

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The Sheffield Private School

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Sheffield Private School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.sheffield-school.com
Telephone	04-2678444
Address	Al Nahda Al Thania Ghusais, Dubai-P.O.BOX:92665
Principal	Adrian May
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 years/KG to Post-16
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1550
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	52
Date of the inspection	28th October to 31st October

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## The context of the school

The Sheffield Private School is located in the Al Qusais district of Dubai. It caters for boys and girls aged 3 to 18 years and offers a curriculum based upon the National Curriculum for England including IGCSE and A level examinations. It follows the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic, which was taught from the Foundation Stage to Post-16.

The school was in its tenth year and had grown considerably over this time. It was at full capacity with 1550 students on roll with two thirds of students making up the Foundation Stage and primary phase. The students came from a variety of nationalities, about 60 in total, reflecting the international community of Dubai. The largest proportion was from Pakistani, Arabic, Indian and families. Three percent of the school community were Emirati. Over half of the children travelled to school from different areas of Dubai.

The school had over 90 teachers and 30 teaching assistants and other administrative and support staff. Over 30% of teaching staff were new to the school. The school was equipped with specialist areas including a library and swimming pools with lifeguards. From September, all classrooms had interactive whiteboards.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- Good progress in secondary Arabic for native speakers, and good attainment and progress in primary and secondary mathematics;
- Good attitudes and behaviour of children in the Foundation Stage and students in the primary phase;
- Students' good understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness in the Foundation Stage, and in the primary and secondary phases;
- Good health and safety provision across all phases;
- Good opportunities for enrichment activities to support the curriculum.

