

# The Winchester School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 13

Report published May 2010

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## Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

**Outstanding** – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

**Good** – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

**Acceptable** – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

**Unsatisfactory** – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

The Winchester School was inspected in October 2009 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

### Basic information about the school

Located in Jebel Ali, The Winchester School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 13, ages three to 18 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,648 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Over half of the respondents did not know how the school had responded to the last inspection. While positive about the school and its leadership, a minority of parents said that the school did not always communicate effectively with them about the progress of their children. There was widespread concern about the overcrowding in the school. The quality of attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was also raised as an issue by a majority of the parents. Extra-curricular activities, provision for healthy eating and teacher absences were other areas for concern.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The Winchester School was performing at an acceptable level. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic throughout the school were acceptable. With the exception of the primary phase, attainment in English was good while progress was good in all phases. Attainment and progress in mathematics was good in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase and acceptable in secondary and post-16 classes. Attainment and progress in science were acceptable throughout the school. The attitudes and behaviour of the students in all sections of the school were good. There were good student-staff relationships. Punctuality to almost all classes was good and attendance was acceptable. Students had, in general, a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They demonstrated good appreciation and understanding of Islam and local customs and traditions in the multicultural context of Dubai. They had good knowledge of the economic and environmental context of Dubai and understood the implications on local and global issues.

Teaching and learning in the school were acceptable overall. Teachers had good subject knowledge but did not always develop the students' independent and analytical thinking. The significant overcrowding throughout the school hindered the efforts of many teachers to enable students to be more than just passive participants in lessons. Students were keen to learn but they did so by listening rather than taking an active part in the learning process. Assessment was variable across the subjects. There was good transfer of information between the key stages. The curriculum was good in the primary school and acceptable in the secondary and post-16 sections. However, the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic was not compliant with Ministry of Education requirements. Some aspects of the curriculum lacked balance and did not fully accommodate the needs of individual students. Health and safety arrangements in the school were unsatisfactory. The safety of students was compromised during play and physical education activities. The clinic was clean but services to students were adversely affected by the excessive numbers of students using it. Students expressed satisfaction with the school but were concerned about overcrowding and its effect upon the quality of their learning. Support for the students was acceptable with some good tracking of progress in some subjects.

School leadership was acceptable overall. There was a strong commitment to implement professional development programmes aimed at improving teaching, but overcrowding negatively affected this work. The school knew its strengths and aspects for improvement but had not attended to some recommendations and weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Parents were willing to participate more, but the lack of a parent council and insufficient consultation in the curriculum development process discouraged them. Governance in the school was unsatisfactory. The impact of the enrolment policy had affected student safety and the quality of teaching and learning negatively. Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable.

## Key features of the school

- Overcrowding throughout the school impacted significantly on the safety and learning of the students;
- Teachers had good subject knowledge and were committed to improvement;
- Attitudes and behaviour of students were good throughout the school;
- Students' had good civic understanding and appreciation of Islam, local traditions and culture.

## Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress throughout the school, particularly in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science;
- Share best practice to raise teaching quality in all subjects;
- Comply fully with Ministry of Education regulations regarding provision of Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Put in place arrangements to ensure the safety of students at all times in the school;
- Manage enrolment to ensure it is commensurate with the school's ability to provide good quality learning experiences;
- Ensure governance supports the school's leaders to fulfil the school's mission.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. Most Year 3 students were able to recite short chapters from The Holy Qur'an correctly. Most Year 4 students had acceptable knowledge about the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and the major incidents that happened around the time of his birth. Year 6 students understood that all the Prophets came with the same message agreeing with Islam. Most Year 7 students understood the rewards and the benefits of performing prayers. They also explained the meaning of Hajj and its importance. Year 10 students understood the meaning of modesty and linked that understanding to their daily lifestyles. The majority of Year 11 students explained the meaning of sin and repentance but they were not able to link these concepts to their lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable across the school. Most Year 1 students identified single alphabet letters and wrote them correctly. Most Year 2 students were able to read aloud a short poem confidently. Year 5 students answered comprehension questions on an age-appropriate text. Most Year 7 students identified similes and explained their meanings. The extended writing of Year 11 students was functional but not sufficiently creative. Overall, students were not able to use the language for effective expression.

