

# The Sheffield Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

Report published May 2011

## Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school .....	3
How well does the school perform overall? .....	4
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations .....	5
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.

The Sheffield Private School was inspected in October 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 Al Nahda, The Sheffield Private School is a private school providing education for 1136 boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. The attendance of students for the last academic term was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, parents completed an on-line survey of their views of the work of the school. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education. Approximately half of the parents reported that they were happy with progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language, while about one third were satisfied with progress in Arabic as a first language. Most parents felt provision in English, mathematics and science was of a high quality and that teaching was good. Similarly, satisfaction ratings for learning and the range and quality of extra-curricular activities were high. Most felt behaviour was good and well managed and that resources were acceptable or better. Almost all parents thought their children were treated fairly by the school and that provision for students with special educational needs was good. Most parents stated that the school helped with choices of future career and education, dealt well with incidents of bullying, promoted a healthy lifestyle and kept their children safe. Most parents were happy with the regularity and quality of communication from the school. They felt that reports were informative and found parent teacher meetings useful. They believed that the school was well led and that staff had responded well to the previous inspection.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of The Sheffield Private School was acceptable. The school had responded well to almost all of the recommendations of the previous report with improvements in outcomes for primary students of Islamic Education, Arabic for first language learners in primary and secondary, assessment procedures and the use of data and curriculum provision. The school, through a good leadership team, demonstrated a strong capacity to improve.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in primary and unsatisfactory in secondary and post-16 stages. Attainment and progress for students in Arabic as a first language were acceptable while they were unsatisfactory for students of Arabic as a second language. In English and mathematics, attainment and progress were good in the Foundation Stage and primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. In science, attainment and progress were good in all stages except the Foundation Stages where they were acceptable. Students had good attitudes and displayed good behaviour. Their knowledge and understanding of Islam, civic responsibility and local traditions and culture were good. There were examples of good teaching and learning throughout the school but overall, teaching and learning in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 were acceptable, while in primary they were good. Assessment was good throughout the school. The curriculum was good in all phases except for secondary where the curriculum did not meet the needs of the students of Islamic Education or Arabic as a second language. Protection and support for students was good throughout the school. Leadership and management were good and there were good partnerships between parents and the wider community. Governance was acceptable due to the lack of any formal role for a wide range of stakeholders in the school. Staffing, facilities and resources were good.

## Key features of the school

- Committed, professional leadership that is focused on the raising of standards in teaching and learning and the development of a vibrant, progressive school;
- The care and support provided by all staff for the students;
- The improvements in attainment in Arabic as a first language and mathematics in Foundation Stage and primary;
- The positive response of the school to the recommendations of the previous inspection;
- Good systems for tracking progress in mathematics and science providing data that teachers use well;
- The unsatisfactory attainment and progress in Islamic Education in secondary and Arabic as a second language throughout the school.

## Recommendations

- Raise standards of attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language;
- Continue to support the improvement of student-led learning through effective professional development;
- Improve opportunities for secondary students to raise their attainment in English through enhanced provision for second language learners;
- Further develop the curriculum and resources for students of Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language;
- Ensure that many stakeholders have a formal role in the governance of the school.

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

In primary, attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. In secondary, they were unsatisfactory. Most Year 3 students had good knowledge about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his family members. They could give the evidence that Mohammad was a Messenger. They also memorised given Qur'anic chapters to an acceptable level and understood their meaning. Although secondary students' general knowledge about Islam was acceptable, the skill of reading the Qur'an was well-below expectations. In Year 7, most students could not memorise the prescribed chapters and only a few of them could read The Holy Qur'an correctly. In Year 12, most non-Arab Muslim students, who represented two thirds of the total number of students studying Islam, could not read The Holy Qur'an correctly.

Attainment and progress in Arabic for native speakers in primary and secondary stages were acceptable. In speaking, primary students pronounced words and simple sentences correctly. Older students could form longer accurate sentences. Most primary students understood teacher instructions and could follow them, while only a few needed them repeated. In the higher years, students understood texts and the profiles of characters from plays at an acceptable level. Most primary and secondary students could write short passages of acceptable quality. In grammar, younger students could identify and use pronouns while older students could distinguish between sentences and phrases. In poetry, most students read chants while older students had the ability to discuss meanings.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were unsatisfactory. A few primary students could speak about themselves but their vocabulary was limited or they simply repeated what they heard with no understanding, using English excessively to complete their sentences. In listening, most students did not demonstrate an appropriate level of skills to understand new words or sentences. They needed translation to understand. Primary students could read words which were in the book or connected with a picture. Older students could read short sentences. In writing, primary students copied words and letters

from the book and older students copied short sentences and wrote the answers of questions using two words only.

