

Queen International School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

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.

Queen International 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 Deira, Queen International School is a private school providing education for students from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12, aged three to 17 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum leading to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). A limited number of courses have been reintroduced at Advanced Level. At the time of the inspection, there were 1231 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. Almost all parents felt that their children liked school. Most were of the opinion that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. They commented positively about behaviour at school. They believed that staff expected their children to work hard, to do their best and to be independent and responsible. Almost all thought that teaching was good with a good range of stimulating activities and that children were treated fairly. Most parents felt comfortable approaching the school with a question or complaint. Most thought that the school was caring and that it kept their children safe and healthy. They felt that the school was well led and had good links with parents. A minority of parents felt that the school had not responded positively to the recommendations from the last inspection.

How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, Queen International School provided a good quality of education for students. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science across the school ranged from acceptable to outstanding. In mathematics and science in Foundation Stage attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. Attainment and progress in English were outstanding throughout the school. The school achieved its aim to enable students to gain outstanding results in international examinations across the curriculum. However, children in the Foundation Stage did not achieve at the level expected, apart from in English. The attitudes and behaviour of students were good in almost all lessons and around the school. Students had acceptable Islamic, cultural and civic understanding in Foundation and primary stages and demonstrated good understanding in the higher grades. Similarly, economic and environmental understanding ranged from acceptable to good as students progressed through the school.

Teaching in the secondary school was successful in preparing students for university and learning activities were carefully planned to ensure students gained the highest grades. However, teaching in Foundation Stage was unsatisfactory and did not provide age appropriate activities which enabled young children to learn effectively. Also, teaching in the lower primary phase was unsatisfactory in too many lessons. Lessons in the early phases were teacher directed, text book driven and lacked effective use of resources to ensure learning. The teaching in these early phases did not allow students to work collaboratively and at their own pace in order to foster independent learning skills and creativity. Assessment was unsatisfactory in Foundation Stage and Primary and acceptable in Secondary and Post-16. Teachers did not set clear learning objectives in many Kindergarten and lower primary lessons and lacked the skills to assess students' work and so that tasks met the needs of the students. Staff were meticulous in their analysis of examination results and this enabled the school to make very useful comparisons from year to year, both internally and against international standards. The curriculum in Foundation Stage and lower primary had significant gaps and was therefore unsatisfactory. The Foundation Stage curriculum did not incorporate enough practical learning activities to develop children's skills of enquiry and independent learning. This was a feature of the last inspection and continues to require urgent action. The inspection team also identified the need for a review of the curriculum for Grades 1 to 6 due to an over-emphasis on text book learning. The Director ensured high standards of care and welfare of students. Arrangements to ensure health and safety were good and the school had addressed safety recommendations since the last inspection. Tracking of educational and personal well-being of students was acceptable. However, in the early years this tracking did not lead to any review of the curriculum or teaching strategies. The practice of students, who did not bring books to a lesson being unable to participate, should stop as this adversely affected their learning.

The leadership and management of the school were good overall. Whilst the Director provided clear direction, the processes for school self-evaluation were not as rigorous as needed and therefore actions did not impact quickly enough or directly enough to improve

outcomes for students. This was particularly apparent in the lack of change since the last inspection in the range of practical learning activities. The school had very close and productive relationships with parents which were reflected in the positive response of the parents to the life of the school. The Director was well supported by the senior staff and members of the advisory board, who worked conscientiously to achieve agreed objectives. The day-to day running of the school was efficient and resources and facilities were good.

Key features of the school

- The total immersion of students in the English language from KG to Grade 12 resulted in all students acquiring very high level English language skills, which enabled them to achieve very highly within an English curriculum;
- The combination of high standards of behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and respect for others from Kindergarten to Grade 12, resulted in students being fully prepared to take their role in society as responsible and caring citizens;
- The trusting and close relationship between the parents and the school;
- The outstanding achievement in international examinations;
- The strong work ethic and harmonious relationships across the school;
- The strong supportive and caring environment engendered by the Director;
- There was a very wide range of teaching and learning quality with high incidence of unsatisfactory teaching in the early years and outstanding teaching in the upper grades.

Recommendations

- Widen the representation of the advisory body to include parents, local business people and community leaders to ensure greater accountability;
- Use assessment to track students' progress, in order to identify exceptionally high or low achievement and to adjust teaching and the curriculum accordingly;
- Improve monitoring and accountability systems by providing subject leaders with targeted release time to ensure school priorities are met;
- Provide professional development to teachers to ensure that the KG curriculum incorporates enough practical learning activities to develop children's skills of enquiry and independent learning and review the primary curriculum to ensure learning beyond the text book;
- Ensure that all programmes of study include sufficient opportunities to develop skills in creative thinking, independent research, investigation and team-working;
- Stop the practice of premature dismissal of classes to catch buses before the end of the school day as this leads to lost teaching and learning time.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in Primary and Secondary and good in Post-16. Standards of the majority of the students were in line with Ministry of Education expectations. In the Foundation Stage, children could exchange Islamic greetings with adults in formal situations. In primary stage, the majority of students were developing an acceptable understanding of the basic principles of Islam. In secondary stage, the majority of the students showed acceptable skills in The Holy Qur'an recitation and memorisation. However, they were not provided with opportunities to explain the meaning of the whole text. Some students could ask their teachers questions that reflected their good knowledge of the Prophet's (PBUH) Hadith. .

