

The Millennium School

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report issued February 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.

The Millennium School was inspected in December 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 its 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 Ghusais, Dubai, The Millennium School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) 1 to Grade 12, aged four to 17 years. The school follows a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,669 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents were very happy with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school, that the teaching was good, that their children were treated fairly and that they were being encouraged to become independent and responsible people. Parents liked the range of activities available to their children and almost all agreed that they were comfortable approaching the school with any questions or complaints and felt that the school would act promptly to address any issues. They felt that their children were well cared for and that the teachers were good at explaining to them what they could do at home to help with their children's work. A minority of parents who responded did not know if the school had good links with the community, and did not agree that the school was good at consulting them on decisions which affected their child. Parents were very happy with their children's progress in all subjects except for Islamic Education, where a majority of parents were unsure of progress.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Millennium School provided, overall, a good quality of education. Inspectors judged the students' attainment and progress in all the key subjects to be good, except for Islamic Education and Arabic at the primary stage, where they were acceptable. Students' attainment in CBSE exams was good. The students' attitudes and behaviour were good at all grade levels. Students were courteous and had positive attitudes to learning. There was an outstanding sense of civic responsibility. Well-established relationships with other local schools had allowed students to develop an awareness of their responsibilities to their wider community. Students had a good understanding of, and a respect for Islam, and greatly appreciated the multicultural nature of Dubai. The older students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding and the younger children were able to talk about environmental projects that they had taken part in, and their responsibility for the environment.

The quality of teaching and learning was good in Grades 1 to 12 and acceptable in the KG. Most lessons were judged as good or better. Teachers had good subject knowledge, which they used to generate enthusiasm for, and interest in, their subjects. Very good teacher-student relationships generated a high level of respect. Students were well motivated, showed interest in their studies, applied themselves and responded positively to the teaching. The school had a robust assessment framework that was linked to the CBSE scheme and operated across all grades. The detailed information the school kept on the attainment of individual students was analysed rigorously to plan future work and improve performance. Teachers knew their students well. However, the quality of marking in students' books was variable and did not always make clear what students needed to do to improve. Assessment in lessons was not used consistently to help students learn well. The curriculum was acceptable in the KG and good in the primary and secondary stages. At all levels there was a breadth and balance of subjects, with arts and personal development emphasised as well as academic attainment. The curriculum was reviewed annually, and extended through an extensive after-school programme. The arrangements for the health and safety of the students were good. The school was well equipped with fire and first aid equipment. The buildings and facilities were safe, secure and well maintained. Staff paid strong attention to their duty of care. Healthy lifestyles were promoted, and child protection procedures were well established.

The quality of leadership and management of the school was good. Senior leaders set clear expectations and had a strong vision for the school. Self-evaluation had led to a three-year strategic plan with appropriate priorities and steps to address them. The large leadership team provided close supervision at all levels of the school. Parents were involved in the school in many ways and kept well informed about the progress of their children. Governance was acceptable, with accountability to, and guidance from, a corporate office, but little stakeholder representation. Facilities were excellent, but over-extended in some areas because of high student numbers.

Key features of the school

- Excellent relationships throughout the school helped to develop confident and engaged students;
- Large class numbers and inconsistent classroom management weakened student learning in the younger grades;
- The school ran an extensive after-school programme, providing students with many sporting and artistic opportunities, as well as additional support when necessary;
- The environmental science curriculum for the younger grades did not sufficiently develop scientific thinking;
- The KG curriculum offered only limited opportunities for practical learning and language development;
- The buddies programme and social integration visits by students with significant learning needs promoted positive values for social inclusion throughout the school community;
- A strong sense of mission and purpose permeated the school.

Recommendations

- Extend practical learning and improve children's language development in the KG;
- Improve primary environmental science to ensure that scientific skills and knowledge are sufficiently addressed;
- Provide consistent support for teachers on classroom management, where necessary;
- Encourage all teachers to adopt the good practices identified in the high quality lessons;
- Establish an advisory council with parent representation;
- Ensure that all class sizes are conducive to high quality learning.

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

Overall attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable across the school. By Grade 4, most students could recite long verses from The Holy Qur'an from memory, using proper pronunciation and following recitation rules. In early grades, students knew a variety of daily prayers for different times and knew the Five Pillars of Islam. In higher grades, the majority of students had good knowledge about charity and Zakat. They understood who is entitled to receive Zakat. However, only a few students understood how Islam impacted on their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were good in the KG, acceptable in the primary school, and good in the secondary school, although students made better progress in the higher than the lower primary grades. Children began learning Arabic in KG2, where they knew a few Arabic words and could recognise and write almost all Arabic letters. The majority of students in the younger primary grades knew common greetings, could talk about themselves using simple sentences and could write with teacher support. By Grade 6 they could read simple sentences, although some students had difficulty understanding extended instructions. Students made good progress in the upper grades. By Grades 8, 9 and 10 most students read with good pronunciation and could write longer paragraphs,

although many found it difficult to apply grammar rules in their own writing. They could understand the teachers' instructions well.

