

Jebel Ali Primary School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Primary

Report published May 2011

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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.

Jebel Ali Primary School was inspected in November 2010 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, Jebel Ali Primary School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to primary, aged four to 11 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 651 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were exceptionally pleased with the education of their children. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked the school, that the teaching was good and that their children were given a high level of care and support. Parents strongly agreed that the school was very safe, engendered a high level of behaviour and inspired its students to aim for a healthy lifestyle. Parents agreed that they felt very comfortable approaching the school with any issue and that the school responded constructively to parental concerns. They felt communication on a daily basis with teachers was very good and that teachers were helpful in explaining to parents how they could support their children's work at home. Parents indicated that they were very much welcomed as a part of the school community and were able to contribute to the wider life of the school. A minority of parents were unsure about the school's response to the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Parents felt that the school was well led.

How well does the school perform overall?

Jebel Ali Primary School provided a good quality of education with many outstanding features. It had made improvements in a significant number of areas since the last inspection. The school had responded well to the recommendations from the last inspection report. The school had developed the use of information and communication technology (ICT) so that it now contributed to the high quality of students' learning. It had monitored the impact of the new curriculum developments and had developed strategies to support teachers deliver the new thematic curriculum. It had improved timetable provision for Islamic Education and Arabic, but this was not fully compliant with requirements regarding the time for these subjects within the curriculum. The school demonstrated a very strong capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress in English and mathematics were outstanding across both phases of the school. In science, in the Foundation Stage, attainment and progress were good and in the primary phase were outstanding. In Islamic Education and in Arabic, students' attainment and progress were acceptable. Students demonstrated excellent attitudes and behaviour and they were given an outstanding quality of support complemented by a robust culture of health and safety. Learning support was excellent for students requiring additional help in their learning and students identified as gifted and talented. The quality of teaching was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and learning was outstanding across both phases of the school. The school leaders managed the school very effectively and were clearly committed to advancing the school in every aspect.

Key features of the school

- The high quality of students' attitudes and personal development;
- Students exhibit strong enthusiasm for learning;
- Students benefit from excellent support and high standards of health and safety;
- The excellent quality of students' attainment in English, mathematics and science;
- The effectiveness of assessment practice;
- The well-developed links with parents and the community;
- The role of the governing body in its support and challenge in the school's development.

Recommendations

- Improve the standards of attainment, progress, teaching and learning in Arabic to the standards of the other key subjects and meet the Arabic curriculum compliance for private schools;
- Improve the standards of attainment, progress, teaching and learning in Islamic Education to the standards of the other key subjects and meet the Islamic Education curriculum compliance for private schools.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in both phases of the school. Most students could memorise chapters and verses of The Holy Qur'an and the most could recite the Qur'an with few errors. They knew about the five Pillars of Islam and understood the main concepts. Students continued to develop a more detailed knowledge of the Islamic principles and only a few understood the meanings of the verses of The Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. Few students knew the names of the Messengers of Allah. They knew the five daily prayers and their timings. Most students demonstrated acceptable knowledge of Islam in relation to expected age-appropriate standards.

Attainment and progress in Arabic for native speakers was acceptable. Students repeated simple phrases and sentences with correct pronunciation and could answer simple questions. Whilst speaking standard Arabic students mixed their language with slang. Few students could explain the meaning of the words they were learning. Across the school listening skills were acceptable as students were able to follow familiar instructions correctly and accurately. However, in the early stages a few students needed the instructions to be translated. The students could write simple words with the teacher's help. They understood the rules of basic grammar such as the verb and nouns in sentences. Students' skills in writing were underdeveloped.

Students with Arabic as an additional language demonstrated acceptable attainment and acceptable progress. Most students could answer simple familiar questions from memory and a few could write a two-word simple sentence and could translate familiar sentences. Most students understood a few spoken words though English translation was often required to provide support. Most students could say basic words and repeat simple phrases in response to pictures and what they heard from their teachers. Most students could read simple texts with few difficulties in pronunciation but they did not always understanding the meaning fully. Majority of students could not write many of the words they heard. In the upper stages, most students had acceptable handwriting but were unable to construct meaningful sentences, orally or in writing, despite several years of study.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding across all phases of the school. Students performed above international expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 in the internally marked

and moderated tests and, at the end of Key Stage 2, in the externally marked examinations. Most students spoke confidently and used increasingly sophisticated vocabulary to express their ideas. They listened carefully and gave well considered responses in class, pair and group discussions. In reading, those in Reception were recognising simple words and by Year 4 most were reading with increasing confidence. Students in Years 5 and 6 read with accuracy, feeling and understanding. Throughout the school writing was well formed and well presented. Students from Year 4 upwards could write well for a variety of purposes. They were skilful in transferring their note taking, understanding and knowledge of literary techniques and critical appreciation into their own written work.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding throughout the school. Children performed above international expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 in the internally marked and moderated tests and, at the end of Key Stage 2, in the externally marked examinations. Although there was a broad range of mathematical ability on entry to Foundation Stage, most children made outstanding progress in counting, sorting and one-to-one correspondence. They could use mathematical language appropriately and were developing the concept of number, for example, by ordering three two-digit numbers. By the end of the primary phase, students had extended their mathematical vocabulary and their ability to work with numbers. Most could use all four operations with decimals to two places. They could identify the properties and nets of three-dimensional shapes, handle and present data in a variety of formats and produce formulae to solve simple problems. Most students understood how their learning applied to the real world.