Attainment and progress in English were good in Foundation Stage and primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Students throughout the school had good listening with understanding and speaking skills. Foundation Stage children rapidly acquired an extensive vocabulary with good understanding. Pre-reading skills were good and older students in primary read fluently. Extended writing skills were well developed in primary and acceptable in the older grades. Secondary and post-16 students wrote in a range of genres and defended their opinions well, but for most, aspects of spelling, imagination, grammar and depth of thought were underdeveloped.

Attainment and progress in mathematics in Foundation Stage and primary were good and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Young children could recognise, write and sort to 10. They were able to count, measure and estimate in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Key Stage 2 they interpreted data, measured shapes and calculated accurately. They solved problems efficiently and understood the language of problem-solving clearly. Secondary and post-16 students were able to draw conclusions from data and perform algebraic and geometric functions accurately. They did not use information and communication technology (ICT) or co-operative learning techniques effectively to extend their understanding of complex topics such as linear inequalities. Overall, the older students were performing better than the test results indicated.

Attainment and progress in science were good throughout the school, except in Foundation Stage where it was acceptable. Foundation Stage children knew the five senses. However, a significant minority of children did not display age appropriate scientific skills. Primary students understood fair testing and knew the functions of the body, particularly the importance of healthy eating. Secondary test results indicated better outcomes for students in biology and physics compared to chemistry. Students in Key Stages 3 to 5 had developed good competencies and understanding of scientific processes and skills. They knew and understood homeoothermic processes of the body and were able to investigate and calculate terminal velocity to a good level.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Overall, attitudes and behaviours were good at all levels in the school. Positive relationships were also evident in all phases. Students' interactions with their peers and adults were fruitful, co-operative and mature. Almost all students demonstrated tolerance and respect towards each other. Most students were making good progress with the development of personal skills and self-confidence. Older students made an increasing contribution to the wider community as they progressed through school. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable and slightly improved since last year.

Students' understanding of Islam, civic responsibilities and their appreciation of local culture were good in all phases. Muslims and non-Muslims had a good understanding of Islam, its impact on their lives and they fulfilled their civic responsibilities to a good level. Students



appreciated the quality of their lives and spoke about their love of being able to live in a peaceful, multi-cultural society like Dubai. They displayed the tolerance of and respect for other cultures they spoke about. They enjoyed the local culture and traditions and they understood the advantages of living in Dubai. All students enjoyed celebrating the national and international days.

Economic and environmental understanding was good. Students were able to provide examples of global economic change and had an appropriate level of understanding of how the economic crisis and environmental issues have affected Dubai. Students spoke clearly about the future environmental management of Dubai and the responsibility of each individual to take an active role in this work. The school council wished to bring about improvements through upgrading recycling stations around the school.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage, secondary, post-16 and good in primary. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. Their understanding of how students learn was inconsistent except in the primary stage where most teachers promoted effective learning well. Lesson planning was good throughout the school and catered well for the full range of learners' needs. Learning objectives were clear and shared with students. The pace of lessons was good and teachers engaged students well. They used ICT consistently to promote appropriate targets but there was an overall lack of understanding of how to promote personalised learning through the use of ICT. Where teaching was good it was characterised by good, probing questions that enabled understanding and the creation of student-led hypotheses. Group and paired settings were routine, students had targets within the group and teachers used resources well to consolidate and extend learning. They emphasised students' development of independent and co-operative and analytical skills. Where teaching was acceptable, teachers were overly directive, did not assist students with English as an additional language appropriately and missed the opportunities that could promote independent progress.

Learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 and good in primary. There were examples of good learning throughout the phases. However, consistently good learning was seen in primary. Here, the students collectively engaged with the activities enthusiastically and took responsibility for the creation of relevant hypotheses. They explored topics thoroughly, presented their data accurately and could apply their learning to real-life situations effectively. In a majority of lessons, however, students did not use ICT independently to ensure that their own learning objectives were realised. A culture of a "discipline of learning" was being encouraged throughout the school. The opportunities for students to link their work with their needs, assess their outcomes accurately and extend beyond a knowledge basis to more complex, critical thinking activities were limited.

Assessment was good throughout the school. Large amounts of data were gathered and well organised to ensure that this was passed to class and subject teachers. Tracking information on individual students was comprehensive and the next steps were well understood. In general,

teachers questioned well and where teaching was good they interpreted student feedback quickly to meet the need. As students progressed through the school, they developed a better understanding of what the assessment system was designed to achieve and could assess individual parts of their own work. The quality of written feedback to students was inconsistent with a large number of teachers not indicating to the students what the next step was or how it might be achieved.

