

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai English Speaking School

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai English Speaking School

Location	Umm Hurair
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dessdubai.com
Telephone	04-3371457
Address	P.O. Box 2002, Dubai.
Principal	David Hammond
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	4-11 / Foundation Stage- Year 6
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	844
Largest nationality group of students	UK
Number of Emirati students	7 (1 %)
Date of the inspection	11th to 13th November 2013

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## The context of the school

Dubai English Speaking School was founded in 1963 and is situated in Oud Metha. It is a private school providing education for students aged four to 11 years; from Foundation Stage to Year 6. The school follows the English National Curriculum for most subjects and the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic.

At the time of the inspection, there were 844 students, of whom a very few were Emirati. Most students were from the United Kingdom but a significant number of nationalities made up the rest of the school population. Eighty students with special educational needs attended the school. There were 54 full-time and 14 part-time teachers. Most teachers were British and were suitably qualified. The Headteacher was in his ninth year in post.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- The outstanding vision of the leadership team leading to successful development of the school and sustained high performance;
- The exceptional provision in the Foundation Stage and the consistently maintained high standards in mathematics and English leading to very high performance by all students;
- The learning opportunities offered to all groups of students which result in an exceptional desire to learn;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of students throughout the school and the active part they play in their community and environment;
- The outstanding facilities and management of staff leading to a high level of staff retention and their development.

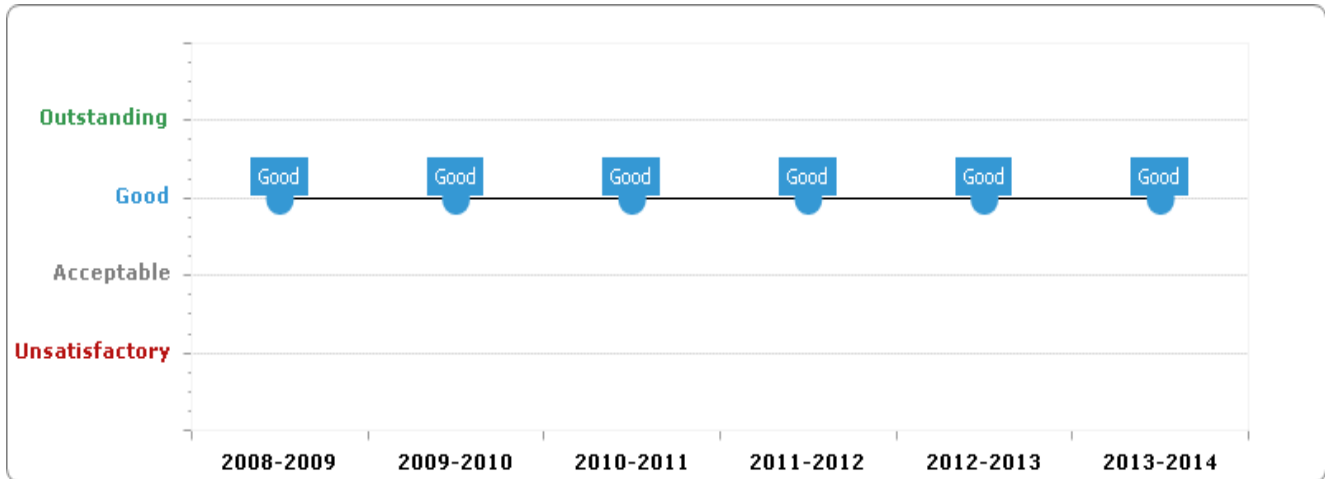
### Recommendations

- Improve learning outcomes in Arabic and Islamic Education by:
  - raising teachers' expectations in lessons;
  - tracking students' progress more rigorously;
  - using assessment data to inform teaching and curriculum modification.
- Capitalise on the outstanding practice in primary and the Foundation Stage to improve the less effective aspects of teaching and learning in the school.
- Improve self-evaluation practices by consistently using students' outcomes to define school priorities.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Greatly improved progress in mathematics and English across the phases;
- Better understanding of Islamic values, local and global cultures of students in primary;
- Better sense of community and environmental responsibility in the Foundation Stage;
- Development of high quality teaching, learning and support for children in the Foundation Stage;
- Improvements in the leadership in the school.

