

Emirates International School - Meadows Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

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.

Emirates International School - Meadows was inspected in January 2011 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 Meadows, Emirates International School - Meadows is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 19 years. The school follows a UK/International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1471 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. Whilst a majority noted with pleasure the improvements that the new principals, appointed late in 2010, had brought and acknowledged the approachability and helpfulness of individual teachers, the majority also raised concerns. These were wide-ranging, but particularly notable in the areas of continuity and stability of leadership and management, academic standards in some subjects and in the regularity and timeliness of reporting of their child's progress. However, most acknowledged the quality of the teaching and support of their child. Almost all parents said their children felt happy, safe and fulfilled in school; most felt that behaviour was good. Almost all were satisfied with the range and quality of extra-curricular activities available.

How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of the school was acceptable. There had been positive progress since the previous inspection. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were now acceptable throughout the school, as they were in most subjects. Students were making good progress at post-16 in Arabic, English and science. Their Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was acceptable. The behaviour of students was good. Students showed good economic and environmental awareness and understood how this related to their everyday life.

Both teaching and learning were acceptable in Foundation Stage and in secondary, and good in primary and at post-16. Good quality teaching was seen in most subjects, and there were very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching. Almost all students regularly made links with and built on previous learning. Their collaboration skills were becoming well-developed and students were supportive of each other's learning. Assessment was acceptable in Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases and good in post-16. There was consistent practice in the recording of data to track students' performance and to assist improvement. The curriculum was acceptable in Foundation Stage and secondary, and good in primary and in post-16. A comprehensive review of the curriculum and better planning had brought improvements that were having a positive effect on learning. Arrangements for students' health and safety were good. Procedures and systems, including child protection, were thorough and closely monitored by key staff. All staff and students were well aware of the child protection policy. Buildings were safe and well maintained. Based on a thorough tracking system, students received very good guidance throughout their schooling. Leadership and management were good. Since the appointment of new principals, a substantial positive impact had been made and improvements in self-evaluation were evident. Good morale amongst staff had been reinforced and parents had begun to acknowledge the many positive developments. There was a renewed feeling of optimism within the school community that the next stages of this strategy would be successful in raising standards further in all areas. The school's links with parents were improving, partly through the establishment of an active and efficient parental advisory group. With encouragement by senior leaders, the newly-constituted group had made a good start in creating enhanced roles as partners in their children's learning. The owners were increasingly aware of the views of parents and understood the importance of their greater involvement in the school. The school's overall resources and facilities were good.

Key features of the school

- The significant strengthening of morale throughout the school resulting in renewed commitment by staff;
- The clear progress in planning and implementation of self-evaluation;
- The raising of attainment and progress in Islamic Education;
- The strong level of commitment to the continuing development of the curriculum, with high participation in an expanding range of extra-curricular activities;

- The positive attitudes and behaviour of students and the good relations between staff and students;
- Students' mature and confident approach to learning backed by a strong system of support and guidance.

Recommendations

- Build on the improvements already made to the curriculum in order to ensure better continuity and progression across the phases;
- Review the approach and delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure more child-directed learning;
- Further improve assessment strategies to better meet the needs of the range of students;
- Review the system of traffic control and safety in the main car park;
Develop the current plans to distribute the leadership responsibilities more systematically throughout the school community.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. Across the school, most students were able to memorise short verses of The Holy Qur'an with few errors and could understand the general meaning of the verses. However, only a few students could apply the recitation rules correctly. The majority of primary students had basic knowledge of Islamic concepts and could list the five Pillars of Islam, the Pillars of Faith, the daily prayers and could talk about the mercy of Allah. In secondary, the majority of students had good knowledge about the Prophet's life (PBUH) and his companions and followers. In post-16, the majority of students could explain their duties and responsibilities as Muslims. Across the school, only a few students demonstrated sufficient understanding of how to apply the Islamic values to new, unfamiliar real life situations.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were acceptable in primary and secondary, and good in post-16. Across the school, students' listening skills were good as they were able to understand and follow instructions accurately. However, their speaking and writing skills varied as most of the students reverted to using colloquial Arabic in their text or speech. Although students were starting to write more in class, they were still repeating spelling mistakes and the majority were less confident in applying grammatical rules in new contexts. Students' reading and comprehension skills were broadly in line with expectations. In post-16, students' progress was good in all key aspects and this was reflected in their good examination results.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable in both primary and secondary. Across the school, students' progress varied with most students improving at an acceptable pace. Students were more confident at listening and responding to instructions and questions in Arabic than they were at speaking to convey meaning. Their answers were generally well structured but short and a few used a limited range of vocabulary. Students' writing skills were limited to the key vocabulary and phrases in the text book. However, students in their early stages of learning Arabic demonstrated good progress overall in their listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Students' attainment in English was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary, and good at post-16. Progress was good at all stages. Foundation Stage children were developing good listening skills and appropriate phonic ability, and were making a sound start to writing. Listening skills continued to develop well through the primary stage and students were able to produce extended writing for different functions, making good use of a widening vocabulary. A minority of students in Grades 7 to 10 demonstrated skill in analysing novels and poems but language attainment here was more variable than in other stages, especially in speaking and writing. By Grades 12 and 13, most students were able to present complex ideas, write extended essays and analyse pieces of literature.