Attainment and progress in science was good in Foundation Stage and outstanding in the primary phase. Pupil tracking data in the primary phase and international data comparisons clearly demonstrated the excellent levels reached by the students. Relevant and meaningful connections to other areas of learning were a strength across the whole school. In the Foundation Stage, almost all children could identify some features of parts of the body, compare obvious similarities/differences of materials and investigate living things. In the primary phase, scientific method and process were a forte. Most children had a sound grasp of how to conduct a fair test. Scientific vocabulary was also well-developed. Students in Year 5 could give lucid explanations of terms such as condensation and evaporation and, in Year 6, demonstrated a good understanding of forces.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils across the whole school were outstanding. Relationships between students, their peers and staff were characterised by respect and concern for each other. High levels of student self-discipline and responsibility supported independence of thought and tolerance. Events such as the annual Health Day supported the students' firm understanding of healthy living. Attendance was good and students arrived on time for lessons. Punctuality at the start of the day had improved due to closer monitoring and support from parents.

Students' civic understanding was good. Students in the primary phase enjoyed positions of responsibility as team captains and could serve on the school council though Key Stage 1 students were not yet involved in the decision-making process. Students across the school participated fully in events organised by the school community and the Parent Teacher Association and raised money for a range of charities. Although there was a range of displays featuring Islam, students' understanding of Islam was not fully developed. Students had developed an excellent appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai through the curriculum, educational visits and community links.

Economic and environmental understanding throughout the school was outstanding. Through a programme of visits and visitors linked to the thematic learning, students had developed a detailed knowledge of factors contributing to Dubai's economic growth. Students' environmental awareness was equally notable, exemplified by their eco projects. The appointment of a school community liaison officer had helped to integrate the wider business community and local environmental initiatives into the curriculum.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching in the Foundation Stage was outstanding and in the primary phase it was good with many outstanding features. Teachers used their subject expertise to engage and motivate students and to inspire them with confidence. Planning was usually meticulous and addressed the full range of abilities. High quality resources were utilised to engage and motivate students and time was used efficiently to ensure a rapid pace in learning. Teachers were skilful in their choice of questions to check understanding, challenge thinking and extend learning. In the best lessons younger children enjoyed the opportunities to learn through practical activities and exploration, whilst older students were challenged to solve increasingly complex problems and carry out investigations. In some lessons, especially in Islamic Education and Arabic, expectations were not always high enough and the learning was not interactive.

Students' attitudes to learning were outstanding from the youngest to the oldest. In the Foundation Stage, children were equally enthusiastic learning through play, imagination and discovery with their friends as they were answering questions and completing set tasks. Older students were thoughtful and keen to discuss and share their ideas with their classmates. They were confident using technology to extend their learning and could apply what they had learned to the real world, especially when it was linked to investigations, practical experiences or visits. Students were equal partners in assessing their own progress and were able to say what they needed to do to improve their work. Students' understanding of the links between areas of learning was markedly strong.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and outstanding in the primary phase. Teachers knew their students very well. As they started school, children's skills in language and their understanding of number were assessed and the information used to plan appropriate activities in these areas of learning. The school had already planned to extend this in future to provide a more detailed profile of each child. Teachers generally made good use of assessment information to plan lessons that met the needs of all students. They were skilful in checking

students' understanding during lessons and adapting explanations and questions accordingly. Work was marked consistently and feedback to students, both verbal and written, ensured the students knew how well they were doing and what they should do to improve. Progress over time was assessed regularly and the information used to adapt planning and to provide additional support where it was needed. Test results were rigorously analysed to identify what students did well and to prioritise teaching strategies.

