

Regent International School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 10

Report published May 2010

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Regent International School was inspected in February 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 The Greens, Regent International School is a private school providing education for students from Foundation Stage to Year 10, aged three to 15 years. The school follows an English curriculum which is taught in English. At the time of the inspection, there were 777 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was satisfactory.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most parents who responded were positive about the work of the school. They were strongly supportive and spoke highly of the progress the school had made over the last year. Almost all were pleased with their child's progress in most subjects. Where concerns were expressed, many centred on the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic, regarding which a majority of parents felt that attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. The minority judged the school could improve access to the site and make parents feel more welcome. They also commented that the school did not always act promptly to address the issues they had raised. A few felt that there was a need for more detailed guidance on how they could help and support their children with their schoolwork at home.

How well does the school perform overall?

Regent International School provided an acceptable quality of education for its students and had shown improvement in several areas since the last inspection. It had the capacity to make further improvements. In the Foundation Stage attainment and progress in the key subjects were acceptable. In the primary and secondary sections attainment and progress were now good in English and mathematics, and acceptable in science. Progress in Arabic was acceptable but attainment was unsatisfactory. The school had addressed most of the concerns over compliance in Islamic Education and Arabic although students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education remained unsatisfactory. Students' attitudes and behaviour across the school were good. Civic understanding and appreciation of Islam and local culture were acceptable, although students' civic understanding was markedly better than their understanding and appreciation of Islam. Students' economic understanding and environmental awareness were well developed and most students had an informed understanding of global warming, its causes and effects. Older students in particular could talk knowledgeably about the economic challenges facing Dubai.

Teaching and learning had improved in most subjects and were acceptable overall, although there were still unsatisfactory areas of which the school was aware but had yet to address. The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. Students had benefited from the decisions made over the last year to enhance the curriculum, not least in the way it was now regularly reviewed and updated. The school took seriously its responsibilities for keeping students safe and healthy; health and safety were acceptable. The quality of support for students was good and productive relationships between staff and students were routinely observed. Students were courteous and orderly and teachers managed behaviour well in the school.

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. Good leadership had been shown since the last inspection and was evident in the improvements in attainment and progress in several key subjects. While governance was acceptable overall the uncomfortable working relationship between staff and the owners reported in the last inspection still existed and continued to affect adversely the morale of many staff. In turn the owners had anxieties about how quickly students progressed. Encouragingly, plans were being made to develop more effective partnership working. The senior leadership team accurately assessed the achievements and challenges of the school. Links with parents and the community were acceptable and were developing productively. Most parents were strongly supportive of the school and the school's leadership team and spoke highly of the improvements that they had observed. Concerns with the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic were expressed along with the need for more help on how best support their children's education at home. Staff were, with a few exceptions, well qualified, experienced and efficiently deployed. The accommodation was attractive, well maintained and fit for purpose and the school was acceptably resourced in most areas with the notable exception of students' routine access to information and communication technology (ICT).

Key features of the school

- The good attainment and progress in English and mathematics;
- The good lesson planning and effective monitoring and recording of students' progress in most subjects;
- The monitoring, tracking and supporting of students, especially in the Foundation Stage and primary years;
- The good quality of leadership at all levels that had helped bring about improvements in students' attainment in key subjects.

Recommendations

- Continue to address issues raised at the last inspection:
 - o raise standards of teaching and learning across the school to meet the needs of all learners;
 - o support teachers through frequent mentoring and coaching to implement the curriculum they have and improve their teaching skills;
 - o modify the curriculum to comply with Ministry of Education regulations, particularly with respect to Islamic Education and Arabic provision;
 - o empower the senior management team to make strategic and educational decisions, including staffing and resource decisions;
 - o ensure that the professional development needs of staff are met.
- Improve attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Develop governance so that the views of all key stakeholders are properly represented.

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

Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education were unsatisfactory across the school. Most students in Years 1 to 6 did not demonstrate age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of Islam. Only a few students were able to recite correctly the short chapter of The Holy Qur'an they had learnt. By Year 6, most students were unable to name the Five Pillars of Islam. In Years 7 to 10, most students lacked a basic knowledge and understanding of the core Islamic principles. Most had only a limited knowledge of the life of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the major events in his life in Mecca and Medina. Only a minority of students had an acceptable level of skill and accuracy in the recitation of a few short chapters of The Holy Qur'an.