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

The curriculum was good in Foundation Stage, primary and post-16 and acceptable in secondary where the needs of the large number of students of Arabic as a second language were not met. The number of Islamic Education and Arabic lessons met Ministry of Education requirements. Arabic was taught as a first and second language. English was the language of instruction and students also studied French. The school had introduced a proficiency in English programme to support the large number of students for whom English was an additional language. The curriculum took the needs of students with special educational needs into account. Long and short-term lesson plans indicated appropriately modified work to support or extend students. There was good integration between the phases especially at the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition. Timetables included topic and theme-based opportunities to enable the development of a variety of learning skills. Regular review was in place resulting in a change of examination board to meet students' needs better. The school provided parents with good information on the curriculum on its website and teachers posted additional subject learning materials for its students in the recently-developed Virtual Learning Environment. There was a wide range of musical and sporting activities. Other recent activities included end-of-year productions of *Gruffalo* and *Circus* and a school visit to Greece. Good links with other schools and universities were in place to provide learning opportunities outside the school.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements to ensure the students' health and safety were good. Bus transport was safe and orderly on arrival and departure. The school maintained a safe and secure environment; buildings were clean and well maintained. Fire drills were carried out and equipment was updated regularly. Two full-time nurses and a visiting doctor were responsible for the medical welfare of the students. Records and medical materials were stored appropriately and procedures were carried out according to regulations. Staff members were also visible, vigilant and alert to the needs of the students. They anticipated potential hazards and responded effectively. Students were trained in safe practices and risk assessment, particularly in science. Students were encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through personal and social education and physical activities and the school was working on developing the choices of healthy foods in the school cafeteria. Staff members were clear about the school's policy on child protection.

The quality of support provided by the school was good. A positive relationship existed between teachers and students and teachers were responsive to and aware of the range of



needs of individual students. The change from vertical to horizontal form groups was ensuring that the pastoral needs of the students were being met including career guidance and preparation for the students' futures. Comprehensive assessment results were available in key subjects to teachers, which tracked the progress of individual students including those with special educational needs. Teachers were increasingly using this data to support and modify individual students' learning; those not reaching expectations were identified and given additional support. Parents' were provided with school reports on a regular basis and were also invited to attend a parents' evening to discuss their son/daughter's progress. Effective systems were now in place to monitor punctuality and attendance.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management in the school were good, overall. There was a clear sense of direction provided for all staff that was based on the principles of effective learning. Senior leaders were very visible in the school, passionate about and capable in their roles and held in high regard by students and parents. Positive relationships were supported by good communication, fair appraisals and a consistent focus on raising standards. There was a strong commitment from all teachers to the vision of the school and the professional learning journey that was seeking to promote a "discipline of learning". Leadership personnel displayed a good capacity to improve further the consistent teaching and learning standards required to drive attainment and progress in all subjects.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Comprehensive processes for examining the outcomes of the school's well-constructed action and development plans were in place and rigorously implemented. The school knew itself well by listening to parents' and students' views, interpreting assessment data effectively and developing good quality responses to most of the recommendations from the previous inspection. Knowledge of teaching and learning was good and there was an awareness of the lack of consistently good practice in different phases. New programmes for analysing teacher effectiveness, supported by well-thought out professional development provision was making an impact in most classrooms.

Partnerships with the parents and the community were good. Regular and informed communication strategies facilitating easy access for parents supported this work. Parents were very supportive of the school's efforts to raise standards and had considerable knowledge of the school's priorities. While there was parental input in the classroom work in Foundation Stage and primary, this work needed to be extended to involve more parents with a clearer focus on supporting learning needs. A small but enthusiastic group of parents had reorganised the parents' association with the school's assistance. This had begun to impact on the need to provide a clearer parental voice. Links with the community were extensive. Throughout the school, field trips, school and community service initiatives and career-related programmes helped develop students' awareness of their future and on-going contributions to their community.

Governance was acceptable. The recommendation from the previous inspection that suggested greater stakeholder involvement had not been addressed to a good level. There was an acceptance of its importance but formal arrangements had not been created. While teachers and senior leaders were held to account by the school's owners there was some reluctance by the schools' owners to engage with stakeholders, such as parents, in furthering the vision of the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. Almost all staff were appropriately qualified and effectively deployed. Facilities were well-maintained, met students' needs and enhanced the effective learning opportunities that were provided by good teaching. Students had easy access to these materials and used them well. There had been an increase in resource provision in Foundation Stage, in particular. Library stock for Islamic Education and Arabic was under resourced. Students and teachers used ICT well as required in most classes.

## 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 Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
24% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable



## Next steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:  
inspection@khda.gov.ae.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

Copyright 2011

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.