## Trend of overall performance



## How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
<b>Islamic Education</b>		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b>		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Science</b>		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was outstanding in English, mathematics and science across the school. It was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic, except for second language learners where it was unsatisfactory. Most students had adequate knowledge of key concepts in Islam, such as the Pillars of Islam and understanding of Islamic values. However, their memorisation and recitation of the Holy Qur'an were generally below curriculum expectations. In Arabic as a first language, most students had better listening skills than speaking and writing. In Arabic as an additional language, most students showed mainly underdeveloped skills in most of the language aspects. Students' speaking and writing skills were limited. In English, Foundation Stage children conversed in long sentences. They knew most letter sounds and wrote their names from memory.

At the end of primary, students engaged in extensive focused discussions. They read fluently and for pleasure. Handwriting was impressive. They wrote in various genres and used their strong knowledge of grammar and spelling to support their exemplary written work. In mathematics, most students attained levels that were above curriculum standards. By the time pupils left the school, they had attained levels that were above international standards in using number to solve problems and apply mathematical skills in a wide range of projects. This high level had been consistently maintained over the last three years. In science, children in the Foundation Stage demonstrated high levels of curiosity and could recognise differences between mini-beasts when comparing different insects. In the primary phase, they had a good understanding of fair testing and could collaborate to outline the methodology of an experiment. However, less able students were not given the opportunity to record their experiment findings in a variety of ways.

Progress in the Foundation Stage was outstanding in all subjects. In primary, progress was outstanding in English and mathematic, good in science and acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic. In Islamic Education, progress was better for younger primary students than for older ones. Most students made steady progress in most aspects except for the memorisation and recitation of Quran where progress was slow. In Arabic as a first language, students made slower progress in developing their standard Arabic speaking and extended writing skills. Lower primary students showed better progress than those in the upper primary. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students made adequate progress in lessons as measured against lessons 'learning objectives; however, their progress over time was slow. In English, students made substantial gains in their spoken language, and their understanding of grammar and spelling. Their knowledge was used increasingly well in their creative writing as well as in a variety of genres.

In mathematics, progress was consistently strong in each year group and ability group. In science children in the Foundation Stage made excellent gains in developing their skills of observing the world around

them. The progress of primary students was good rather than outstanding because higher attaining students were not always given enough challenge in lessons when setting up investigations. Too few opportunities were provided for younger students to record their findings.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Students' attitudes to learning were exceptionally positive. They responded enthusiastically to all teachers' expectations of them to learn independently. In most lessons teachers expected students to evaluate their own learning and students confidently described their strengths and weaknesses. In English, mathematics and science students worked together collaboratively in project groups and they applied their skills and knowledge to real-life experiences. Their enthusiasm for learning was heightened because they expertly linked their learning to other subjects. In the Foundation Stage, there was a real sense of purpose and enjoyment when children counted pirate money and used pirate-related vocabulary. Other students worked on hotel budget planning for Expo 2020 in mathematics, whilst others costed Henry VIII's banquet requirements and planned complex expedition routes to the Arctic Circle in a survival topic. There were high expectations for pupils to work independently in these contexts and they displayed outstanding research and thinking skills. Although students were positive learners in Islamic and Arabic studies, teachers' planning did not always have sufficiently high expectations for independent and reflective learning.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' attitudes, behaviour and relationships were outstanding. Attendance was good and students loved coming to school. They were motivated learners who took responsibility for themselves and always did their very best. They demonstrated excellent teamwork and co-operated very well with one another in lessons. Behaviour was excellent because of the consistent application of the Golden Rules by all staff. Students were very clear as to what was expected of them. Most of them were able to articulate their targets for improvement. Students had excellent knowledge of healthy eating, what constitutes a healthy meal and the importance of exercise on their body. They were very sensitive to the needs of others and offered help where it was needed. They appreciated one another's cultures and were very interested in the different religious celebrations of their peers

Students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic values and their impact on the contemporary society of Dubai. Students in the primary phase had excellent understanding of the local traditions and culture of UAE; they had good awareness of current events and activities in Dubai. They described their own cultures and traditions extensively and provided many examples about how they learned well from each other.

