

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai English Speaking College

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai English Speaking College

Location	Dubai Academic City
Type of school	Private
Website	www.descdubai.com
Telephone	04-3604866
Address	PO Box 125814, Academic City, Dubai
Principal	Andrew Gibbs
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	11-18 / Year 7 to Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	842
Largest nationality group of Students	Click here to enter text.
Number of Emirati students	10 (1%)
Date of the inspection	5th to 7th November 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	10
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next?.....	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

Dubai English Speaking College (DESC) is situated in Al Ruwwayah. The school opened in 2005. At the time of the inspection, there were 842 students on the roll, aged 11 to 18 years.

The school followed the English National Curriculum, starting at Key Stage 3. Students were entered for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations at the end of the secondary phase. Students completed Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level examinations at the end of Year 12, and Advanced level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

There were 79 full-time teachers, including the Headteacher and the senior management team, and five part-time teachers. All had appropriate qualifications. They were supported by five teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 41 classes, seven in Year 7, six in each year group from Years 8 to 11 and ten in the sixth form. Ten students were Emiratis. Thirty-three students, approximately four per cent, had Arabic as their first language. At the time of the inspection, the Head teacher had just started his second year in post and there were two new members of the senior leadership team. Twenty-two teachers were newly appointed.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Outstanding

Key strengths

- The high attainment and progress by students in English, mathematics and science;
- The students' high levels of personal development and commitment to success;
- The high quality of teaching and learning achieved across most subjects;
- The improvements to the curriculum, raising the quality of all subjects to the level of the best;
- The dynamic and committed leaders at all levels, furthering the school's development.

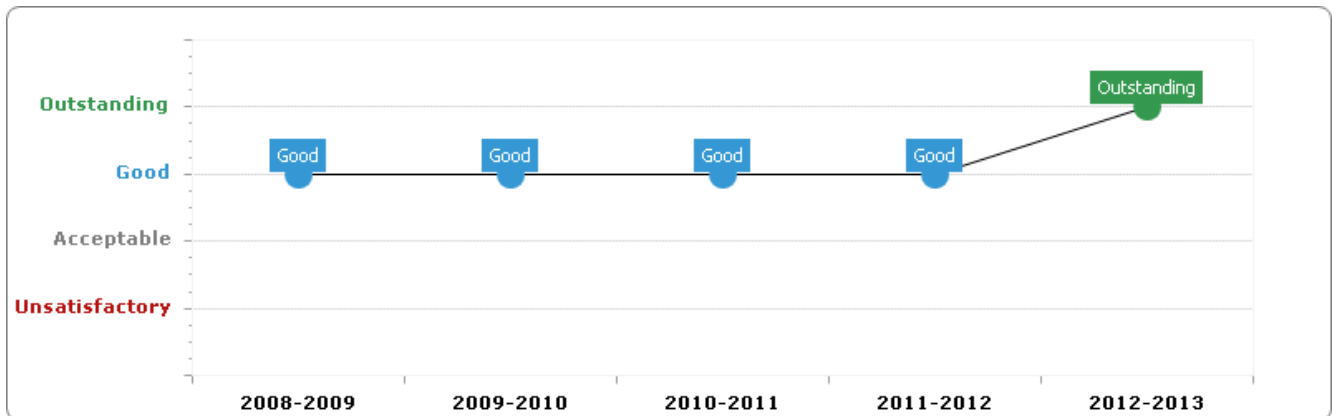
Recommendations

- Continue to raise students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Develop a system to give an overview of attainment and progress for groups of students across all subjects.

Progress since the last inspection

Dubai English Speaking College provided an outstanding quality of education. The school's ethos of improving the quality of education for all students, whatever their abilities, was tangible throughout the school. The school was equally committed to the personal development of all students. The pursuit of excellence in all areas was supported by the well qualified and committed teaching staff. The school had many outstanding elements, including attainment and progress in both phases in mathematics and science and, in post-16, in English. Teaching and learning were of outstanding quality overall. The actions taken to improve attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic were beginning to bear fruit. The school had successfully addressed the three recommendations from the last inspection report. The school was compliant with the Ministry of Education time requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. Self-evaluation and development planning were robust and supported the process of improvement. The school had taken positive steps to improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic but, equally, it acknowledged that these subjects needed further improvement. It had excellent processes for tracking individual students' progress, but not for tracking groups of students and assessing trends. The leadership team and Governing Board had the capacity for making further improvements.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	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	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Outstanding
Mathematics		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable. It was outstanding at both phases of mathematics and science. In English, attainment was good at the secondary stage and outstanding at post-16. In Islamic Education, students knew Fiqh laws, could explain parts of the Seerah, understood moral values and the concept of Halal and Haram. They could apply Islamic concepts and principles to real-life situations. Students' memorisation of The Holy Qur'an and Hadith was the least developed element in this subject. In Arabic as a first language, most students showed secure listening skills and acceptable speaking ability. Reading and writing skills were the least well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, most students relied on English translation and could speak about familiar topics and read short texts. In English, older secondary phase students had achieved good standards of sustained writing and could confidently communicate their ideas on literature. In the post-16 phase, students had an excellent grasp of critical analysis. In mathematics, attainment was outstanding because students were able to use their understanding of key mathematical ideas to think about complex abstract calculations. In science, students could explain concepts in detail using scientific terms with confidence and accuracy. The experimental and investigative skills of students were particularly strong.

