

Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade12

Report published May 2010

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report	2
Basic information about the school.....	2
How well does the school perform overall?	3
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	9
Summary of inspection judgements	11
Next Steps.....	15
How to contact us.....	15

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.

Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School was inspected in March 2010 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 Oud Metha, Al Rashid Al Saleh School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12, aged three to 17 years. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 2375 students 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. Parents considered the school had a good reputation in the community and to be well led. They appreciated the high standards of personal behaviour expected. However, parents were critical of the school's lack of extra-curricular clubs and activities. A minority stated that the school was not good at consulting with them.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Rashid Al Saleh School provided an acceptable quality of education for its students. It had improved since the last inspection. Attainment and progress and were acceptable in each of the key subjects except in Arabic where attainment and progress were good in Grades 10 to 12. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good and relationships between students and teachers created a good environment for learning. Younger students had an acceptable understanding of the values of Islam and local traditions while that of the older students was good. Some students had perceptive insights into the reasons for Dubai's economic success and the challenges still to be faced. Overall, however, students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable.

Teaching and learning were acceptable. A common shortcoming was an over dependence on the textbook and too much talking by the teacher to the class. These strategies often constrained learning and there were too few opportunities for the more able students to excel by exploring ideas and through independent work. Homework was rarely set in ways that captured students' imagination or interest. Procedures for assessing students' progress were acceptable. Teachers tested their knowledge regularly and marked written work accurately but they did not routinely give enough help and guidance on what they must do to improve further. The curriculum was acceptable. Some improvements since the last inspection had been made but the impact of these changes was limited. The school's protection and support for its students were acceptable and most health and safety issues raised in the previous report, especially those around bus safety, had been addressed making the school a safe place for students to work and play. Staff-student relationships were good although students did not receive adequate careers information and guidance early enough to help both them, and their parents, make informed choices regarding the future.

Leadership and management of the school were acceptable and day to day organisation was friendly and purposeful. Whilst more teachers had been given responsibility to manage subjects and phases, their lines of responsibility and accountability were unclear. Most did not have sufficient time to carry out their duties effectively. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The response to the recommendations made in the last inspection had been extremely diligent leading to improvements in several areas such as the work in KG. Actions to improve teaching and learning were starting to have an impact but the school still had not yet developed whole school policies and practices in areas such assessment. Links with parents and the community were acceptable. Parental concerns about the lack of practical activities in lessons were accurate. Governance was unsatisfactory and there was no external advice and support available to the school's leadership team nor was it accountable to stakeholders. There were sufficient qualified teachers who were appropriately deployed. The premises and facilities were well-maintained and the resources for learning were acceptable though the library was not well stocked.

Key features of the school

- The positive relationships between staff and students;
- The calm purposeful ethos, which reflected the way the school interpreted its mission to value, respect and serve its students;
- The good subject knowledge displayed by the teachers and their enthusiasm for sharing that knowledge;
- The thorough response to the previous inspection report;
- The good attainment and progress in Arabic in the senior school.

Recommendations

- Continue to build on the work already started to broaden the range of teaching and learning strategies and make more and better use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the library;
- Use assessment information to guide students on what they need to do to improve and to inform teachers' lesson planning;
- Provide subject leaders with more time to plan and develop consistent whole school approaches to teaching, learning and assessment;
- Ensure that there are more practical and investigative activities for students to do both inside and outside of the classroom;
- Develop governance to include representation from parents, external personnel and staff so that representatives of these stakeholders can critically support the senior leadership team.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. In Grades 1 to 5, students' memorisation of The Holy Qur'an was in line with expectations and students acquired acceptable knowledge about the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and his family. In Grades 6 to 9, students' reading, recitation, and understanding of the verses of The Holy Qur'an that they learnt were acceptable. However, most students made less progress with applying the rules of Tajweed they had learnt to the verses they read. In higher grades, students could read long chapters with acceptable accuracy. By Grade 12, students had made good progress in their knowledge about The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah while their recitation skills remained at an acceptable level.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable in Grades 1 to 9 and good in Grades 10 to 12. In Grades 1 to 5, students' reading was acceptable and most could read an acceptable range of unfamiliar texts confidently and express themselves clearly. By Grade 5, a few students could read and dramatise familiar poems well. In Grades 6 to 9, students' knowledge of grammar developed slightly. Students could memorise the rules but showed limited ability to apply them to new sentences. Reading was slightly below age-related expectations in a few grades but acceptable overall. In Grades 10 to 12, most students could use figures of speech accurately. By Grade 12, they had made good progress overall, particularly in grammar. In the girls' section, students were able to read long texts using Classical Arabic confidently and could think critically on occasions. However, writing across school was underdeveloped. Almost all writing was limited to basic activities in the textbook and examples of free and extended writing were rare.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable across the school. In KG children performed in line with expectations and could form basic words and recognise sounds. In all grades students demonstrated knowledge, skills and understanding comparable with international age-related standards and made the expected progress. Whilst spelling and listening were often good this was not always the case with students' reading and writing. Grade 8 students applied the rules of grammar accurately and constructed formal sentences. The most confident Grade 12 students researched well used a variety of resources to present their points of view and debated maturely. Most students however remained overly dependent on their teachers to plan and shape their learning.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable. Most students were able to calculate accurately, had sound practical skills and confidently talked about their work. In KG, children developed a basic understanding of number and had a sense of shape. Students progressed steadily to Grade 9 and, by this stage, most could also manipulate basic algebra well. Problem-solving, however, was less developed and a few students were occasionally over-reliant on the use of formulae. By Grade 12, most students in the scientific strand confidently manipulated algebra, interpreted graphs and used integral calculus competently, but some had difficulties with challenging work on probabilities. In the arts strand, attainment was lower. Students were proficient in business mathematics but some made simple errors in algebra and standard integration. Across the school, students' skills in applying mathematics in the real world were well developed, but investigative skills and open-ended problem-solving were underdeveloped.