Throughout the school, most students showed an exemplary work ethic and emerged as responsible members of their school community, caring about its environment and supporting one another. Students had good opportunities to develop personally and socially through serving as volunteers in various school-based activities and some community service projects, such as raising funds for the school and local community. Children in the Foundation Stage demonstrated excellent care for their class and school environment. Older students in primary were well aware of the major environmental issues of Dubai and the reasons behind them. Most students were able to give examples of their active environmental responsibility through recycling waste and conserving energy.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was outstanding in the Foundation Stage. It was good overall in the primary phase but outstanding in English and mathematics. Although teaching in Arabic and Islamic Education was slowly improving and leading to more active learning, it did not challenge all students enough. In the Foundation Stage and in primary classes, most teachers had outstanding or good subject knowledge and planned imaginative lessons using real-life resources in meaningful topics. Teachers' questions skilfully engaged students. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensured that all ability groups had the right level of work and knew the relevant steps to improve. This was less evident in Arabic and Islamic Education lessons and, as a result, students made slower progress. Similarly, effective questioning raised students' expectations and enabled them to access high order thinking mainly in the Foundation Stage and primary English and mathematics. In science, students had very good subject knowledge

Assessment was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the Primary phase. Teachers were well informed of the challenging long-term targets set for pupils in English and mathematics. English teachers were not consistent enough using these targets and did not fully challenge all students who have special educational needs. Science teachers did not use the same thorough assessment systems as used in English and mathematics and so the most able students were not challenged enough. Marking in books gave students an understanding of how well they had done. However, teachers were not consistent in their expectations of students to address their mistakes and did not always identify the important next stages in

the learning. Most teachers tracked students' progress and adjusted provision in classes to ensure optimum progress was being made. This did not happen enough in Arabic and Islamic Education because assessment data was inaccurate and teacher expectations were often too low.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was outstanding across the school because it was firmly rooted in real-life experiences and students understood the purpose of what they were learning. The curriculum had a very clear rationale based upon the vision of the senior leadership team aimed at ensuring that all students enjoyed learning because they could see its relevance in life. The curriculum was balanced and regularly monitored for knowledge and skills coverage by both senior and middle leaders to ensure it fulfilled all the requirements of the school's stated curriculum. Transition arrangements between year groups were excellent. Children in the Foundation Stage had excellent opportunities to continue their learning journey into Year 1. Students in Year 6 were very familiar with the expectations of secondary school due to wide range of visits undertaken to familiarise themselves with their new learning environment. A very strong feature of the curriculum was the way in which visits and trips, for example to the heritage centre, national parks and mosques, enriched students' learning about UAE culture. Very well planned opportunities for personal, social and health education contributed to students' high self-esteem and confidence in learning. A major strength of the curriculum was the opportunity for teachers to make links to other subjects and ensure that students could practice what they had learnt in English, mathematics and technology in a range of different contexts. The curriculum provided excellent opportunities for students to develop their independent research skills and critically analyse their learning.

Curriculum design to meet the needs of all pupils was good. However, the school had not yet fully modified the curriculum to meet the needs of boys in Islamic studies and Arabic, and the higher attaining students in science. Students with special educational needs had full access to the curriculum and all students had ample opportunities to develop their learning through well-structured homework.

[View judgements](#)

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

The organisational procedures and arrangements for health and safety were outstanding. The school environment and premises were immaculately clean and maintained to an excellent standard, and thus created a safe and secure environment. Ramps throughout ensured full access to all of the school premises for all students. School transport was an example of excellent practice. Fire safety procedures were regularly reviewed and risk assessments both in school and prior to external visits were completed and acted on. The school had detailed policies that ensured students' personal and medical safety. Health offices were self-contained and medicines securely stored and administered by licensed medical staff. Packed lunches and snacks were healthy. Child protection policies and procedures were in place and school leaders ensured that students and parents were informed and that staff were fully trained.

The support for children in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. It was good for primary students. Staff-student relationships were a key feature of the school. Staff knew students well and were aware of their individual needs. Mutual respect was evident throughout the school and adherence to the 'Golden Rules' ensured that behaviour was exemplary. The school kept accurate records of attendance and recent actions had resulted in good improvements. Parents were contacted immediately if a student failed to arrive when expected. The school had detailed procedures to identify students with special educational needs on entry to the school. Specialist staff with relevant expertise led the assessment process. They informed and trained staff to ensure the students' needs were fully met. As a result, the students made good progress. All students had access to a known and trusted member of staff who offered advice and guidance, in confidence, on a range of matters and concerns.

[View judgements](#)

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

The outstanding leadership focused on all aspects of school improvement. The leadership team demonstrated a very high degree of professional preparation and knowledge and, through action research projects, examined all available practices to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning within the school. Clear directions and communication from the Principal and the school leaders ensured all key staff were clear about the professional expectations, procedures and systems in the school. This strong leadership was mirrored by the students whose voices were strong in school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Improvement planning had led to better standards and had addressed priorities from the previous report in a systematic and thorough manner. Highly effective strategies were in place and involved all members of the school staff. However, the standards in Islamic Education and Arabic had yet to be raised to the same level of standards achieved in the other key

subjects. The action plan and strategies in the weaker areas of school were based on thorough analysis of data and had achievable targets. Self-evaluation had contributed to real improvements such as the examples of international best practice seen in the Foundation Stage.