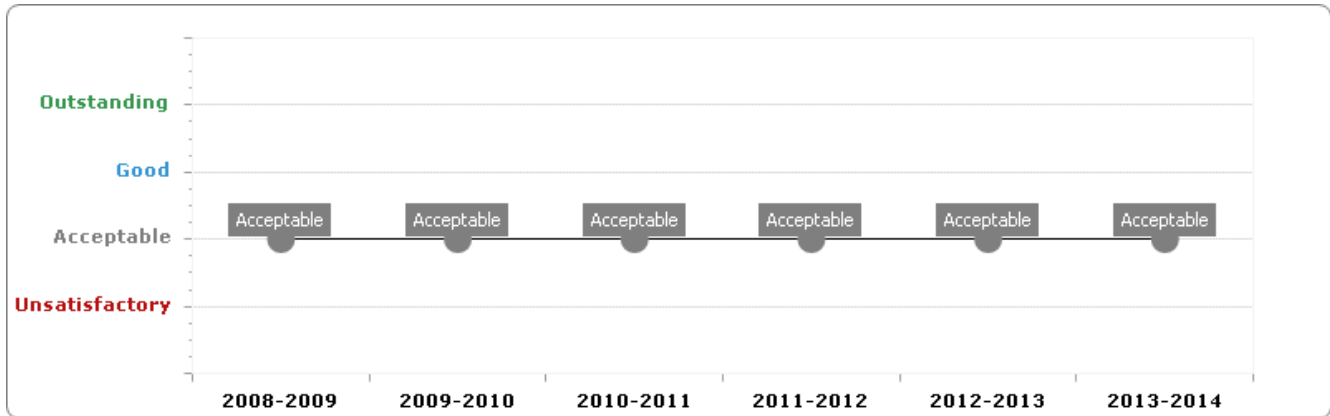
### Recommendations

- Improve attitudes, behaviour, attendance, attainment and progress in Post- 16 phase through more rigorous day-to-day management of all aspects of provision;
- Improve attendance and punctuality for Emirati students and their rates of participation in extra-curricular activities;
- Develop rigorous systems of assessment and ensure that teachers use them consistently to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of all groups of students;
- Improve the quality of teaching for effective learning by using the best teachers as models of good practice;
- Set more ambitious targets for all groups of students to accelerate their rates of progress;
- Improve self-evaluation skills of all leaders so that they can use the data available to make more accurate judgements of students' academic standards and progress based on the inspection framework.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Students' progress in Arabic as a first language had improved in the secondary school;
- Assessment procedures were more secure in the Foundation stage;
- Resources, including the addition of interactive white boards and new text books had improved;
- There had been some improvement in the quality of teaching for effective learning with more opportunities for students' interaction and development of their thinking skills.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Unsatisfactory
<b>Science</b>				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment was acceptable overall in the Foundation Stage and the primary and secondary phases. It was unsatisfactory in English and mathematics in Post-16. In Islamic Education, most students in the primary phase demonstrated correct recitation skills and appropriate knowledge of the names and attributes of Allah. Students in the secondary phase understood the value of the main forms of worship in Islam. Post-16 students demonstrated age-appropriate understanding of concepts but their memorisation of the Qur'an was less well developed. In Arabic as a first language, most students listened attentively and responded appropriately to questions set by their teacher and had acceptable speaking and comprehension skills. However, writing skills were weak. In Arabic as an additional language, primary students' reading and speaking skills were acceptable but only a minority could form sentences independently. In secondary, their listening and comprehension skills were age-appropriate but their speaking and writing was limited. In English, attainment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, Primary and Secondary but unsatisfactory in Post-16. Students in all phases were becoming increasingly confident in reading and speaking but their independent writing skills were weak and they did not always use grammar rules correctly in writing. In mathematics, the majority of students in Primary and Secondary had good knowledge, skills and understanding but IGCSE results were below international standards in 2013 and had a variable trend over the past three years. Results of AS examinations in Post-16 had been significantly below international standards over the past two years. In science, children in the Foundation stage showed curiosity and interest. They enjoyed exploring their surroundings. In primary and middle phases students could apply their knowledge and understanding of the sciences to explain phenomena in everyday and abstract contexts. Post-16 attainment was restricted due to limited opportunity to predict, interpret and evaluate.

Progress reflected attainment in all subjects except in Arabic as a first language where it was good in Secondary. In Islamic Education, most students were developing their understanding of key concepts and values and how the forms of worship in Islam are performed. Progress with Qur'an recitation was inconsistent and was weaker in Secondary. In Arabic as a first language, progress in speaking and listening was stronger in Secondary. In Arabic as an additional language, progress in learning new vocabulary was adequate but progress in speaking and writing was inconsistent. In English, students increasing development of spoken language was evident across the school. In Foundation Stage and lower primary their confidence increased in speaking to different people and,

by the time they reached secondary and Post-16, students were able to use spoken English in different contexts, for example asking questions and developing arguments. Progress in writing was unsatisfactory in all phases. In mathematics in the primary and secondary phases, progress was good. The majority of students were developing good skills in applying their knowledge and skills to practical situations and making effective links to other subjects, for example when analysing data relating to extra-curricular participation rates. Nevertheless, students' abilities to apply their learning to unfamiliar situations was weak in Post-16. In science students made sound progress in developing their skills of scientific enquiry. In the Foundation Stage children learned to explore the environment around them using a variety of materials and equipment. Throughout the primary phase, students improved their skills in designing and carrying out investigations using fair tests. Their range of practical skills increased, including observation, measuring volume and time and recording accurately. In Post-16 progress slowed because there were too few opportunities for enquiry, creating hypotheses or problem solving.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was acceptable across the school. From Foundation Stage to the secondary phase most students had positive attitudes to learning and consistently took responsibility for their own learning. A majority, particularly in the primary phase were developing an awareness of their learning strengths and weaknesses and made efforts to improve. Most students across the school enjoyed group work. They collaborated well in a range of subjects. Increased numbers in the lower part of the school were making connections between their current and previous learning. Relating learning to the real world was not consistently strong in most subjects other than in Islamic Education, Arabic and mathematics. Occasionally students researched and found out things for themselves by making use of computers but, generally, the use of ICT to support their learning was in its early stages of development. The majority of post-16 students had poor attitudes to learning. They did not or could not work independently of teachers and showed a disinterest in independent learning. Across the school opportunities for critical thinking, research and enquiry were occasionally planned but were yet to become a consistent part of learning.

[View judgements](#)

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

Personal responsibility was good in Foundation Stage and Primary, acceptable in Secondary and unsatisfactory in Post-16. Throughout the lower school, students had sensible and mature attitudes. They had increasing self-reliance as they progressed up the school to the secondary phase. Positive behaviour was a strength of the lower phases, with self-control and courtesy being positive features. Younger students were proud of their school, their teachers and each other. Most had a strong understanding of healthy eating. They made sincere attempts to follow the school's advice on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Attendance was acceptable and almost all arrived punctually at school. In Post-16 most students had poor attitudes and indifferent behaviour. They were ineffective role models for the younger students. Their unsatisfactory attendance and poor punctuality indicated a distinct lack of interest in learning. Emirati students had poor attendance overall which affected their learning opportunities.

Students expressed an appreciation of the Islamic values of modesty, hospitality, and friendliness, and could relate them to the society of Dubai. They demonstrated a broad awareness of the Emirati culture, language, and traditions. Students had a good understanding of their own cultures and global awareness through their active participation in International Day events, class projects, and well-designed school displays on cultural aspects of other countries.