Attainment in English was good at all stages compared with international benchmarks with the exception of the primary classes where attainment was acceptable. Progress over time was good in all stages. Students generally responded in one-word or short phrases to teachers' questions in the larger classes and engaged in discussions in small groups at post-16. All students displayed good listening skills, although they occasionally required redirection by their teachers. Students at all stages were able to read silently and independently for sustained periods of time. They were able to support opinions with evidence from their texts. Primary students wrote about fantasy, setting and characters, and distinguished between fact and opinion. Primary students were also beginning their study of drama. Students in Key Stages 2 to 4 were able to read and write about poetry, myths and legends. Writing output at primary was low. Students wrote well-developed and creative compositions in the secondary and post-16 stages. Where appropriate, all students used concept maps to plan their writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in Foundation Stage and primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16 stages. By the end of Foundation Stage the majority of children could recognise numbers to ten and count objects correctly. They also understood some of the language of measurement and shapes. By Year 6 the majority of students had good understanding of numbers up to 1,000 and knew how to use simple decimals, percentages and fractions to describe proportions of a whole. Secondary students made acceptable progress in developing their understanding and application of the four rules of number. For a minority, an inability to recall number facts quickly limited progress in other aspects of mathematics. The majority of students had limited understanding of how to apply the mathematics they knew to the real world.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable across all stages when compared with international benchmarks. Students had sound subject knowledge and attainment was improving at post-16 level. Foundation Stage children explored the world and had a basic scientific knowledge. Primary students knew that certain foods were healthier than others and were able to sequence food chains using pictures of living things. Students' abilities to explain their findings were less well developed. Students did not have enough opportunities to develop their investigative skills.

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

Attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were good. Students exercised self-control in the hallways and common areas. Student and staff relationships were good. When students were engaged in small group work within the larger classes, there were high noise levels, requiring students to raise their voices. Students lost attention in large classes when teachers talked for extended periods. At times, students called out to gain the teacher's attention and did not respond quickly when asked to be quiet. While punctuality at all age levels was good, attendance for the last term was acceptable.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam, and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good at all stages. Older students took pride in their positions of responsibility in the school. They guided younger students in heavy traffic areas and described how they tutored them. Some students were involved in charitable work with their families and with the school, for example, creating a charity website linked to school volunteers.

Economic and environmental understanding throughout the school was good. Students talked about the economic growth of Dubai. Secondary students understood the changes that had resulted from the recent economic downturn. They appreciated and valued the diversity of the cultures in Dubai and discussed their roles in maintaining a healthy environment and its importance for the future of Dubai.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall. A few lessons were of high quality and a minority were good. There was good teaching in English, mathematics and science lessons but there was a greater proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic lessons. Most lessons across the school were well-planned with objectives clearly stated to students. Most teachers knew their subjects well, but the majority did not use a wide enough range of strategies to address the varied needs of students. Teacher-student interactions were almost always positive but many teachers dominated lessons by talking for too long. Many of their questions promoted one-word answers rather than independent and analytical thinking.

Students' learning in lessons was acceptable overall. Most students were attentive during lessons. However, only a minority took responsibility for their learning because teachers often provided too much information and, consequently, students were dependent, passive recipients of knowledge. Most students interacted well and collaborated on tasks. Students' application of their learning to the real world was generally weak. They acquired large amounts of subject knowledge by memory, but did not apply it to different contexts. The development of students' enquiry and research skills was limited, due in part to the low level of information and communication technology (ICT) provision and integration with the curriculum. Students' higher order and critical thinking skills were being developed in only a few lessons.

The arrangements for assessment were acceptable. Most students knew how well they were doing in each subject, although the quality of marking varied. Most teachers assessed the progress of students daily in lessons but this was impeded by severe crowding in the classrooms. A few teachers did not notice students who were falling behind during lessons. The school's assessment methods were narrow in scope, with an emphasis on recall of factual knowledge. Records of assessments were rigorously kept but the majority of teachers did not use assessment information effectively to plan next steps for each student. There was efficient communication of assessment information between key stages and the use of assessment information to inform planning for students with special needs was effective.