Partnerships with parents and community were outstanding. Parents were very satisfied with all aspects of the work of the school and particularly positive about the community spirit in school. There were effective systems for enabling parents to communicate with school staff and clear reporting systems enabled them to monitor the progress of their children. Parents undertook various activities which proved beneficial to the school and its students. They included charitable, community events and fundraising which enhanced the school facilities.

Governance was good. The Board of Governors had a positive influence on the school, conducting regular meetings with senior leaders to review action plans and areas of mutual concern. The Board was representative of the school and local community. They continued to develop excellent monitoring systems which ensured every initiative was evaluated in terms of student outcomes. As a result, the school had sustained strong outcomes from the previous report. However, it recognised the need to raise the standards in the weaker subjects.

Management of the school was outstanding. Highly effective procedures and routines supported the operation of the school. All staff were appropriately qualified and supported in a positive, professional learning environment. Staff turnover was very low and a number of additional staff effectively complemented the instructional and managerial aspects of the school. The school was safe, clean and modern, and maintained to a high standard. Libraries were well stocked and computer laboratories were well equipped and maintained. The regular access to good quality resources such as modern technologies resulted in a dramatic increase of students applying technology to their learning on a daily basis.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The seven Emirati students were well integrated into school life. The school monitored their attainment and progress well. Their attainment and progress were variable but, overall, they were acceptable in all subjects. In lessons, students concentrated well and fully participated alongside and with their classmates. School reports focused well on the progress students were making. Emirati parents visited the school regularly and were well involved in their children's learning.

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

The Foundation Stage admission policy had been reviewed and ensured early identification of children who required support. External professionals and the school's admissions team collaborated to ensure that the school could meet the needs of effective inclusion. In all other years, entry assessment took place using a range of tests. Special needs staff had appropriate qualifications and understood the DSIB categories. Record keeping was substantial and informative.

Students with special educational needs made good progress across the school. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics was stronger than in science. Progress in Islamic Studies was acceptable but it was unsatisfactory in Arabic as a first language. The curriculum was modified to meet the needs of individual students. The specialist staff supported classroom teachers in planning to include appropriate resources to meet the learning needs of students. Teachers had in-depth information on each student but were flexible in their use of it, which resulted in some inconsistency of approach. The school used National Curriculum data tracking to assess progress. Staff responded constructively to those students not reaching appropriate benchmarks or not making expected progress.

The school had recently employed a well-qualified co-ordinator of special educational needs who had further raised the profile of special educational needs in the school and trained staff. Improved liaison between learning support staff and teachers resulted in more consistency of approach to students in their learning. Parents were proactive. Many highlighted their child's needs on entry and some had obtained specialist diagnoses before attempting to enrol the child. The school kept parents well informed and consulted with them to ensure consistency between home and school.



## How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Almost all teachers of Arabic as a first language had a secure subject knowledge; however, their understanding of how students learn was still developing. Lesson planning was not informed by accurate assessment of students' performance in various language skills. In most lessons, teachers planned activities that engaged students but, due to the low levels of challenge, these did not always lead to good progression with their language skills. Teachers used the abundant resources adequately but not skilfully to reinforce learning. Teaching strategies did not always meet the needs of all students. In too many cases, learning activities were limited by undemanding questioning that inhibited the development of critical thinking

The curriculum lacked sufficient opportunities to develop students' language skills through the provision of meaningful and challenging learning experiences. The curriculum did not often promote active and independent learning in reading different genres or writing for different purposes. The expectations set by the school was often below that of the Ministry of Education. This, in turn, meant that the assessment of students' language skills also lacked accuracy. The curriculum did not cater to the needs of different groups of students particularly the less able.

## 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 judgments. 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	256	41%
	Last year	276	34%
Teachers	23		34%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

Almost all parents believed their children were happy at school and that they made good progress in English and mathematics. Most believed the school was led well and worked closely with parents but a significant minority believed their views were not listened to. Almost all agreed that their children thrived academically and made substantial gains in their personal development and that the school promoted UAE and Islamic culture well. However, some stated they would like more information on curriculum activities, especially Arabic and Islamic studies. A few cited concerns about safety at the school gates but the vast majority felt their children were safe at schools, including during their bus journeys. Students were not of an age to participate in the survey.

## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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