Attainment and progress in science across the school were acceptable. A few students in Grade 12 regularly achieved outstanding exam results and overall, performance in biology was the best. Most students in KG had a good grasp of the world around them and knew what was needed to enable plants to grow. By Grade 5, students recognised the planets and used digital scales and spring balances. Grade 9 students' scientific knowledge and understanding of the basics of Newton's laws was good. However, their enquiry, discovery and investigative skills were underdeveloped, even in Grades 10 to 12 where there was enough practical work. For example, Grade 12 physics students attained well in electrical circuit theory, recorded and analysed results methodically from experiments and knew how to improve reliability. However, students were not sufficiently involved in the planning of experiments, and many were not independently able to build a circuit correctly or resolve problems when circuits failed. Similarly, chemistry students could calculate complex solubility products of solutions, but only observed the corresponding experiment.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good. Almost all showed courtesy, friendliness and respect both in the classroom and around the school. A few students in the younger years could become less engaged in the more formal lessons if not kept on track by teachers but most were keen learners. In almost all lessons relationships between staff and students were strong with many characterised by warmth and good humour. Attendance was outstanding. Some students arrived late to school but once in school, they were always keen to get to lessons on time.

In KG and Grades 1 to 5, students' civic understanding and their understanding of Islam was acceptable and good in Grades 6 to 12. The school did not provide students with enough opportunities to develop their understanding of civic and Islamic life through discussions and debate. When asked, older students shared their thoughts about the concept of citizenship very maturely. They showed tolerance to people from other religions. Most students were well aware of the civic life in Dubai.

Economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Older students particularly had perceptive insights into the reasons for Dubai's economic success and the challenges it still faced. Students' environmental understanding was less well developed and too few showed an appreciation of such important ideas as sustainability or the need to conserve scarce resources or the links between these ideas and their own lives.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning across the school was acceptable. Almost all teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and established good working relationships with their students. Teaching methods, however, were too narrow and repetitive. Most lessons followed a similar pattern with teacher exposition followed by questioning and a textbook exercise. This was effective in teaching factual information but its repetitive style was less successful in developing learning skills. Teachers sometimes gave students too much support, reducing their opportunity to develop new skills and lessening their challenge. While most teaching was enthusiastic and motivated students to succeed, the common practice of planning at only one level of difficulty for a mixed ability class meant that some students struggled to complete tasks while others found them too easy. In the better lessons, teachers improved learning by introducing varied activities and asking more open and challenging questions to make students reflect. In some older classes teachers tested what students had remembered with a quick quiz, enabling them to focus on new learning and avoiding the excessive repetition and reinforcement of some lessons. In KG, teaching sometimes gave children too little opportunity to do things for themselves.

Learning was acceptable. Students were keen to learn and ready to volunteer to answer questions or demonstrate their knowledge. However, for long periods students were passive learners. For older students especially there were too few opportunities to develop critical thinking, research and investigative skills. In gaining factual knowledge and new vocabulary, students' learning was effective but they needed more practice in applying it purposefully. Most children in KG showed good work habits for their age but some found difficulty sustaining concentration over a full formal lesson. Younger students benefited from regularly building their ICT skills, but older ones did not use these skills frequently in order to support their learning.