Progress in Islamic Education was good in the secondary phase and acceptable in the post-16 phase. In Arabic, progress was acceptable. It was outstanding at both phases in mathematics and science. In English, progress was good at the secondary phase and outstanding in the post-16 phase. In the secondary phase, most students were able to listen carefully, used vocabulary effectively and wrote cogently. In the post-16 phase, students' written work was sophisticated. In mathematics, progress was accelerated by students being able to build abstract ideas from mathematical foundations. In science, progress was outstanding because of a strong emphasis on thinking skills, discussions and group work. In many cases, students had developed into research scientists. Students with special education needs made at least acceptable progress in the key subjects, with most making good or better progress in English, mathematics and science.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress was acceptable in Arabic, good in Islamic Education and English and outstanding in mathematics and science. In English, students could speak fluently but did not have the same level of fluency in written English. Girls performed better than boys. Attendance was outstanding. These students engaged very well in lessons and, in the post-16 phase, Emirati students were seen to take the initiative in lessons, notably in practical science classes. Reports to parents were detailed, with a range of information on current and predicted performance and areas for development. The school's preparation for students' next phases of education was outstanding, with personal guidance on careers and university choices. Emirati parents were well involved in the life of the school and had contributed their ideas to the improvement of the courses for Islamic Education and Arabic.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was good overall. Their attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They spoke and behaved with courtesy, and demonstrated mature and respectful attitudes towards everyone. Almost all students were ambitious, self-disciplined and demonstrated strong commitment to learning. They thrived on their teachers' guidance and used almost every opportunity to improve their understanding and skills. Students enjoyed physical activity and made healthy food choices. Disruptive behaviour or bullying were almost unknown and behaviour problems were dealt with promptly. Teachers contributed to realising the vision of the school as a hardworking and harmonious community. Attendance was high, with no group of students lower than the school average. Students were punctual to school and to lessons. Students' understanding of Islamic values and community and environmental responsibility were good. Islamic values were already embedded in the school through mutual respect and the contributions of students to helping other members and the wider community. Through the curriculum, international visits, and by being part of a multi-cultural school community, students understood how cultural diversity enhanced their school and Dubai. Students were increasingly involved in school improvements through the school council and informal consultation. Students strongly supported charitable causes and showed awareness of environmental issues, but their awareness was underdeveloped. Greater opportunities for students to take lead roles in suggesting improvements were being considered by the school, but were not yet fully established.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was of outstanding quality across the school. It was especially strong in English, mathematics and science. All teachers had excellent subject knowledge and a well-developed understanding of how students learn. Teachers' planning was carefully structured and included a wide range of appealing activities. The same format for planning was used throughout the school, focusing on an agreed set of skills. Consequently, skills were reinforced in every lesson. Teachers had excellent relationships with their students. Almost all had excellent questioning techniques and were able to adapt lesson plans to match the levels of understanding and differing needs of all students. The greatest consequence of the school's focus on teachers' skill development was that opportunities for critical thinking were a common occurrence in every lesson. The quality of teaching was equally outstanding in other subjects. Detailed planning, strong teacher knowledge and a commitment to students' taking charge of their learning were hallmarks of these lessons as well.

The quality of students' learning was also outstanding. Students were able to build on their experiences and exercise choice. Consequently, learning was personal to them and increased their motivation. Students were equally skilled in studying independently as they were at collaborating in groups. This developed their understanding through a variety of ways; research, enquiry and discussions. Students were confidently expressing opinions and shared their understanding in front of their peers. Most students had sound knowledge on which to build future understanding and made good use of the school's information and communication technology resources.

