

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai British School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai British School

Location	Emirates Hills
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaibritishschool.ae
Telephone	04-3619361
Address	PO Box 37828, Springs 3, Emirates Hills, Dubai
Principal	Mr Mark Ford
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage 1 to Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,060
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	19th to 22nd November 2012

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The context of the school

Situated in Emirates Hills, Dubai British School opened in 2005. At the time of the inspection, there was a total enrolment of 1,060 students, aged three to 18 years. Students were grouped into 49 classes, eight in the Foundation Stage, 18 in the primary phase and 23 in the secondary phase. 55 different nationalities were represented amongst the student population.

The school followed the National Curriculum for England. Students were entered for GCSE and IGCSE examinations at the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced-level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

At the time of the inspection, there were 87 teachers, including the Principal, a senior leadership team and three part-time teachers. Almost all teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 25 teaching assistants. The Principal was in his second year in post and 26 teachers were recently appointed to the school.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The outstanding attainment in all aspects of the Foundation Stage, and in English and mathematics at post-16;
- Students' outstanding behaviour and their strong awareness of community and environmental responsibility;
- The high quality of the school's arrangements to protect and support the students;
- The outstanding relationship between the school and its community.

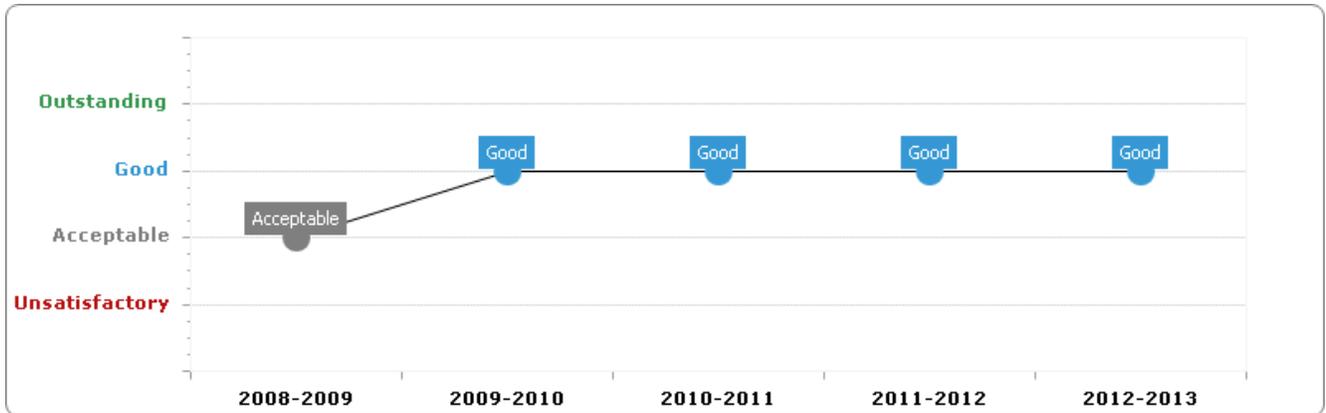
Recommendations

- Take positive steps to ensure that standards in all key subjects are consistently high, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Build on and share the current best practice in high performing subjects where teachers use a variety of teaching strategies;
- Ensure consistency in assessment across the phases, particularly in primary;
- Take a more rigorous approach in the process of self-evaluation at all levels.

Progress since the last inspection

- The sustained outstanding performance of students in most of the key subjects.
- Students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic remained lower than in other subjects.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Science				
Attainment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

In Islamic Education, attainment was acceptable in all phases. Most students in primary knew the Five Pillars of Islam well. Students were able to differentiate the Sunnah from the Fard in the lower years of secondary school. At post-16 students had acceptable knowledge of the Fiqh and Islamic law. The recitation and memorisation of verses of The Holy Qur'an were the weakest skills across the whole school. In Arabic as a first language, speaking and listening skills were strong for most students in the primary and secondary phases. They were able to speak with confidence. However, their reading lacked accuracy and fluency, especially in the secondary years. Their extended and free writing was limited. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable in primary and secondary. In both phases, most students were able to understand familiar words and short sentences, and were able to have simple conversations about themselves. Their reading skills were limited to the pre-learned words or phrases. Writing was the weakest skill.

However, in English, all four language skills were good; attainment in examinations was good in secondary and outstanding at post-16. In mathematics, attainment in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. Children's knowledge and understanding of the features of 2D and 3D shapes were particular strengths. Students' attainment in the primary phase was good. Higher achieving students worked well in pairs to calculate the perimeters and areas of shapes and worked above expected levels. In the post-16 phase, attainment was outstanding. Students had developed the ability to analyse problems and select an appropriate method to solve problems. In science, children's attainment in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. They rapidly developed early science skills and knowledge. Most students through the rest of the school had acquired well developed science knowledge and a clear understanding of scientific ideas and concepts beyond those typical of their age.