Attainment and progress in English were good throughout the school. At the end of the KG stage the children could identify letters and sounds, and could recognise some common words. By Grade 4, students could listen attentively, read independently with confidence and comprehension and write accurately, using a broad vocabulary. Students at all grades recited poems well. Secondary students had a good knowledge of poetic devices such as rhyming schemes, simile and personification, and could explain different genres of writing. By Grade 12, students could exchange ideas collaboratively and voice their opinions confidently. The senior students' writing was accurate with good vocabulary and attainment in CBSE exams was high.

Students' attainment and progress in mathematics were good across the whole school. All students were confident in using numbers in line with their developmental level, and their mental calculations were quick and accurate. Almost all students understood and used mathematical language well to complete problem solving tasks and share ideas. Resources and equipment were used effectively to develop their skills. In the KG, children displayed high levels of knowledge and understanding of number symbols and common shapes. They applied this knowledge to solve problems and create animal pictures. In Grades 1 to 8 students built on existing knowledge well to extend their understanding of number, shape and data handling. In Grades 9 to 12 almost all students justified and proved results well using valid mathematical reasoning.

Attainment and progress, overall, in science was good. Children in KG could explain their observations well. Students in the younger primary grades could describe some elements of their environment, but had learned few scientific concepts and had developed few experimental skills. Almost all upper primary and secondary students knew a range of scientific facts and used scientific vocabulary with a high degree of precision. Grade 9 students had a good understanding of the atom, and Grade 12 students had clear knowledge and understanding of the process of DNA replication. Almost all students could carry out practical investigations; they showed enthusiasm for science and joy in learning.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

From KG through to Grade 12, students' personal and social development was good. Students were very well behaved and friendly, and had good relationships with teachers and other staff. Punctuality was good and students were attentive and committed to learning. All students displayed positive attitudes to homework. Attendance was acceptable.

Students' civic understanding was outstanding. All students displayed a strong sense of responsibility to the school community. Prefects and the highly developed prefectural board encouraged personal as well as academic responsibilities. Students, as part of a link with the wider community, 'buddied' children from another school. There were weekly visits for social integration of students with significant special educational needs. This resulted in profound and positive impacts for all involved. Students had taken part in several development programmes abroad. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the Islamic faith. Very young children participated in assemblies by reciting

confidently from The Holy Qur'an. Students showed an appreciation of Islam in Dubai and discussed how they welcomed gaining these insights. They valued the multicultural nature of Dubai very highly. Students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. Students demonstrated sophisticated understanding of the nature of Dubai's current and past economic context and were very determined about the skills and contributions they could make towards the future success of Dubai and also to less affluent areas of the world. The school strongly promoted global and environmental issues through lessons and assemblies and participated in many environmental initiatives.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching and learning was good in Grades 1 to 12 and acceptable in the KG. Teaching in the KG consistently engaged the children in activities appropriate for their age, but provided few opportunities for them to develop as independent learners. Across the school, teaching was judged as good or better in most lessons. In these lessons the common good features included the teachers' secure and relevant subject knowledge, which was used to generate enthusiasm for, and interest in, the subject. Very good teacher-student relationships promoted a high level of respect. In a minority of lessons, teaching time was not used well enough: the introduction took too long and students did not have sufficient time to apply their learning. Classroom management was good in most lessons, but poor classroom control hindered progress in a few of the classes for younger students. During lessons, good use was made of all available resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for students. In the best lessons teachers used very skilful questioning that required students to think carefully and deeply about their work, enabling them to reason effectively with their peers and teachers. In contrast, in a minority of other lessons, the extensive use of closed questions limited the students' thinking.

The quality of students' learning was good. Students were well motivated, showed interest, applied themselves and responded positively to the teaching. For example, almost all students persevered with tasks and concentrated well, sometimes for long periods. They behaved well and interacted and collaborated with each other in a mature way. Most students built well on their previous learning and could relate topics to the real world. The more able students made rapid connections between different areas of their learning.

The school had a robust assessment framework that was linked to the CBSE scheme and operated across all grades. The detailed information the school kept on the attainment of individual students was analysed rigorously to plan future work and to improve performance. For example, students were targeted for attendance at the school enrichment programme for extension or for support activities. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students was good. However, the quality of marking in students' books was variable and did not always state what students needed to do to improve. Although the school's assessment policy focused largely on external examinations and proved effective, there was insufficient emphasis on assessment for learning in individual lessons. For example, in only a minority of lessons was good use made of self- and peer-assessment, in which students demonstrated skilful and mature questioning of each other that enabled them to deepen their thinking and extend their knowledge and understanding.

