

National Charity School Inspection Report

Cycles 1 to 3

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.

National Charity School was inspected in February 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 Al Garhoud, National Charity School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Grade 1 to Grade 12, aged five to 17 years. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum and operates with a morning and evening shift. At the time of the inspection there were 5580 students in total on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most of the parents who responded were satisfied with the school. They were happy with their child's progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science. Fewer were happy with progress in English. Most agreed that teaching was good. Most said that students were treated fairly, were safe and enjoyed their lessons. However, a majority thought that the equipment and resources available in the school was only satisfactory or poor. The majority did not agree that the school helped their child make good choices about future education. Most parents also felt that there were poor extra-curricular opportunities available for students. A majority felt that school reports were not regular enough, contained insufficient information and that there were few opportunities for parents to be effectively involved in the work of the school. Most parents did not know if the school had responded positively to the recommendations of the previous inspection, although most parents thought the last inspection report was accurate and had led to improvements in the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The previous inspection report had identified five areas for improvement and there was, overall, acceptable progress in addressing the recommendations. The school demonstrated capacity for future development. Students had made progress across the school. Attainment in Islamic Education and spoken Arabic skills across all levels, as well as speaking and listening in English at Cycle 3, were good. There had been continued improvement in health and safety. Boys' behaviour in Cycle 2 and 3 in the morning school had improved.

National Charity School was a busy, purposeful school that provided an acceptable quality of education overall. The school performed effectively in a number of aspects of its work, despite the limited resources it had. There were a number of strong examination results, including a few that were among the highest scores in the Ministry of Education examinations in Dubai. Staff were conscientious and wanted students to do well. Students across all phases behaved well in class and around the school. Most wanted to learn. They respected their environment and appreciated the need to maintain a clean school. The quality of teaching for effective learning and school leadership were acceptable. In lessons, teacher talk was still the dominant form of teaching. The varying learning needs of different students were not fully met. In the best lessons teachers provided a range of resources to enrich learning and students were able to work in pairs or groups on a variety of activities. Students respected their teachers and were welcoming and polite to visitors and to each other. There were good relationships between staff and students and between students and their peers. Leadership in the girls' Cycle 2 and 3 sections was good. Insufficient resources, as well as poor quality and overcrowded buildings, limited students' learning.

Key features of the school

- The outstanding results of a few students in the Ministry of Education examinations;
- Motivated, ambitious, well-behaved students, who were proud of their school;
- Some outstanding classroom teaching in the day school that could be used as a model for all teachers;
- Good attainment across all stages in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Aspects of school leadership had shown improvement, with strong leadership in Cycle 2 and 3 girls' school;
- There remained important weaknesses in a number of key aspects of the work of the school including partnerships with parents and the community, governance and staffing, facilities and resources.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science in Cycles 1 and 2;
- Improve the quality of learning by providing more regular and better opportunities for students to develop higher-order and critical thinking skills;
- Develop a wider range of teaching strategies;
- Use assessment information to better inform teacher planning and student knowledge of their progress.
- Involve parents more in students' learning and the work of the school;
- Develop effective governance that represents the range of stakeholders within the school community;
- Extend the overall provision of information and communications technology (ICT), science laboratories and reading resources to enable key activities to be more integrated into the learning process.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in all cycles of the morning and evening schools. Students in all cycles had a good knowledge of the basic principles of Islam. Most students in Cycle 1 memorised short Surahs of The Holy Qur'an and also short Hadeeth. They could perform ablution and they knew details of the daily prayers. In Cycle 2, most students memorised and could recite The Holy Qur'an correctly. Most students could perform the Tayammum and they showed good understanding of the Prophet's (PBUH) commandments. In Cycle 3, most students could read and had memorised verses of The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings, making few errors. The majority of students knew recitation rules. Most students were able to describe a Muslim's duties towards others.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were good in all cycles in the morning and evening schools. Most students had well-developed speaking, listening and reading skills. Their ability to write extensively for a wide range of purposes was less well developed. They used standard Arabic confidently. For example, most students in Cycle 3 were confident in leading whole class presentations to discuss literary works. In Cycles 1 and 2, students' skills and progress varied, but they made good progress in most aspects by the end of each phase. Most students from Grade 4 to 12 demonstrated good debating and analysis of texts. They developed good understanding of poetry, poetic diction and figurative language. Most students had good understanding of sentence structure and applied grammar rules correctly, even in lower grades. Almost all students could answer their text book questions. Most students could read age-appropriate texts, although only a few developed the ability to read independently. Students' handwriting was not consistently good in boys' classes.