The overall quality of progress and attainment in Arabic was good across the school. Although attainment was outstanding at post-16 in comparison with international benchmarks, it was good in secondary and acceptable in the primary. In Grade 2, students could write short paragraphs, which they had studied before. By the end of the primary stage, students could read longer passages. They recited poems enthusiastically and gave short responses to comprehension questions. In the secondary stage, students' reading was good. They read fluently and expressed themselves well. In higher grades, students' results in IGCSE exceeded international standards.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding. In KG, children could recognise and form letters. Grade 1 students confidently conversed in English. In the primary years students had a good command of spelling rules, were proficient in grammar and had developed extensive vocabularies. In the secondary years they debated, used complex words and understood advanced phrases. Reading in English was advanced. Students regularly accessed a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. External examination results for international students, demonstrated outstanding attainment but writing for purpose and meaning was under-developed across all key stages.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory in KG, good in primary and outstanding in secondary. Results at IGCSE were outstanding, and exceeded the international average. KG children could recite a few number rhymes. In Grade 2, students used mental addition, supplemented by finger counting, to calculate totals to 15. In Grade 6, they confidently used the correct order of operation in a complex problem with parenthesis. In Grade 8 they correctly answered probing questions about the congruence of triangles. Students in Grade 9 found a variety of methods of solving practical mathematics problems. In Grade 10, students worked confidently and accurately with vectors. In Grade 11, students working with graphs demonstrated good understanding of domain and range.

Attainment and progress in science were unsatisfactory in KG, good in primary and outstanding in secondary. Most students in Grade 6 named the structures in plant and animal cells and gave some account of their functions. In Grades 11 and 12 most students could calculate the error when making scientific measurements. However, students' investigative skills were weak and they were unable to model scientific methodology such as the control of variables.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable overall. In the Foundation Stage and primary school the attitudes and behaviour of students were good. Throughout all key stages there was a strong traditional work ethic supported by parents and teachers. All students followed rules for good behaviour. Students demonstrated good self-discipline in all areas of the school. Positive relationships were observed. Students had self respect and showed respect for others. Adults provided good role models for the children and constantly promoted positive relationships. There was a strong emphasis on good behaviour within a very positive ethos and students were polite and friendly. Indoor and outdoor recreational areas were insufficiently resourced to allow quality social interaction and learning beyond the classroom. Students were not checked when running in corridors, which was a potential hazard. Attendance and punctuality were good. However, students in some classes left lessons before the end of the school day resulting in lost learning time.

A few students in the primary phases were unfamiliar with local traditions of Dubai. In the secondary school, students' knowledge of local traditions improved. Islamic understanding was good. The school provided the students with the principles and values of Islam, and related this to daily life.

Economic understanding was good in the secondary years where excellent business studies provision made a substantial contribution to student's knowledge of Dubai's economic progress. However, children in the Foundation Stage and primary phases had limited understanding of this aspect. Students' environmental understanding was limited by the lack of field trips and reference to the environment in the curriculum. Most students cared for their school, keeping it clean and tidy but litter was seen in some areas of the school. Older students took part in desert field trips and were aware of some important environmental issues though this knowledge was inconsistent.

How good are teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning were acceptable overall. There was a very high number of good and outstanding lessons in the upper primary and secondary phases and there were too many unsatisfactory lessons in the KG and lower primary. Almost all of the teachers working predominantly with upper primary and secondary students had expert knowledge of their subjects. They helped their students to learn effectively and were familiar with the requirements of international examinations. The knowledge of some teachers in the KG was lacking, especially in science and many were not able to help students to learn effectively in mathematics. Teachers in the higher grades skilfully planned their lessons and the pace was brisk. They did not just rely on textbooks. In science, for example, they used a variety of resources such as flash cards, real life specimens and pre-prepared graphics. Many lessons in lower grades relied too heavily on textbooks, made little use of other resources, including Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and did not encourage collaborative work. Additionally, in many of these lessons students were all taught the same thing at the same time and there were consequently no opportunities for them to work independently at their own pace. This approach was not beneficial to the very able children or for those with special educational needs.

In the upper school most students were engaged in and took responsibility for their learning. They focused well on their work, worked well collaboratively in teams, used ICT effectively and displayed high level communication and presentation skills. For example, in science, several groups of Grade 10 and 11 students confidently made PowerPoint presentations to their peers on aspects of the curriculum that they had researched in teams. In an English class in G8 students worked collaboratively in small groups to prepare compositions together. This planning process required them to brainstorm to collect ideas and to devise the best method of recording their thoughts. In many lessons in the lower school children rarely worked without constant teacher direction and they did not have the opportunity to find things out for themselves or make use of ICT. Frequently in these lessons students were asked questions and were required with one word answers which were chanted by the whole class, thus making it impossible for the teacher to assess individual learning reliably.