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

The curriculum was of acceptable quality in the KG and good in the primary and secondary stages, although the choice of subjects at Grade 10 and Grade 12 was restricted to science and commerce streams. At all levels there was a breadth and balance of subjects, with arts and personal development emphasised as well as academic attainment. The KG curriculum provided a balance of subjects with appropriate content, although there was little self-directed practical learning and insufficient challenge for the highest achievers. Language learning in the KG included initial phonics and letter formation, but lacked differentiation for children at different levels. In the younger grades, environmental science did not pay sufficient attention to significant scientific knowledge and skills. The CBSE framework provided continuity and progression throughout the school. The curriculum was reviewed regularly through weekly, monthly and annual meetings. Book selections were reviewed at the end of each academic session. Teachers' suggestions were taken into account, but final responsibility lay with senior management for Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) schools. Cross-curricular approaches were developing between some subjects, but were underdeveloped through most of the school. A programme of field trips enabled students to experience and learn from the local environment.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for health and safety were good. School transportation was well organised, and buses were well supervised and maintained. The school clinic was fully equipped. Science laboratories had a good range of fire and safety equipment and there was sufficient fire and first aid equipment throughout the building. The school building was well maintained. Regular fire drills were carried out and recorded, and students and teachers were well aware of the procedures involved. All medical incidents were clearly recorded. The school promoted a healthy lifestyle through its sports programme and ensured that food in the canteen was healthy. Students were well supervised at all times, and all teachers showed concern for their welfare. The school's child protection policy was discussed with teachers in a staff meeting, explained to students in an assembly and published on the school website.

The quality of support was good throughout the school. Staff-student relationships were very positive. Teachers worked with the school counsellor to support students' personal well-being. The school counsellor conducted sessions for students on anti-bullying. There was a well-developed programme for providing students with career guidance. There were few behaviour issues but, when they arose, they were addressed in cooperation with parents and the counsellor. Clear assessment and recording procedures provided teachers with good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Additional classes were provided in the after-school programme for students in need of support. Attendance was carefully tracked, although there were often students absent for family reasons.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. Senior leaders set clear expectations and had high aspirations for the school. Senior leaders were highly visible around the school and engaged well with students and staff. Members of the management team had clear and detailed job descriptions, which provided for accountability and guidance. There was a clear vision for future development. However, the staff responsible for developing the environmental science curriculum in Grades 1 and 2 did not have the necessary expertise to develop the scientific aspects sufficiently.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. An effective formal self-evaluation began in 2007, including input from all teachers. This led to a three-year School Development Plan with eight highly appropriate priorities. Steps to address each priority were planned for each year. Objectives for 2009 to 10 were clear and appropriate. There was regular appraisal of all teaching staff by their supervisors, including classroom observations and weekly reviews of lesson plans. A few teachers with leadership qualities had been identified and promoted. Senior managers visited classes regularly and talked knowledgeably about individual teachers and subjects. There was a clear induction process, with an introduction by the Principal and more detailed follow up by the supervisor, and some mentoring.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents spoke very highly of the school. The school had a 24-hour response time expectation for parental questions or complaints that parents said was always met. Parents were involved in many ways, including a mothers' day, fathers' day, grandparent's day, sport days, two open houses per term, new child orientation and meetings for parents of Grade 10 and 12 students regarding exam guidance. Parents supported school productions with make-up and backstage tasks. A counsellor met parents on a regular basis. The school ran an annual summer camp. Community links included effective partnerships with two special education schools.

Governance was of acceptable quality. The school was part of the GEMS group, which provided regular advice and guidance, including Principals' meetings and curriculum material for the group. The Principal was accountable to GEMS for both educational and financial aspects of school management. This supervision was at a corporate level and did not yet sufficiently involve parents or other stakeholders as partners in the governance of the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The high number of support staff helped provide a clean and attractive environment and provided support for learning. Teachers were appropriately qualified and sufficient in number to cover all classes adequately. However, the large numbers in some classes had a negative impact on learning, particularly in the younger grades where some classes had 36 students. There were many excellent facilities, including a hall with a high-quality sound and light system, a swimming pool, well-equipped music and art rooms and science laboratories. Increases in enrolment meant that, at times, facilities were over-extended, especially in the after-school programme, and in classes with large numbers or older students. Information and communication technology resources had recently been increased significantly. All teachers had been given laptops and all classrooms had data projectors.

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.

The four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

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

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
School phase (e.g. Primary, Secondary)	Overall
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

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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