In the morning and evening schools, attainment in English was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2, and good in Cycle 3. Progress was acceptable in Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3 in the day school. In the evening school, progress was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3. Most students entered school

with few English skills, but made good gains in speaking and listening. In Cycle 1, students' vocabulary range was good. They applied grammatical rules in sentences. In Cycles 2 and 3, most students spoke English confidently. Independent reading was less well developed in Cycles 1 and 2 but, towards the end of Cycle 3, the majority of students could read a range of texts. Writing skills were under developed and did not meet international standards.

In both the morning and evening schools, attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3. Whilst attainment and progress were acceptable overall in Cycle 2, in the morning and evening schools, they were good in the girls' school. In Cycle 3 a few of the students' performance was outstanding; for example, their ability to apply higher order and critical thinking when solving mathematical problems in three dimensions using sine, cosine and tangent of angles. Cycle 2 students could solve problems involving ratio and proportion. They knew and used the properties of quadrilaterals. By the end of Cycle 1, students had learned basic number operations. Insufficient practical activities and the absence of links with meaningful contexts restricted attainment and progress across a broad range of skills.

Attainment in science was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 in both morning and evening schools. In Cycle 3 it was good in both schools. Progress over time in both schools was acceptable, with the exception of Cycle 1 in the morning school, where the students made good progress, especially in Grades 3 and 4 classes. Grade 1 students understood the importance of personal hygiene. Grade 6 students knew the structure of the earth and could build models to illustrate this. Grade 10 students understood the special case of meiotic cell division and could explain how the DNA of parents is mixed in any offspring produced. Grade 12 students could interpret topographical maps to explain the geology of an area. Older students' skills in English and ICT skills helped their understanding in science. Throughout the school the skills of research, investigation and experimentation were poorly developed, due to limited practical work in science laboratories.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitude and behaviour were good in all cycles of the morning and evening schools. There were positive relationships between students and staff and between students and their peers. Students with special needs were welcomed and integrated into classes. Almost all students attended assembly and interacted well with the programs. Students moved about the school in a calm and organised manner. They were respectful towards visitors and demonstrated an eagerness to learn. Most students had awareness of healthy life choices. They attended health programs and had tests for diabetes and blood pressure, as well as for body mass. Attendance and punctuality of students were outstanding.

Student's Islamic and civic understanding was good across all cycles in both morning and evening schools. They demonstrated good Islamic behaviour and performed evening prayers at school. They had broad knowledge of modern issues and understood Islam's views on them. They had good appreciation for the positive relationships in multicultural Dubai. They linked Islamic teachings to the harmony between different people that prevails in Dubai. Almost all had good knowledge of local traditions and customs. Most students, particularly the girls, expressed their ambitions to take positions of social and civic importance.