Progress was acceptable in all phases in Islamic Education. There was steady progress in the understanding of Islamic values in primary and in understanding of Islamic concepts and principles in secondary and post-16. However, students made slow progress in developing the knowledge of Seerah in lessons. Qur'an recitation was the least well developed skill. In Arabic as a first language, progress was acceptable in all phases. Most students, made steady progress in their listening and reading skills. However, students made slower progress in speaking when using modern Standard Arabic. Their writing skills were also less well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, students in the primary and secondary phases made significant progress in their listening skills. Progress in English was good in developing and extending language skills. At the later stages of secondary and post-16, progress in literary criticism was outstanding. In mathematics, almost all children in the Foundation Stage made excellent progress. Progress in the secondary school was good. Students developed their understanding of numbers, geometry and

measurement and data handling. Progress in post-16 was outstanding. When measured against external benchmarks students far exceeded age expectations. In science, progress was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good elsewhere. Most students, including those with special educational needs, developed their enquiry skills particularly well because of the frequent opportunities to try things out for themselves. Students with special educational needs made good progress in all subjects except in Arabic and Islamic Education where their progress was only acceptable.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school. Attendance was very good. The students arrived on time to their lessons. Almost all students were mature and sensible in lessons and during break times. The students were developing an attitude of self-reliance toward their education. Almost all students were sensitive and courteous towards one another and adults. Students made excellent choices about their food and exercise habits. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good. They had a keen interest in ethical issues and had very good insight, based on first-hand experience, into similarities and differences between their own and others' cultures. They were open to new ideas, appreciated cultural diversity and challenged racism. They respected and appreciated the traditions, heritage and Islamic values of the UAE that underpin and influence life in Dubai. Almost all pupils had a detailed knowledge of how Dubai had developed. Most students understood the reasons for the changes. Older students had gained a deeper understanding of the economic structure and society of Dubai. Students were exceptionally responsible members of the school community, demonstrating strong citizenship and real pride in their school. The students' strong voice was seen in numerous changes to the school including additional fruit at meal times. Students were involved in a wide range of local community events including the Taaleem Qur'an Competition, and their participation in the wider community included desert-tidying tasks and a recent introduction to the Global Citizenship Award. The students had an excellent work ethic and spoke enthusiastically about 'never giving up'. They took part in a wide range of initiatives which support conservation including clean-up dives where they helped to tidy the sea, supported local tree projects and worked with the World Wildlife Fund.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was outstanding in the Foundation Stage where work was challenging and very closely matched to children's needs. Lesson plans showed that teachers had an excellent understanding of how children learn. Independent and critical thinking were promoted very well. Elsewhere teaching was good, except in Arabic and Islamic Education, which had some weaknesses. In most lessons, respectful relationships ensured that classrooms provided a calm learning environment. Skilful questioning helped students to develop their ideas well. Teachers had secure subject knowledge, except in Islamic Education, and lesson planning was good. In a majority of lessons, a wide range of learning styles was used, motivating students to learn. However, teaching was not consistently good; a minority of lessons lacked pace and challenge, with a limited range of teaching strategies used.

Learning was outstanding in the Foundation Stage where children looked forward to coming to school. They worked very well at solving problems, taking on responsibilities and challenges confidently. Children developed their creativity, independence and critical thinking skills to a high degree during skilfully structured play. They applied their learning very well to real life. Learning was mainly good elsewhere, except in Arabic and Islamic Education where students rarely showed enthusiasm. In other subjects, students were keen to learn and took responsibility for their work whenever possible. They also applied their learning well to the real world. In a small number of lessons, students were passive and rarely had the opportunity to take the initiative, develop independence or work collaboratively.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. Children's progress was accurately tracked. Teachers knew children's strengths and areas for development very well. In most lessons, teachers used assessment effectively to adapt their teaching. Excellent use was made of assessment information to plan lessons that were closely matched to children's needs. Assessment was mainly good in other phases of the school, except in Arabic and in Islamic Education lessons, where teachers did not know students well. The quality of oral and written feedback was generally good and assessment was used to influence curriculum, teaching and support for students in the majority of lessons. Effective systems were in place to monitor students' progress but assessment was not as accurate in the primary phase as elsewhere. This occasionally led to a lack of continuity in learning. The analysis and use of data for self-evaluation and planning were uneven in quality.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum across the school was outstanding. It was broad and balanced, with a clear rationale that matched the aims of the school. The learning experiences provided well for the development of the well-rounded individual. The children and students overall enjoyed a smooth transition from one phase to the next within the school, although the curriculum arrangements between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have been identified by the school as needing further refinement. There was systematic review of the curriculum that took account of the views of students and parents. Meeting the needs of students was to the fore in planning and all groups of students gained from stimulating, challenging and developmental provision. The effective planning of cross-curricular links was evident in most subjects. Students were provided with very good opportunities to develop their independence in project work, for example work on paralympians. The school provided an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and many chances for students to learn beyond the school.