Assessment was unsatisfactory in Foundation Stage and primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. In the upper school teachers helped students to improve by skilful use of probing questions, helpful comments on written assignments and individual guidance. They had a thorough knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses and could consequently offer meaningful feedback to help them improve. In the Kindergarten and lower primary, assessment was not well developed and consequently did not provide information which could be used to modify teaching approaches or the curriculum. Students in the primary years were unaware of what to do to improve.

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

The curriculum was mostly broad and balanced and fit for purpose in the secondary phase. Students had the option of a range of General Certificate in Secondary Education courses and AS level had been re-introduced this year. Students reported that there was no provision for Physical Education (PE) after Grade 8. The KG curriculum did not incorporate enough practical learning activities to develop children's skills of enquiry and independent learning. This had been a recommendation in the last report and needed urgent action. Current inspection findings also indicated the need for a review of the curriculum for Grades 1 to 6 because of the over emphasis on textbook learning. A special needs support teacher had been recently appointed and this had greatly enhanced the provision for children with special educational needs. Modern Language provision had been further enhanced in the primary phase, with the introduction of French. Programmes of study across all subjects throughout the school remained deficient in giving sufficient opportunities to develop skills in creative thinking, independent research and investigation or team-working. This was a recommendation in the last report and needed urgent attention. There had been some progress in the upper secondary phase but this was limited to a few pioneering individuals and this good practice needed more wide-scale adoption. Plans were in place to develop a Student Council to ensure students were involved more effectively in the decision-making process in school.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security were good. The school buildings were clean, and no risks were apparent. A few recommendations from the previous inspection had been implemented, including improved fire drills and risk assessments. The school kept detailed records of students' health and well-being and, in response to epidemic risks, had installed dispensers for hand-cleansing gels. The school had given parents sound advice on how to ensure a balanced diet in students' lunchboxes. Suitable buses were provided for students and supervision was good. Students complained of the need to carry heavy bags up and downstairs. The Director was responsible for training all staff in child protection procedures and processes were clear.

The quality of support was good, with good personal relationships amongst students and between students and teachers. However, classroom relationships were sometimes tense when students came to lessons without the required books and were excluded from participating. Where teachers made no effort to integrate these students, their learning was adversely affected. Although a visiting lecturer offered students advice about further education and careers, the school did not have a counsellor or careers library to support the advice. Teachers kept good records of students' personal development and acceptable records of their academic progress. Students' attendance and punctuality were good. Administrative staff carefully monitored absence, and contacted parents when students were unexpectedly absent.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Director, senior staff and heads of department had a clear vision which was focussed on maintaining outstanding achievement in international examinations. This vision was enabled by the co-operation of all staff. There was some effective delegation of responsibilities to the advisory board and other middle managers. Members of the advisory board were given accountability for implementing whole school policies in areas such as dissemination of good practice, ensuring professional development and post-inspection action planning. It was too early to establish the impact of the work of this group. In a few cases performance management arrangements were in place but they were not sufficiently rigorous. The leaders of the school had the capacity to solve problems in order to further the school's development once they were convinced of the need.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable but not embedded fully in the life of the school. In the time since the last inspection a few issues had been addressed, for example those relating to health and safety and careers advice. Furthermore, a start had been made to improve the opportunities for students to experience taking on additional responsibilities and leadership. There had, however, been no progress towards rectifying the issues relating to teaching and learning in the KG and lower primary classes.

Leadership was very responsive to the views of parents. School leaders knew the school and its students very well through regular 'hands-on' contact. The Director had a very high profile around the school. The knowledge gained from this close contact was often used to make improvements. These very close and productive links with the parents meant that parents viewed the school as receptive and ready to solve problems relating to their children's learning. The school had just appointed a new webmaster with the specific task of providing a portal to parents for monitoring and homework purposes. There were few links with the community or partnerships with other schools.

The school advisory group consisted of senior staff in the school. They were committed to their role and played a key part in implementing school policies leading to school improvement. They did not, however, act as 'critical friends' to the Director. The membership of the governing body did not include representation from a very wide range of stakeholders.

All teachers were well qualified but there was a high proportion of inexperienced members of staff who required further support and training. KG teachers did not deliver a curriculum which matched the development needs of young children and therefore needed training in appropriate strategies. The basic classroom accommodation was good. Corridors were wide and facilitated smooth movement round the school. Specialist facilities were largely acceptable and included science laboratories; two ICT rooms; a library and an area for basketball, football and volleyball. There were insufficient resources for the KG.

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

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

How good is the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

How good is the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable

How good is the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable

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

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

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

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation	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?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

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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