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

Curriculum provision based on the English National Curriculum was good in Foundation Stage and primary and acceptable in higher stages. This was because the level of challenge in the secondary years was generally below the abilities of a majority of students. In Islamic Education and Arabic the school did not comply with the Ministry of Education regulations. The curriculum was soundly planned and reviewed by senior leaders who had worked productively with teachers through a curriculum review group. However, parents were not actively involved in this work. The review of the curriculum had resulted in changes to the primary day and an increased teaching allocation for A-level subjects. Sample lessons for Year 6 students contributed well to curriculum continuity and progression between stages. While broad and balanced in Foundation Stage and the primary stage, the curriculum in the secondary stages lacked sufficient breadth to meet the needs of all students. Cross-curricular work in the primary stages had developed in a number of subjects. For example, Year 4 students studied dental care in science and produced related written work in English. Cross-curricular links were not as strong in the secondary stages. The extra-curricular programme, which was valued by senior students, provided activities in a variety of sports as well as a range of subjects. Students elected subject presidents to promote participation in activities. The school linked the curriculum to learning in the community through field trips and inviting specialists to the school, including, for example, authors who worked with the students.

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

The school's arrangements to ensure students' health and safety were unsatisfactory in all stages, largely as a result of the significant overcrowding. The school buildings and equipment were kept clean and regularly checked. Acceptable procedures had been put in place for carrying out and evaluating routine fire drills. A senior member of staff had responsibility for child protection arrangements and these were understood by other members of staff and implemented effectively. A significant number of adults supervised the students and young children. Outside, hard play areas and areas used for physical education did not provide a safe environment for the students. This was due to overcrowding and the unsafe movement of buses. As a result students frequently suffered injuries which required medical attention. The school had a clinic which was staffed by a resident doctor. There was only one nurse and one administrator to support the work of the clinic and this was insufficient for such large numbers of students. Medication was administered by the doctor and appropriate records were kept. Although the school promoted healthy lifestyles through the curriculum, healthy eating was not promoted in practice. Most students brought unsuitable snacks to school and the canteen served food that did not encourage a healthy diet.

The quality of support for students was acceptable in all stages. Staff-student relationships were acceptable across the school. Students had ready access to teachers, coordinators and tutors. Most secondary and post-16 students received good careers advice and guidance from the school counsellor. Tracking of students' academic progress was done regularly and was detailed, but the information was not shared to full effect among teachers, coordinators, and the counsellor. Behaviour was generally good and was managed well by the school. The management of attendance was acceptable.

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

The quality of leadership at all levels was acceptable. Leaders were competent and committed to the fulfilment of the school's mission. Roles were well-defined, with widely distributed leadership responsibilities across the school, which was beginning to have positive effects on student outcomes. Performance management policies and procedures were focused on teachers' professional development, which was a high priority at the school. The leadership team overall demonstrated the capacity to make further improvements at the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable overall. The school had evaluated the quality of education it provided and had established a comprehensive action plan. Although it included specific timelines, measures and outcomes, it was not widely understood by all stakeholders. Some priorities in the plan had not been successfully addressed since the last inspection. Nevertheless, there were clear indicators of progress in the achievement of goals, with the necessary resources and people responsible identified. Monitoring of teacher performance was consistently used to assess the improvement process, but a focus on student outcomes as indicators of success was present in only some sections of the school.

Partnerships with parents and the community were of acceptable quality. There was no parent council at the school, but there was a sufficient number of parents who demonstrated a genuine interest in school life. Special events regularly drew parents to the school as participants and supporters. The school had regular procedures for communicating with parents on paper and electronically. There were well-established procedures for periodic reporting to parents and extra monitoring of students' progress when necessary. The school also had established links with the local community, including businesses and other schools.

Governance of the school was unsatisfactory because it had allowed an over-enrolment of students and this was having a negative effect on teaching, learning, and safety. The enrolment of 2,648 students was more than 900 over license. This resulted in crowded classrooms and hallways and an unusually high teacher workload. Over-enrolment undermined the quality of provision in several important ways, including teaching, learning, and safety. Due to ineffective governance, the school did not fulfil its promise to develop the students' capabilities of independent and analytical thought. The school was accountable to its owners but not to all stakeholders. For example, the governors of the school did not consider the creation of a parent advisory group to inform future governance a relevant priority.

Overall, the management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. There were sufficient qualified teachers and staff, with the exception of counsellors. Almost all staff members were effectively deployed, but in a few cases teachers' assistants were not effective in helping students learn. The school was clean and well-equipped, but too small for the number of students attending. A new library was used well for learning. Records showed regular visits and borrowing by students across the school. The provision of ICT was limited, as there were too few computers for student use and too little integration of ICT with learning across different subjects.

## Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

## Next Steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

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

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

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