[View judgments](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

There were meticulous arrangements to promote students' health, safety and security in all parts of the school. The arrival and departure of cars and buses were very carefully managed and there was ample adult supervision at these times. Teachers worked hard to ensure classrooms were safe learning environments. Buildings and equipment were maintained in excellent condition and cleanliness was exemplary. Policies, procedures and record keeping were well embedded. Some, including emergency evacuation, went beyond requirements in terms of frequency. The promotion of healthy living was excellent, and seen in the students' keenness to eat healthily and to take plenty of exercise. Adults were systematically vetted for their suitability to come into contact with students and senior staff ensured that the arrangements for child protection were secure.

Relations between students and staff were respectful and supportive. Students were confident and at ease in their dealings with teachers. Their behaviour throughout school was exemplary. The school had very robust procedures for checking attendance and for dealing with unauthorised absences. The school had identified gifted and talented students, and was making provision for their needs both within the mainstream curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. Teachers and a counsellor offered valuable support to all students on both academic and personal issues. Careers advice was pertinent and focused.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The school had developed sophisticated procedures to identify students with special educational needs. The extended learning department provided very detailed advice and recommendations for support, which would benefit from being prioritised. Students with special educational needs made generally good progress. They were well supported not only by teachers but by a generous provision of teacher assistants. Parents were kept very well informed about their children's progress, and were fully involved in making decisions about the specific nature of the support offered.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding. There was a positive working ethos in school and the distribution of responsibilities was clear and strategic. The senior leadership team was dedicated and the vision of the school was shared by all stakeholders who were driven to change poor practice.

Self-evaluation plans were good and improving. Priorities for improvement were clearly defined and evenly distributed between the different school leaders. The school had done well to introduce new progress reports, but these were not all evaluative enough and yet to be clearly incorporated in the main school improvement plan. Self-evaluation linked to students' progress varied between phases and faculties. The school professional development activities were varied and they involved different members of the teaching community. The staff performance management was focused and informed meaningful action research projects. This allowed the school members to review and share their practice. The school continued to capitalise on the sharing of best practice from the outstanding practice seen in some lessons. The recommendations from the previous report had been taken seriously by the school but attainment in certain areas had deteriorated from the last inspection. Also, despite the great efforts and input from the School Executive Board in the Islamic Education and Arabic faculties, the improvement of the quality of teaching was still slow.

The partnership and communication with parents were outstanding. Parents were regularly informed about both academic and personal development of their children through the school reporting system and by the dynamic pastoral team. Parents were extremely positive about the quality of education provided by the school in the questionnaires and meetings. Links with local businesses and the community were

purposeful and varied. They played, for example, a crucial role during the students' work experience in Year 10.

Governance in school was good. They were actively involved in the school life and intervened in different areas of school in order to raise standards. They listened to parents and other key stakeholders. Governors played an active part in the school improvement. They held the Principal to account for the school's performance but some aspects of students' attainment required further, closer review.

Staffing and resources were good. Most of the teachers' qualifications were appropriate to the students' age range. Staffing issues were noted in school and the turnover of staff was high. This factor hindered the impact of the school's improvement strategies. The buildings were modern, safe and clean. However, the number of students was growing fast and the school had yet to fully consider the impact on students' academic and personal development. Resources such as information technology were rapidly growing. The science laboratories were well equipped and they were used effectively to develop students' research and critical thinking. Interactive boards were available in lessons but they were mostly used by the teachers. The library offered a variety of readers but the number of books and magazines in Arabic was low.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	291	44%
	Last year	287	28%
Teachers	74		87%
Students	205		86%

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

A minority of parents responded to the survey, but this was still an increase from last year. Most parents, students and teachers were very positive about the quality of education available at the school. Most parents believed that their children's progress was good in English, mathematics and science. However, they thought progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was too slow. In their comments, they wondered why the quality of teaching in those subjects was not in line with other key subjects. As last year, parents held broadly positive views about the different aspects of the school and they felt they played an active part in their children education. All parties agreed the school leadership was good.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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

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