Community links were acceptable across all phases. Students collected money for charities such as Cancer Research and were able to compare the festivals of their community. The school council demonstrated early skills of leadership but not all students had the opportunity to participate in 'Junior Enterprise', which helped develop a work ethic associated with running an enterprise. Students throughout the school were active in environmental schemes, which supported recycling and conservation.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable across all phases of the school. However, teachers' subject knowledge and their planning were variable across all phases. In a few better lesson plans, particularly in primary and secondary phases, there were prescribed learning intentions and success criteria but these were seldom specific or shared with students. Teachers presented their lessons

confidently although planning frequently did not take into account the learning differences of groups of students. Too often learning opportunities were restricted because groups were insufficiently challenged or were given work that was not matched to their needs Teachers' questioning was often restricted to the recall of facts which resulted in brief answers. This restricted their in-depth understanding of the quality of the students' learning, such as their strengths and areas for development. In the better lessons, teachers used a good range of questioning skills which kept students focussed. There were occasional opportunities for students to discuss, think and challenge but few students framed their own questions or were involved in broad dialogue. A few lessons had opportunities for practical investigations, research or enquiry but these were not consistent across the school.

Assessment procedures were acceptable but information from them was not used sufficiently to set work that challenged the different ability groups. The use of assessment to influence teaching and curriculum design was at the very early stages of implementation. Marking was regular but did not identify the students' next steps in learning. Only a minority of lessons ended with a plenary to help inform future lesson planning.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases and unsatisfactory in Post-16. It mostly followed the school's stated curriculum and was reasonably balanced as all students took part in academic, creative and physical subjects. For all phases, Arabic was studied as a first language from KG 2. Art and music were taught throughout the school. There was a good range of extra-curricular activities for all ages, including sport, cookery and art. However, too few Emirati students participated in these activities. Students took part in educational trips, for example to Sharjah Museum and Aquarium. These encouraged an enjoyment of learning and the students developed socially. There were 'booster' classes for talented students. The school provided additional subjects such as French and psychology in Post-16. Transition arrangements for the next stage of education for post-16 students were unsatisfactory. This group was not completing enough courses to gain access to higher education and work. Cross-curricular links were at the very early stages of development, although several examples were seen in the primary phase.

The quality of the curriculum design was acceptable except at Post 16 where it was unacceptable. The school followed the English National Curriculum and teachers recognised that students had different abilities and interests. Teachers planned to meet the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) by assessing them and providing support. Gifted and talented students had various activities organised for them. Older students had insufficient choices and these were not always well-matched to their prior learning. This resulted in a lack of motivation to study.

[View judgements](#)

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

The arrangements to ensure health and safety in all parts of the school were good across all phases. Transport systems were managed efficiently with students well supervised on buses. All aspects of the buildings were well maintained and suitable for all students. Disabled students had access to all parts of the school via the school lift. The school clinic had a full-time doctor and two nurses. Medical records and medicines were stored securely. Safety checks and evacuation drills were undertaken but systems for evacuation were inconsistent. The school provided a good range of physical activities and the promotion of healthy eating was a part of the school curriculum. Nevertheless, the food provided in the school's canteen did not fully support a positive approach to healthy eating. The school had a written child protection policy and staff were aware of the child protection arrangements.

The quality of support was acceptable throughout the school. Staff and student relationships were good. The school had secure systems in place to monitor attendance and punctuality but procedures to ensure good attendance were not effective in Post-16. Students with SEN were identified by their teachers but this was on a subjective basis rather than following a rigorous in-house procedure. Advice and support for all students were acceptable. In the primary phase there was effective use of target setting but this was not consistent throughout the school. Advice and support for post-16 students were weak. These students were unclear about their future education and career options.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the leadership was acceptable. There was an emerging vision of where the school needed to be but all levels of the school did not yet embrace this. Inclusiveness and collegiality were strengthening but systems for accountability and for accelerating progress and attainment were not well developed. Relationships between staff were professional with sound communication systems. Leaders at all levels had recently reviewed their job descriptions, and clarified their role and time allocations but there was a lack of focus on identifying key priorities.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school evaluated itself too highly because it did not make sufficient use of data about its own performance. School improvement planning relied too much on the previous inspection judgements and did not include evaluations made by the senior leadership team. The school development plan lacked success criteria and accountability. This resulted in the school being unsure of its progress towards its targets.

Partnerships with parents were acceptable. Parents expressed their satisfaction with most aspects of the school. They affirmed that the school community communications and the school reporting system were strong. Relationships between parents and almost all staff were sound. However parents did not have sufficient access to homework through the school website. The school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) was supportive of all aspects of the school, including fundraising for charities and raising awareness of aspects of the wider community.

