all students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

Overall health, safety and security arrangements were effectively managed and monitored. Transport systems had improved, with better arrangements for the parking of buses. The school had organised a bus-pass system and had arranged for the provision of late buses for those engaged in extra-curricular activities. Fire safety was excellent in policy, equipment and operation. Fire evacuation chairs had been installed for students with physical disabilities. The school buildings, grounds and facilities were very well maintained and supervised. Lifts had been installed in some blocks for easy movement of students with physical disability. Comprehensive record-keeping was evident in all aspects of health, safety and welfare. The medical area was well laid out and equipped. The storage of medicines and students' records was secure. The school effectively promoted healthy living through PSHE lessons, routine health checks and individual consultation. The canteen menu included healthy foods, but there was scope for the inclusion of more salads and fruit. Catering staff regularly consulted with medical personnel over the food offered in the canteen. Child protection guidelines were in place. There was a gap in provision of training for all staff in child protection issues, as staff had not been made sufficiently aware of early warning signs of potential problems. Most students indicated that they knew staff to whom they could talk, if any issue of concern arose. However, in the student survey, a few had suggested otherwise.

Relationships between students and staff were excellent. Students' behaviour was outstanding and, when necessary, was managed very well using a well-developed behaviour policy. Significant tracking and monitoring of student attainment and progress was evident throughout the school, especially in the learning support department. The excellent progress among this cohort of students was due in no small measure to the meticulous procedures for monitoring and subsequent interventions. Overall, the school offered excellent support to students in personal and academic matters. Provision for students with special educational needs was excellent at all stages. Teachers provided holistic support for individual students in whole-class settings. Where necessary and appropriate, some were withdrawn at suitable times for high quality individual or small group support. The learning support department comprised a small group of dedicated professionals. They were ably assisted by class teachers. Attendance was good and punctuality outstanding. Both were effectively managed and monitored. School contact with homes of students not in school occurred after the second day of absence, leaving a rather long gap.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership was outstanding. The recently appointed Headteacher had clearly indicated a change in direction. He was determined to alter the mindset of reluctant engagement with KHDA. He saw an immediate need to bring the Arabic department closer to the rest of the school. He had already expressed radical views on planning and on improving performance. He was determined to press ahead with his vision for the school. The senior management team had addressed in a workmanlike way some of the recommendations in the previous report. Heads of department were well placed to support the Headteacher. Overall, the school had a good capacity to improve.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Staff audited practice, and students' and parents' views were sought through questionnaires. Procedures for self-analysis permitted a comprehensive overview. However, the school's final document was ill-presented and of poor quality. It was largely descriptive, not rigorously analytical or evaluative. The school had not addressed the recommendation to comply with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic, despite having been told of the need to do so one full year before the current inspection, at the oral feedback to the school in October 2010.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. The school had extended and improved its links with parents, making very good use of electronic communication. Parents received regular informative reports on their children's progress. The school had developed productive links with business, Islamic centres and universities.

Governance was good. The Governing Board, ably led by a new chairperson, had declared its intent to work as a critical friend to the school. At recent meetings, the Board had addressed major strategic issues about the direction which the school should take and about ensuing priorities. It had a wide representation of stakeholders. A clerk to the Board had recently been appointed, facilitating communication for parents. The new chairperson demonstrated foresight and conviction. However, the Board had not ensured that the school had fulfilled statutory requirements.

Management was good. Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. The school supported new teachers very well, and met the professional development needs of existing staff through well-judged training. A grass pitch had been installed. Covered areas for shade in the grounds were insufficient for the number of students. There was overall one major management issue. The management team had not adjusted the timetable to accommodate the need for extra time for Islamic Education and Arabic. Not only had they failed to seize the opportunity to meet statutory regulations, they had also failed to support students. By deliberately maintaining a reduced exposure, they had left students with inadequate time in which to try to improve.

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	145	26%
	Last year	135	29%
Teachers	30		45%
Students	151		46%

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

About one quarter of parents responded to the survey, a slightly lower rate than last year. Almost half of the teachers and students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students indicated broad satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school and believed that progress was good in English, mathematics and science. In contrast, more than a few parents and students indicated that progress was less than good in Islamic Education and Arabic. A majority of parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, but about a third indicated that they did not know. About a fifth of students thought that the range of subjects was limited; a fifth also indicated that they were not involved in improving their school. Conversely, parents and teachers indicated that they were involved in school improvement. Parents, teachers and students were broadly positive in their views of the school's provision across a range of aspects.

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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