In mathematics, progress and attainment in the Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 were acceptable. In the primary phase, attainment was acceptable and progress good. Against international benchmarks most students, in all phases, attained at expected levels. However, IGCSE results were above expected levels. Children in the Foundation Stage showed competence in number skills that matched age-related levels. In the primary phase, students used a range of strategies to solve number problems and were increasingly confident in checking results and providing reasoned conclusions. Grade 7 students had a good understanding of square numbers and were beginning to develop their enquiry skills. At post-16, students demonstrated good levels of independence in their work. In all phases students were able to relate mathematics to real-life situations.

In science, attainment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and good elsewhere. Progress was good in all phases. In the Foundation Stage, children quickly learnt basic scientific skills. Primary students were beginning to organise enquiries and showed impressive scientific knowledge of seismology, for instance. In secondary, students' variable skills at forming hypotheses in Grades 7 to 9 gave way to confident investigation with minimal direction by staff in Grades 10 to 11. Students demonstrated this very well, for example, as they explored aspects of magnetism. Attainment in the current Grades 10 and 11 was significantly higher than in previous years. In post-16, students worked very effectively in lessons, ensuring good progress and high standards. One class showed especially good knowledge and research skills as they examined factors affecting gas movement through plant leaves.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Relationships between teachers and students were positive and based on mutual respect, which contributed to a good learning environment in most classes. Students at all levels were polite, respectful and welcoming to visitors. They exhibited pride in their school. They demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living, supported by a sound whole school focus on the area. Attendance was consistently good, but punctuality remained an issue to be addressed.

Students' civic responsibility, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable at all stages. Students in Grades 7 to 13 welcomed the opportunity to serve the school community through its student council, although students benefit from a wider range of opportunity to take on responsibility at all stages. Most could offer some insights into the multi-cultural nature of Dubai society and give some examples of local traditions and cultures. All felt that they clearly benefited from attending a multi-cultural school. Although students showed respect for Islam, they did not demonstrate a sufficient breadth of knowledge of the relevance and impact of Islam in contemporary society.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good across the school. Most students could say how Dubai had developed over recent times and senior students could offer views on Dubai's position in the global recession. A few expressed clearly how students might make personal contributions to the community in the future. Most students cared for their school environment and could explain the importance of the school's recycling initiatives. Senior students were aware of the local and global initiatives to protect the environment and its resources.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching in the Foundation Stage and the secondary phase was acceptable; it was good in the primary phase and post-16. Teachers' knowledge, well-planned lessons delivered with pace, the sharing of learning intentions and the quality of teacher/student interaction were all strong features across the whole school. In the Foundation Stage, members of staff were skilled in the inclusion of the many children who had a limited level of English. Knowledge how to teach young children was less developed and the provision of outdoor play remained absent. Primary classroom practices were generally well-established including good quality planning. Teachers often used information and communication technology effectively to engage students. Most teaching in secondary was well-focused but did not always meet the needs of high-ability students. At post-16, high expectations and probing questions, leading to the development of critical thinking skills, were central to the quality of teaching.

Learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and the secondary phase, and good in the primary phase and post-16. Across all the phases, students were keen to learn, engaged readily in their activities and worked well with their peers. The cross-curricular nature of the curriculum enabled students to make links with other subjects and build on previous learning. Collaboration skills were becoming well-developed and students were supportive of each