Assessment was acceptable. A substantial amount of data from regular tests and examinations were collected. In the mathematics department, most staff analysed students' performance in more detail and used the information to plan for improvement but this was not yet a school-wide approach. Most teachers had a good knowledge of their students' strengths. They assessed their progress during lessons, offering instant support for those in need, but the use of this information to plan students' future learning was not a consistent feature. Work was marked but not in a way that gave students enough guidance on how to improve. Individual student portfolios gave a good all round picture of their development.

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

The school's curriculum was acceptable. Based on the Ministry of Education framework and supported by standard textbooks it provided the key subjects and gave access to creative, physical and practical experiences for all children and students. There was a process for carrying out a review but this was too focused on the evaluation of additional activities provided during the past year, rather than evaluating the effectiveness of the core provision. The monitoring and reviewing processes had still to address fully the breadth, balance and tracking as well as continuity and progression to ensure the curriculum better met the needs of all students. Work on developing the curriculum for the KG was ongoing and cross-curricular activity was observed using healthcare and diet as a focus for drawing together art and science. Such approaches were not widespread and students remained within overly strict subject boundaries for most of their time. Opportunities for extra-curricular provision were limited. Assemblies provided a good whole school platform for communal prayer, the national anthem and daily presentations on typical news items such as International Women's Day. There was some enhancement of the taught curriculum through students' visits to a science museum, a zoo and an aquarium and older students had submitted entries to a short story writing competition. Awareness of conservation and land use was raised amongst students when the Municipality ran an environmental workshop for Grades 4 to 7. Occasional visitors to the school had included speakers from the Ministry of Health and IT companies.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Protection and support for the students was acceptable. The school had addressed the health and safety issues raised in the last report well, especially those around bus safety. However, some buses were still overcrowded. Cleanliness was a high priority. The school was clean and well maintained with posters promoting health and safety in many areas. Although students placed their bags beside their desks they still posed a safety problem in some overcrowded classrooms. However, bags were far too heavy for the younger students. At break there were good supervision arrangements and efficient catering but few healthy food options were offered to support the school's healthy eating advice. Playgrounds were shaded and rubbish bins encouraged the development of environmental awareness. The school acted on advice from the Civil Defence concerning fire safety procedures.

The quality of support for students throughout the school was acceptable. Staff-student relationships were good. Students were supported by their teachers to improve academically, but did not receive enough guidance regarding their future. Grade 12 students were given higher education brochures and taken to a university fair in Dubai. This advice, though, was not provided at an earlier age. Behaviour was predominantly good and occasional misdemeanours quickly addressed. Management of students' attendance and punctuality and medical arrangements were good. Those staff with specific responsibilities for students' welfare understood child protection procedures. Tracking of individual students' social and intellectual strengths and weaknesses had yet to be developed into a useful tool to maximise potential.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were acceptable overall with acceptable leadership being shown across the school, which was efficiently managed. Senior leadership had high expectations of staff and students and had the respect of the school community. In line with recommendations of the last inspection more responsibilities had been delegated to other staff, for example, heads of subjects. However, these responsibilities needed to clearer definition and more time allocated to ensure the responsibility could be carried out successfully. More direction from senior staff was needed if subject leads were to work in a consistent way to improve attainment and progress in all grades.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The response to the findings and recommendations of the previous inspection was extremely diligent and contributed to many of the improvements noted in this report. For example teachers had been given more support and guidance which had helped bring about an overall improvement in teaching especially in KG. Most planning documents were appropriately detailed though most were descriptive rather than evaluative.

Links with parents and the community were acceptable. Nearly all parents were highly appreciative of the interest staff took in their children's progress and welfare. The school informed parents regularly on matters relating to their children's progress and their attitudes and behaviour. To improve communication between home and school a new website had recently been launched. While most parents valued these regular points of contact a large minority wanted more information about how they could help with their children's work at home. A similar number were unhappy about the lack of practical activities offered. Links with the local community operated well on an informal basis but there were missed opportunities to use the community more extensively and systematically as a resource for learning.

Governance was unsatisfactory. As the previous report noted there was no formally constituted governing body that could either hold school managers to account or provide critical support if needed. This was still the case.

Overall, resources were acceptable and staffing levels adequate to cover the requirements of all sections of the school. Staff were well qualified and adequately trained to deliver the curriculum with an acceptable balance of experience across the teaching staff. The school recognised the need to provide more professional development to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. There were enough teaching areas to accommodate the school population but space was at a premium in the relatively cramped KG classes. The school had sufficient specialist rooms including a computer suite, science laboratories and a mosque, but these were often under-used. Indoor sports facilities were mainly used by the girls. Outside areas were limited and not conducive to safe, competitive games or activities.

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:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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.

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