Governance was acceptable. Recent endeavours to broaden the scope of membership and responsibilities were beginning to impact. Governors were increasing their presence within the school and beginning to hold the school to account. They were gaining increased independent views of the school and an awareness of its strengths and areas for development.

Management including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Resources to support learning across the school were plentiful and included many new library books, textbooks and interactive white boards. These contributed to acceptable teaching. The day-to-day running of the school was acceptable. Nevertheless, timetabling required additional refinement and supervision of students, particularly at Post-16. There was a suitable number of appropriately deployed, trained staff who were supported by a team of assistants. However, Foundation Stage children were not always supported by well-trained assistants. This occasionally restricted their rates of progress.

Premises were clean and well maintained. There was some overcrowding, particularly in primary phase.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school made acceptable provision for its Emirati students but had not successfully tackled the issue of their low attendance and participation in extra-curricular activities. The attainment and progress of Emirati students was acceptable. In Islamic Education and Arabic, Emirati students were making adequate progress. In English, their attainment and progress, whilst acceptable overall were hindered because of poor attendance. In mathematics and science, attainment and progress were acceptable and a few students made good progress in mathematics. Attendance and punctuality were unsatisfactory. Students' behaviour in class and out of class was good in Foundation Stage and Primary, and acceptable in Secondary. Engagement in lessons was weak especially when tasks were demanding. Assessment and tracking of their attainment and progress were acceptable across the school but this information was not fully used to set targets for improvement and accelerate their rates of progress. Curricular and extra-curricular programmes met the cultural needs of Emirati students adequately but only 17% of Emirati students took part in the extra-curricular activities provided by the school. Emirati students in Post-16 were not offered sufficient curricular choices to fill their timetables. Last year, three out of five graduating Emiratis had progressed to higher education. The school had an "open door" policy but few Emirati parents were involved in school activities.

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

The school was fully inclusive and accepted all students. Facilities were suitable and there were ramps and a lift to the upper floors. Teachers had identified students with special needs but not accurately enough. The support systems included individual education plans (IEPs). These were variable in their detail and the guidance they provided for teachers. Parents had been involved in planning IEPs. In addition, the school's focus on improving literacy across the school was having a positive impact on students with special educational needs. All students were assessed against National Curriculum level descriptors in key subjects. These helped teachers to plan to meet their needs, although the quality of planning was inconsistent. Many students had communication



difficulties and teachers had begun to provide alternative means for recording work, for example in science. In the primary phase, a minority of teachers provided prompts to help students write. These included vocabulary cards and writing frames. These intervention strategies had a positive effect on students' access to the curriculum so that the attainment gap between students with special needs and their mainstream peers was not widening. A significant proportion of students were identified as gifted and talented. The school had provided opportunities for them to develop their interests in competitions and out-of-school activities. Emirati students with SEN were mainly those with language difficulties. A few teachers used clearly delivered spoken language when teaching them and suitable techniques for second language learners. However this was not consistent across the school.

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

Teaching of Arabic as a first language was acceptable in Primary and Post-16. In Secondary it was good. There was a high turnover of teachers in the primary phase and this had had a negative effect on students' learning especially in the upper classes. Most teachers had appropriate knowledge of the content of the subject. They usually shared learning objectives with their students and their management of lessons was adequate. However, teachers' expectations of what students could do was not always aligned to students' abilities and their learning needs. They did not always succeed in promoting active learning and the development of advanced skills. The best examples of practice were seen mostly in the secondary phase where teachers made learning interesting and used resources more effectively. The school followed the Ministry of Education curriculum for the subject from KG to Post-16. Appropriate resources were provided to support the delivery of the curriculum. The planned curriculum included opportunities for the development of key language skills, although in the classrooms writing opportunities were not always sufficient. Cross-curricular links existed but were not always planned well enough and did not target the development of independent learning and thinking skills.

## 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	133	10%
	Last year	138	12%
Teachers	34		49%
Students	97		54%

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

The parent percentage response rate was very low. The teachers' and students' response rate were higher. Progress in key subjects was perceived to be strongest in English, science and mathematics and less strong in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and second language. Almost all parents stated that their children enjoyed life at the school, felt safe and were well looked after. Almost all also believed that teachers provided a good quality of education and that the school prepared their children well for the next stage of life and education. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education in the school, that their children used a wide range of technology to support learning and that the school offered a wide choice of subjects and activities. Most parents stated that the school was well led, that school reports were helpful and that meetings with teachers were regular and informative. A majority of parents indicated that the school listened to their opinions, concerns and suggestions.

## 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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