In Arabic as an additional language attainment was unsatisfactory while progress was acceptable. Most students across the school did not achieve appropriate standards in line with age-related expectations in relation to how long they had been studying the language. In lessons, however, and in their recent work, most made acceptable progress. In Years 1 to 3, acceptable progress was made in learning new vocabulary and in using it to form sentences. In Years 7 to 10 most students made acceptable progress and succeeded in extending their vocabulary and could use words and phrases in daily conversation. However, many did not understand well enough what they read aloud or copied, when they were asked to do so. The small number of students with Arabic as a first language made unsatisfactory progress.

Students' attainment and progress in English in Years 1 to 10 were good and at Foundation Stage were acceptable. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children enjoyed stories and could hold a conversation, read simple words and form letters. They quickly developed their skills so that, by Year 3, students could discuss their work constructively and write vividly and imaginatively. By the end of the primary phase students could write prose and poetry in varied styles, using figurative language. In the secondary phase students could understand challenging texts and respond to them maturely. At all stages students found difficulty in writing with accuracy and did not demonstrate the ability to read extended texts for pleasure.

Attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage in mathematics were acceptable. Children were able to identify numbers and count objects with growing confidence. They sorted and classified shapes and solids and were able to use everyday language to describe properties and positions. They showed interest and enthusiasm for their work in mathematics. Attainment and progress in the primary and secondary years were good. Students demonstrated confidence and ability in their number work and, by Year 10, they were able to deal competently with fractions including algebraic fractions. Students solved quadratic equations by completing the square and by using the formula. They were able to formulate geometric proofs for circle theorems but were not always able to see the links between different areas of mathematics. Their problem solving and statistical skills were not sufficiently practised.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. At the end of the Foundation Stage, children were able to identify objects and sort them according to properties such as size, texture and colour. Their knowledge and understanding of the world was well supported by their work in geography and history. In the primary years students had a secure understanding of basic life processes and were able to classify substances as gases, liquids or solids. Subject specific vocabulary was regularly encouraged in the classroom. In the secondary years, students demonstrated a growing understanding and appreciation of scientific enquiry but were reluctant to record their findings in any systematic way. They accurately described what happened in a range of chemical reactions and formed balanced symbol equations with assistance. Students' knowledge and understanding of physical processes was less secure.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of the students throughout the school were good. Students practised self-control in their daily life at school and most demonstrated good behaviour toward teachers, guests, and staff. Almost all students arrived promptly for lessons and at the start of the school day. They showed keenness to work and to improve.

Students' civic understanding and their appreciation of Islam and local culture were acceptable overall. Most students had good knowledge of Dubai's status in UAE and the world and its achievements. They demonstrated good awareness of the challenges Dubai was facing and made intelligent suggestions about how Dubai can improve. Although most students voiced respect for all human beings regardless of their race, colour or religion, they had very limited knowledge and understanding of the values and manners of Muslims around them in Dubai and the world.

Students' economic understanding and environmental awareness was good. In Years 4 to 6, the majority of students demonstrated a good understanding of what taxes were and could explain the impact the current global economic crisis had on people in Dubai. Many were able to link their observations on the property market to families relocating out of Dubai and the delay in starting new projects. Most students had good awareness of the global environment and, from a young age, developed good understanding of global warming, its causes and effects. They could explain the importance of recycling and conserving energy and the conservation of nature. However, they were less aware of local environmental issues and challenges.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching across all phases of the school was acceptable. Most teachers knew their subjects and could communicate them effectively. Teachers interacted well with students and created a positive learning environment. This was especially true in the Foundation Stage where the rooms were stimulating and suited to the learning needs of young children. Schemes of work were planned thoroughly and so most teachers were well-prepared for lessons with detailed plans of how their teaching should proceed. The majority of teachers shared lesson objectives with students and asked them to reflect upon their learning. They used a variety of teaching strategies such as group work, drama and motivational praise together with effective use of the data-projector. However, in Islamic Education, lessons were teacher-led, text-book based and not directed to the particular needs of students. By contrast, the teaching of Arabic had moved forward since the last report and, although many lessons shared the characteristics of Islamic Education, teachers promoted the use of oral work, questioned students effectively and encouraged collaborative work and role play. In the majority of lessons, teachers planned work to suit the different needs of students but the most able students needed more challenging work.

The quality of learning across the school was acceptable. Most students found their lessons interesting and they were engaged in their learning. They concentrated well and, with the help of their personal targets, could focus well on what they needed to do to make progress. Students from the earliest age could work in pairs, in groups and independently. They worked collaboratively and enjoyed learning from each other. Students were accustomed to using inter-active whiteboards to further their learning but did not use technology across the curriculum or to research and produce their own work. The majority of the students were able to think critically, discover things for themselves and use their learning in other settings. In too many lessons, however, students were passive learners and memorised facts by repetition.