Assessment of learning across the school was also outstanding. The tracking of individual students' performance was comprehensive and detailed. Following each report to parents, the senior leadership team thoroughly reviewed the progress and engagement of all students. Any concerns were shared with teachers and, if appropriate, with students and parents. However, there was not yet a single, consistent system of aggregating individual student results to show progress and attainment in any curriculum area. Subject teachers accurately tracked their students' attainment. Students were tested on entry to give a benchmark for future progress as well as to establish a predictive grade for the end of each stage. Teachers regularly reviewed students' progress against these predictions. The data was also used to generate end-of-year target grades. All teachers made effective use of this information. Attainment and target grades were shared with students and parents. Most teachers also made helpful comments for improvement in students' books. Peer assessment was a common feature of nearly all the classes, enabling students to develop the ability to critique their own learning.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was outstanding in both phases of the school. There was an appropriate balance between subjects and a wide range of options in the IGCSE and A-level programmes. A newly-appointed transitions co-ordinator enabled smooth entry to the school through events such as taster days and DESC challenges. Curricular links with the Dubai English Speaking School were especially strong. Excellent support was given to students for the next stages of their education. Each year teachers rigorously reviewed the curriculum and parents and students also had the opportunity to influence the curriculum's content. The school strongly supported students of all abilities and the curriculum was adapted to meet their needs. The curriculum was both challenging and stimulating and many units of study were centred on the UAE. The curriculum was enriched by the contributions of visitors to the school and visits for students, both locally and internationally. All students in Year 12 had a work experience placement in Dubai. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhanced the curriculum.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health, safety and security were excellently managed. A range of security procedures ensured effective supervision of students and the monitoring of visitors on the premises. Bus management met all requirements. Fire drills were held regularly. The maintenance and cleanliness of the buildings and grounds were outstanding. A rigorous safety procedures policy for all activities and trips was in place. Healthy living was strongly promoted. Medical facilities were excellent. The school nurse made good use of the new communicator system to advise parents on health issues. All staff members were trained in child protection. Student behaviour was outstanding, due to systems of behaviour management but also due to the excellent relations that existed between teachers and students.

Students were very well supported by both subject teachers and their form tutors. Attendance and punctuality were well monitored. A good tracking system allowed individual students' attainment to be monitored and this especially aided those with special needs.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The school practiced inclusivity with its admissions policy and was particularly welcoming towards students with special educational needs. The systems for diagnosing students' needs and giving students educational support, based on personal learning plans were outstanding. In subjects where students with special educational needs made good or better progress, teachers showed a clear understanding of students' needs. Their lessons were well structured, used different resources and encouraged thinking skills. In English, mathematics and science the cumulative effect of this ensured that a majority of students achieved outstanding success in external examinations. The special needs team had been significantly enhanced since the last inspection. The team had a very effective two-way dialogue with families, which gave parents guidance for supporting academic work at home.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was of outstanding quality. In his first year the Headteacher, with strong support from the Governing Board, had led improvements. He ensured that the school met the statutory requirements for teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic. He had strengthened the senior leadership team and he had been rigorously selective in his appointment of new teachers and the new heads of department. He had initiated greater engagement with parents and students to ensure that development planning included these stakeholders' views. He had imbued the school with a strong sense of purpose. The school had the capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. The school development plan, devised after widespread consultation, identified the immediate issues for action and had clear timescales for meeting its targets. The action plan for meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection was detailed and confirmed that these had been met. Departmental reviews were equally rigorous. The school's culture was to review and improve and its focus was always the raising of the students' educational standards.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. The school had responded to the need for greater communication with parents and had invested in a new electronic website tool, which gave all parents immediate access to daily information. By holding meetings with parents, the school had significantly engaged them in school improvement. Reports on students' progress were comprehensive. The school had increased its community links with universities, Islamic centres, businesses and charities; these links strongly complemented the students' educational experiences.

Governance of the school was outstanding. The Governing Board was highly supportive of the leaders, working with them to meet statutory requirements and ensure that resources were available to support the development plan. The Board had increased its consultation processes with stakeholders, including students. It had published a detailed annual report and the minutes of its meetings were available. In making new governor appointments, the Board had ensured that members had the necessary expertise to support the school. Governors were forward-looking and clearly working with employees on all levels.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. The management of the school had developed to a high level and strongly supported students and teachers in their learning and teaching. A good example of the influence of the new managers was the excellent displays throughout the school, all of which reflected students' achievements. Induction procedures for new teachers were thorough and the system of performance review led to improved teaching. Resources for teaching and learning were outstanding, but the library had an insufficient stock of Arabic and Islamic Education books.

[View judgements](#)

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	180	27%
	Last year	149	24%
Teachers	57		75%
Students	290		74%

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

About one quarter of parents responded to the survey, a slightly higher rate than last year. Three quarters of the teachers and students responded to their surveys. Almost all parents and most students indicated broad satisfaction with the quality of education at the school and believed that progress was good in English, mathematics and science. A minority of parents and students indicated that progress was less than good in Islamic Education and Arabic, but in their written responses acknowledged the improvements in these subjects. A majority of parents and students confirmed that students could choose from a wide range of subjects and that students received strong support from teachers. Most parents indicated that the school's leaders listened to their opinions, whereas a minority of students did not believe that their opinions held sway. Parents, teachers and students were positive about the education at the school and very pleased with the new leadership of 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

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