other's learning. In the Foundation Stage, children did not have enough opportunity for self-initiated learning. Activities often had narrow objectives which limited learning. There were some good examples in primary, of students taking responsibility for their own learning. Enquiry and research skills were a developing feature of primary and secondary learning; the development of critical and higher order thinking skills was also at an early stage. At post-16, students were accustomed to taking responsibility for their own learning and the development of enquiry and research skills was the norm.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases and good in post-16. There was consistent practice in the recording of data to track student performance, to analyse subject strengths and weaknesses, to aid transition and to identify students who needed further support or challenge. These systems were in their infancy in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary and were not yet impacting on individual student's learning. The quality of written feedback to students was inconsistent and strategies to develop students' abilities to assess learning were limited. Assessment practice in post-16 was more firmly established and was linked to IB criteria. Subject descriptors were well-known and understood by the students. Teachers had a good knowledge of each student's abilities.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Foundation Stage and secondary, and good in primary and post-16. Many recent improvements were evident and change was ongoing, but the curriculum was already having a beneficial impact on learning. This reflected rigorous reviewing and effective collaboration by staff. Curricular vision was clear. Reshaping of schemes of work was required, for instance in Grade 7 to 9 English and mathematics, but the general experience of primary and older secondary students was of imaginatively designed lessons, serving the wide range of students well. Good additional provision for students with learning difficulties was established in primary and developing in secondary. The provision of English as a second language (ESL) offered effective support for many students. The Arabic curriculum was being planned with more regard to other subjects, while Islamic Education provision had created more opportunities for practising Tajweed and recitation, as well as memorisation of The Holy Qur'an. In the Foundation Stage, recent improvements included giving science themes more prominence, but generally there was too little child-initiated learning. In primary, many topics stimulated independent and group research on multi-disciplinary themes, with some excellent work on managing oil spills. In Grades 7 to 9, this investigatory approach was variable but, by Grades 10 and 11, there was strong consistency in the good quality and range of IGCSE courses. In post-16, the well-established IB curriculum had expanded, offering over 30 subject options as well as its successful enhancement programme. The school's excellent range of extra-curricular activities greatly enriched students' experience. Some used community facilities while parents came into school to assist in several clubs. Other activities promoted service within the school, for instance when sixth formers operated as qualified gymnastic coaches.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for students' health and safety were good. Its procedures and systems, including child protection, were thorough and closely monitored by key staff. All staff and students were well aware of the child protection policy and the designated personnel responsible. Buildings were safe and well maintained. Regular fire drills ensured that students could be speedily evacuated efficiently and safely. Transport arrangements were well organised and closely supervised; however, some private vehicles created potentially dangerous situations when collecting students. School facilities were very good and met the needs of all students. The school's extensive healthy lifestyle programmes were well supported by the resident medical staff, which provided good care and kept meticulous records. Form periods, introduced this academic year, provided students with information on all aspects of healthy living.

Good support was evidenced by the excellent relationships between students and all the adults in the school. The individual needs of students were skilfully identified and addressed in all phases of the school. The behaviour policies in place were effectively implemented. The students had the benefit of school counsellors who were available to help them with any issues of concern. Tracking systems were in place to monitor students' progress and well-being. However, further refinement was necessary to ensure a fully comprehensive and coordinated system. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality were effective. Students received very good guidance throughout their schooling which aided the transition to the next phase of their life.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. Since the previous report, the school had been through a turbulent period during which there had been significant changes in senior leadership. It was commendable that in a period of no more than three or four months, the two newly-appointed principals had provided a clear sense of direction and had re-focused teachers on raising standards. Senior leaders had communicated clear expectations of shared responsibilities to middle managers who had responded well to the challenge. New training programmes for senior and middle managers underpinned the successful re-design of performance management arrangements. Teachers had objectives related to the well-defined school improvement plan and to their own professional objectives. There was regular observation of teachers, undertaken in a systematic manner. All senior leaders and middle managers showed enthusiasm and a commitment to planning positive and demanding changes.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable; there was a consistency and clarity in the written documentation for this process. There had been good progress in systematically addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The

related action plan had linked clearly to the main school improvement plan. The plan clearly identified timescales, indicators and criteria key against which progress could be measured. Whilst these co-ordinated measures designed to secure school improvement had already had a positive impact, including the raising of attainment and progress in several curriculum areas, much consolidation work remained to be planned and implemented. Since late autumn 2010, the vision and strategy of the incoming leaders had been communicated well and had been accepted with enthusiasm by staff.

Partnerships with parents and the local community were acceptable. During the latter part of 2010, concerned parents had formed a parental advisory group. This is now well-organised and effective, and has held regular constructive meetings with school leaders. Since the late autumn of 2010, reporting systems have become more detailed and parents stated that much more relevant information on the work of the school had been shared through the website.

Monthly newsletters outlined topics of work. Several meetings had been held to help parents better understand the curriculum. Parents were welcome to express concerns regarding the progress of their children. The school had some productive links with the community, including the sharing of facilities. Work placements for students had been organised.

Governance was acceptable. The Board's schools' manager visited the school regularly, and an interview with key board members demonstrated a willingness to strengthen these links.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good overall. Teachers were generally well-qualified and used effectively. Library facilities and the availability of appropriate internet access for students were good. In view of the increasing number on roll, the school had implemented some contingency plans, including the creation of additional office and teaching space in corridors. However, it was aware of the need for further strategic planning for accommodation usage.

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?				
17% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

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

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

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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
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	Good	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

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

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

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

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.

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

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