In both the morning and evening schools economic and environmental understanding were acceptable. Most students across the schools could describe the scarcity of water and traffic pollution. They could not explain the cause of such problems but could suggest some solutions such as turning off taps or using the Metro. Cycle 2 and 3 girls had a better awareness of threats to Dubai's environment and suggested further actions that they and the wider society could take in response. Similarly, this group had a sophisticated understanding of Dubai's economy and its global role. Students across the school were ambitious in their career plans and almost all wished to make a contribution to Dubai's future. They could describe specifically how their choices would make Dubai a better place to live. Students removed litter and, when they had access to school equipment, they used it with care. They had few opportunities to take part in community activities to improve the environment.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in each cycle in both schools. A minority of teaching was good in the morning school. Most teachers had good subject knowledge, which they used effectively when giving expositions and explaining ideas to their classes. Content and ideas were presented at a good pace. Lesson planning was acceptable and based mainly on the Ministry of Education syllabus. In the best lessons there was challenging and open-ended teacher questioning. Throughout the schools, students were encouraged to give answers and to explain their methods of working to the whole class. A few teachers made their own resources and a minority used audiovisual equipment and ICT. These captured the students' interest and engaged them. However, overall, teachers did not take sufficient account of the wide range of students' abilities. Textbooks were used extensively and too much of the teaching included lengthy teacher talks.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in each cycle in both schools. The students were extremely conscientious, eager to participate and enthusiastic learners. A few teachers questioning was effective in promoting better learning. In a minority of lessons opportunities were given for paired and group work to facilitate discussions and to share ideas and knowledge. Where enquiry and research skills were promoted, the students demonstrated their capacity to apply higher order and critical thinking to the problems posed. A few group presentations were made which gave students the opportunity to research their subject and demonstrate their leadership qualities. However, connections between new and previous learning and to real life situations were underdeveloped. Too much of the students' learning was by rote, without developing a deep and meaningful understanding of the skills and concepts taught. Teachers did not provide sufficient opportunities for students to work independently.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in each cycle in both schools. Comprehensive systems were in place to test students and record their attainment and progress across the school. In the best lessons, the work challenged all students as it was informed by the teachers' knowledge of students' learning. The marking of students' work was an area of significant development, with teachers regularly marking the work alongside students, to correct errors and to provide feedback. In a minority of classes there was questioning by teachers to check on students' understanding, rather than just recall of facts. Peer assessment in a few classes involved students checking each other's work and helping to correct it, which gave additional support to the learning. Students were aware of their test scores, but did not always understand their strengths and weaknesses and what they needed to do to improve.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in all cycles of the morning and evening school. It had adequate breadth and balance and complied with the requirements of the Ministry of Education. Teachers planned the lessons carefully to ensure curriculum coverage, continuity and progression. In the best lessons teachers had creatively supplemented texts by collecting or making their own learning resources. Science teachers used animated video resources from the internet to help students to understand difficult concepts. In English lessons, teachers often collected newspapers and magazines to provide contemporary discussions for students. In the morning school there was extra support for some students before school. Links with the wider community were in place. Students had been taken to visit business, community and leisure venues. The school had supplemented sports activities by entering students for a number of events and fixtures with other schools. The school used some aspects of the community to support its curriculum. Students participated in Dubai community runs and walks, and had sporting competitions with other schools in the area. Visitors from the Road Traffic Authority had addressed the students during assemblies to promote road safety. In the majority of lessons, the textbook was the only learning material available. Links between the subjects of the curriculum occurred in a few lessons, but these were insufficient and not planned coherently. Students were taught how to operate computers, but they were not used sufficiently to improve learning across a range of subjects. The senior managers of the school kept the curriculum under review, but there was no comprehensive guide to help teachers with their planning.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for students' health and safety was acceptable in both schools. There had been significant improvements since the last inspection. Science chemicals were organised for safe use and storage. There was additional supervision on buses and improved security at the school gates. Students with physical difficulties were cared for and supported. Medical staff systematically monitored students' health. Record keeping procedures were rigorous. Teachers were informed of health issues which affected students' learning. Posters and project work promoted healthy lifestyles. The Civil Defence supervised evacuation procedures and checked equipment. Regular safety audits had started. Staff were attentive to students' welfare. Not all staff were aware of a formal child protection policy. A minority of students brought unhealthy food to school. At the time of the inspection, supervision was inconsistent in the evening and this compromised safety.

The quality of support was acceptable. Positive relationships existed between staff and students. Behaviour management was effective and parents received information about the school's expectations. Teachers knew students well. Students were encouraged to succeed in academic work. Some provision was made for those needing extra support. Student attendance was managed well. Prompt action was taken when students were absent and outstanding levels of attendance were maintained. Tracking of students' academic progress had begun, but insufficient use was made of data to inform planning and guide students. Parents received regular reports, but these did not indicate clearly what students needed to do to improve. There were discussions in class, but no formally planned careers guidance lessons.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school was acceptable. Senior staff demonstrated capacity to secure further improvements. Roles and responsibilities were defined. Teams were more effectively contributing to on-going school review and improvement. The school had sound management and organisational systems. Although subject leaders led initiatives and managed effectively, they did not always have sufficient time or resources to complete tasks successfully.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Formal processes for self-evaluation involving senior staff were in place. Co-ordinators monitored teaching staff to evaluate and help improve teaching. Appropriate development priorities had been identified and strategies had been introduced to help the school improve. Planning for extensive staff professional development had occurred. The school had made acceptable progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnerships with parents were unsatisfactory. Mothers' and fathers' committees had been established but meetings had been sporadic and recommendations had yet to impact on the work of the school. The school sent report cards to parents and had parent-teacher conferences. Report cards contained percentage marks but did not contain sufficient information to guide parents or students about future learning. Only a few parents were involved on a daily basis in the school. They attended the school when there was a concern. Links with the wider community were well established. Charitable groups contributed significantly to scholarships for the poor and needy.

Governance was unsatisfactory. A number of initiatives had taken place since the last inspection. A chairperson had been appointed and Board policy with procedures drafted. While documentation was comprehensive, there was limited provision made for parental representation. No timeline had been established for the Board to begin to oversee the work of the school or hold it to account for its performance. Students and teachers did not have any formal input into development planning in the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. There were adequate numbers of teachers to cover classes. Many teachers, co-ordinators and managers who attended the day and evening schools worked extended hours. This impacted on their effectiveness. Facilities that supported learning, such as science and ICT laboratories, libraries and art rooms were limited. A lack of internet and ICT hardware and software in most classrooms restricted learning enrichment opportunities. A few teacher-made resources were available.

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:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?						
100% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.						
Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?

Age group:	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Unsatisfactory
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Staffing, facilities and resources	Unsatisfactory

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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