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

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage was outstanding and in the primary phase it was good. It was kept under constant review to meet the ever-changing needs of students. Younger children extended their knowledge, skills and understanding through a well-planned, integrated programme of challenging and enjoyable activities designed to foster a love of learning. As an example, they dressed up and played the parts of favourite characters from traditional stories and, in so doing, developed their imagination and their skills in speaking and listening. In this rich and exciting learning environment, within and beyond the classroom, they grew in confidence and achieved very well. Older students developed their social and emotional well-being through carefully planned themes. A variety of interesting topics was chosen to enable them to develop skills and creativity and to make meaningful links across the areas of learning. Planning was detailed and ensured continuity and progression in learning from year to year and for all ability groups. Consequently, students were well prepared for the next phases of learning. Their learning experiences were further enhanced by productive links with the local community, for example through trips out to explore Dubai and during a visit from the local police when they learned how to carry out an investigation and gather evidence. Beyond the school day, students took advantage of an extensive range of activities in sport and the arts. Provision for Islamic Education and Arabic was less well-developed than the other areas of the curriculum and did not meet the Ministry of Education's requirements.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were outstanding. Bus transport was safe and orderly on arrival and departure. The school maintained a safe and secure environment; buildings were clean and well maintained and fire equipment was updated regularly. Two full-time nurses, a visiting doctor and dentist were responsible for the medical welfare. Records and procedures were in line with regulations. All members of staff were visible, vigilant and reflective; they anticipated potential hazards and responded effectively. Students were trained in safe practices and risk assessment, particularly in science, and they were encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through personal and social education, physical activities and cross curricular links, as well as the input from the nurses who conducted spot checks on lunch boxes. All members of staff were clear about the school's policy on child protection.

The quality of support provided by the school was outstanding. A positive relationship existed between teachers and students and students and students. Teachers were responsive to the range of academic, physical and emotional needs in the school. Comprehensive tracking of assessment results, coupled with observations and consultations, resulted in highly effective systems for support. Students with learning needs were supported effectively, enabling them to make very good progress. The school used external specialists to help meet the needs of students with emotional and social difficulties. The management of behaviour was unobtrusive as students displayed a high level of self-discipline. Parents' were sent reports on a regular basis, which were written in positive language with targets for improvement. They were also invited to informative transition evenings for students moving from one key stage to another and to discuss transition arrangements and requirements to senior schools.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The Headteacher led by example but ensured that management teams and all staff were integral to guiding and improving the school. Senior staff were highly skilled professionals and very effective in inspiring all staff to promote the school's ethos and meet its promise to parents. A notable quality of senior managers was their involvement in the daily life of the school; they were visible, involved and supportive of staff and students. Rigorous improvement of performance management and professional development, linked to the delivery of the new curriculum, had led to high academic standards. Senior leaders were committed to researching appropriate educational innovation to contribute to the school's future needs. Whilst the surrounding physical environment of the school had remained challenging, it was to the credit of the leadership that the school was a community of happy and purposeful learners, whose parents were active in their support of the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior managers gathered views from staff, students and parents, analysed data on student performance against international norms and, in most key subjects, used regular lesson observation to monitor teaching and learning. This had led to significant improvement in a number of aspects of the school. The school had responded positively to recommendations from the last inspection. Detailed monitoring of the delivery of the new curriculum had taken place and the improvement in students' ICT use to enhance their learning was evident. The school had improved the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic, but the Ministry of Education requirements for private schools were still not met. Whilst evaluation of the needs of these subjects in terms of provision had been undertaken, observation of classroom practice was not as robust as in other key subjects.

Partnership with parents and the community were outstanding. In interviews with parents and in questionnaire responses parents were very supportive of the school and its ethos, valued the way in which they were fully involved in school life and praised the ease of communication at all levels. Reports to parents were detailed, with guidance for improvement. Enhanced links with the wider community had increased opportunities for students to experience life outside the school and develop their learning through firsthand experience of the business and professional community.

Governance was outstanding. The governing body was comprised of representatives of all stakeholders, particularly parents. The breadth of governors' expertise had been influential in the improvement of the school's performance. Governors knew the school well, not solely from regular reports, but through the work of the sub-committees and meetings with staff. The school was fully accountable to the governing body for all its aspects.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Staff were suitably qualified and support staff enhanced the quality of students' learning. Students benefitted from plentiful and up-to-date classroom resources, which promoted independent learning. ICT provision had been significantly increased. The school's co-curricular and extra-curricular programme was extensive. Students benefitted from high quality sports facilities and attractive leisure areas. Resources were regularly monitored to ensure that they effectively supported students' development. The care of the facilities was exemplary.

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 |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Acceptable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? 3% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language. | | |
|---|------------------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Attainment in Arabic as a first language | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress in Arabic as a first language | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Attainment in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in English? | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Progress over time | Outstanding | Outstanding |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics? | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Progress over time | Outstanding | Outstanding |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in science? | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Attainment | Good | Outstanding |
| Progress over time | Good | Outstanding |

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

| How good are teaching and learning? | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Teaching for effective learning | Outstanding | Good |
| Quality of students' learning | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Assessment | Good | Outstanding |

| How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students? | | |
|--|------------------|---------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Curriculum quality | Outstanding | Good |

| How well does the school protect and support students? | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary |
| Health and safety | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Quality of support | Outstanding | Outstanding |

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

| How well does the school perform overall? |
|---|
| Good |

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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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