The quality of assessment was acceptable. Books were marked regularly and some teachers used constructive comments to show how students could improve. Most teachers used targeted questioning to probe for understanding and there were good examples of students assessing each others' work and offering suggestions for improvement. They could also evaluate their own work and write an assessment of their progress which teachers then validated. Thorough records were kept of students' progress, which were used to track, monitor and advise students.

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

The curriculum was acceptable. The innovative and carefully formulated curriculum offered a broad experience for all students and took suitable account of the recent changes in the English National Curriculum as well as reflecting the content of the primary and secondary frameworks. The curriculum was regularly reviewed and updated to take account of students' needs and external requirements. The curriculum met Ministry of Education requirements in terms of timetabled sessions for Islamic Education and Arabic with the exception of sixteen students taking Arabic in Years 1 to 3 whose time allocation was insufficient. The provision of detailed departmental schemes of work was a major improvement since the last inspection offering continuity and progression for students across all year groups. However, continuity and progression in Islamic Education and Arabic remained areas requiring further development. The school had improved its provision for students with special education needs but higher attaining students were not sufficiently challenged in the lessons or through the curriculum. The school offered an extensive range of extra-curricular activities covering sport including football, rugby and gymnastics as well as music, art and languages. Cross-curricular themes and opportunities were often identified in lessons but the provision for numeracy and ICT across the curriculum was underdeveloped with no whole-school approach to develop coherent and effective practice across the curriculum. At the time of the inspection there was insufficient time offered for science to meet curriculum requirements and ensure balance in the secondary stage.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for students' health and safety were acceptable. The school premises were well-maintained, clean and secured by guards. Staff supervised access to the buses and all seats were fitted with seatbelts. Students were supervised at breaks but their safety was compromised outside the school gates by poor driving and parking by a minority of parents. The school nurse administered first aid and vaccinations, maintained records of incidents and advised on healthy lifestyles. The doctor monitored students' health and development. All medicines were kept in the fridge or locked away, as were laboratory chemicals. Fire drills were carried out termly and there were evacuation maps in classrooms. Students had access to clean water. One hazard was that unlocked doors allowed students access to the flat roof. In addition, there was insufficient shade for students.

The quality of support for students was good. There were good relationships between staff and students, and teachers knew their needs. Students were well cared for by their form tutors but there was no programme for careers guidance. A programme was in place to address students' personal and social development. Behaviour and personal progress was tracked thoroughly and students knew how they were assessed and worked to achieve house points and the Principal's commendation. Students were courteous and orderly and teachers managed behaviour well in the school. Attendance also was well managed and punctuality was good.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. Good leadership qualities had been shown since the last inspection which had contributed to improvements in attainment and progress and had brought the school much closer to compliance in Islamic Education and Arabic. Senior staff provided a clear sense of direction and, in most areas of their work, were professional, competent and committed. Much-needed middle management teams had recently been established. However, an uneasy working relationship and mistrust between the staff and the school's owners was holding back progress and preventing the school operating at maximum efficiency. Nevertheless, there was a commitment to develop more consultative channels with a view to achieving a better understanding of the needs and concerns of both the owners and those of staff.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school's self-evaluation was accurate and at least some progress had been made in most of the areas identified in the last inspection. The school development plan provided a sound basis for school improvement but performance management procedures and policies were not yet embedded. The monitoring of teaching and learning had contributed to improvements in teaching and learning in many classrooms but a new challenge facing the school was to use the information at its disposal more productively, for example, to reduce the number of unsatisfactory lessons and enable good practice to be more widely shared.

The partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Links with the community were developing slowly and the school was keen that they should flourish. A parents' forum had been recently established that was already acting as an important line of communication between parents and the school.

Governance was acceptable. The governing body provided detailed advice and guidance, and ensured accountability of staff for the progress students made. Planning was advanced to widen the governing body's representation to include all key stakeholders including parents and staff as well as representatives of the wider community.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Staff were, with a few exceptions, well qualified, experienced and efficiently deployed. A programme of continuing professional development had been planned linked to a needs analysis. Teacher turnover was reportedly lower than in previous years although, over the last two years, there had been too many new appointments and replacements of staff, particularly at senior and middle management level. The premises were attractive, well maintained and fit for purpose. The school was acceptably resourced with the notable exception of students' routine access to ICT.

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:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
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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