

Al Sadiq Islamic English School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 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.

Al Sadiq Islamic English School was inspected in October 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 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 Qusais, Al Sadiq Islamic English School is a private school providing education for students from Kindergarten to Grade 10, aged three to 16 years. At the time of the inspection, there were 1464 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable. The school follows a modified English National Curriculum.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most parents believed their children enjoyed being at school, with good relationships between the teachers and students. Many parents wanted more information from the school about their children's learning and educational progress, about the school activities and about plans for the future. Most parents felt that the staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children as well as treating them fairly. Most parents also believed the teaching to be acceptable, but a number of parents raised concerns about the school transport, fees and lack of extra-curricular activities.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Sadiq Islamic English School provided an acceptable quality of education for its students. Attainment and progress, in the key areas, were acceptable across the school. In mathematics, in the primary stage, there was an over-concentration on arithmetic to develop students' abilities to calculate mentally. Students' personal and social development were good and their attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They had very positive attitudes to learning and their relationships with each other and their teachers were excellent. Older students had a good understanding of Islam and how it underpins life in Dubai. There was a good understanding of economic and environmental issues, both globally and locally.

Although teaching and learning were acceptable, the teachers did not have a good knowledge of the ability of each student and so were not able to provide, on a daily basis, sufficiently challenging activities for the different abilities within the class. The teachers were enthusiastic to improve their practice and a few extended the range of teaching approaches and strategies in order to meet the differing learning needs of the students more effectively. Students were enthusiastic about their learning. The curriculum was acceptable in meeting the educational needs of the students. However, there was a need to ensure that it was developed continuously through the school and that it matched the interests of the students and the context of the community. Text books used did not reflect life in a multi-cultural society or the take account of the context of Dubai and so lacked relevance to students. Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security were good. Premises were suitable. Staff cared for students and continuously promoted a supportive, friendly environment. Support for the students, including child protection procedures, was acceptable. Although senior teachers monitored the results of tests and exams, there was no system to track an individual student's progress. However, tracking of health, emotional and social needs was effective.

The quality of leadership was acceptable across the school. There was a commitment to improvement and openness to new ideas and suggestions. Improvement planning, however, was unsatisfactory. There were processes in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the school, however leaders lacked the skills and time to carry this out effectively. Consequently, there was no clear understanding of progress made or how to support planned objectives. Partnerships with the parents and the community, although acceptable, were reactive to individual concerns. It was unsatisfactory that the school had few arrangements in place to support the involvement of the school community in evaluating, planning and monitoring school performance. The use of resources, including staffing, was acceptable and minimal progress had been made since the last inspection.

Key features of the school

- The school had a strong and positive ethos; students were polite and helpful;
- The students were happy at school and enjoyed their learning;
- Relationships between students and between students and teachers were friendly and respectful;
- The students' knowledge and commitment to the Islamic faith and their understanding of life in Dubai were strengths of the school;
- Teaching was predominantly through the use of schemes of textbooks;
- The strategies in teaching were limited. The practice was predominantly a didactic approach and this did not always meet the learning needs of students;
- There was little on-going assessment of students' progress and this resulted in too many students insufficient progress;
- Improvement planning and school self-evaluation systems were not effective.

Recommendations

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - Assessing the students' skills whilst they are learning and using this information to inform planning;
 - Planning learning activities for all groups of students including the most and least able;
 - Using a variety of teaching approaches to engage the students more effectively.
- Carry out a review of the curriculum based on the needs of the students rather than the content of the textbooks to ensure:
 - Progression and continuity;
 - Skills development;
 - Agreed knowledge content;
 - The interests of the students are met;
 - It reflects the context of Dubai.
- Strengthen the process of school self-evaluation and the improvement planning by:
 - Developing, with the staff, an achievable, relevant, measurable improvement plan;
 - Empowering a wider group of leaders in the school by agreeing detailed job responsibilities and providing appropriate professional development to enable them to carry out their duties.

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

Progress and attainment in Islamic Education were acceptable in all stages. The majority of Arab students could recite The Holy Qur'an, making few errors. The majority of the students in lower grades could recognise the Pillars of Islam and the Pillars of Faith. The majority of the children in Kindergarten (KG) memorised some daily prayers such as the prayer before eating and the prayer before entering the bathroom. In higher grades, most students could write summaries about Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life. Most of the students appreciated Islamic tenets such as respecting parents and reverence for older people, and most students understood how to perform prayer and fasting.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable overall. Most students made the expected progress in the school tests. Most children in Kindergarten were able to pronounce single words and recognise letters correctly. They also identified words for different colours and wrote single letters not words. Most Grade 1 non-Arab students used simple phrases to name items around the class. Most Grade 3 Arab students were able to use definite and indefinite articles correctly by classifying a list of words. Grade 4 students had acceptable writing skills; most students formed simple sentences and wrote them correctly. Most Grade 7 students confidently read aloud literary texts. Students in Grade 6 and Grade 10 had acceptable knowledge of grammar and most students were able to analyse simple sentences. However, they rarely applied their grammatical skills accurately in other contexts.

In English, overall progress and attainment were acceptable. Assessment data showed a few cases of very significant progress, particularly at IGCSE level. Examination results showed year on year improvement. The students were able to converse, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar; they were eager to speak during classes and informally. The students' listening skills were acceptable; they listened attentively to taped English conversations and responded accurately to follow up notebook work. Younger students accurately answered the teacher with one word or short phrases. Students' handwriting was good. Letters were well formed, legible and regular. Both reading and writing for a purpose were less well developed.

Progress and attainment in mathematics, overall, were acceptable but were unsatisfactory in Grades 1 to 6 because of the narrow range of learning. In KG, a few children understood the concepts of 1 and 2 and were beginning to recognise basic shapes. By Grade 6, students could add and subtract numbers to nine thousand, multiply by ten and one hundred and work accurately with simple fractions. Students were not able to recall number facts sufficiently quickly and had little practice manipulating numbers mentally. By Grade 10 students could solve algebraic fractions, construct the locus of a point and apply mathematics to everyday life. In the 2009 IGCSE examinations, around half of the students in Grade10 achieved A* to C grades, which was an improvement on 2008 results.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable across the school. Most students made acceptable progress as demonstrated in the internal and external tests. Students had acceptable theoretical knowledge about science through there was less focus in classes on developing investigation and application skills. Most Grade 2 students classified plants according to their different parts. The majority of Grade 5 students knew how plants adapt to suit different environments. Grade 6 students had acceptable theoretical knowledge about melting and boiling. Grade 8 students correctly answered questions about facts related to speed, velocity and acceleration, however they were not involved in discussing or investigating the concepts studied. Grade 9 students explained factors affecting photosynthesis.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Overall, the students' personal and social development was good and their attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Students had very positive attitudes to their work and were keen to learn. Relationships were excellent throughout the school. There was mutual respect and tolerance between teachers and students, but the social needs of older students in mixed aged classes were not always met. Students arrived punctually to school, and in school showed self-control, moving around the building in a sensible manner. Attendance was acceptable for the last term. Older students took responsibilities as prefects and house captains and carried out their duties well. Students, in general, had too few opportunities to be proactive in developing responsibilities within and outside the school.

Older students had a good understanding of Islam and how it underpins life in Dubai. They valued the national identity and were conscious of the wide variety of cultures in Dubai. They had an awareness of, and showed an interest in, the history of Dubai.

Most students were very aware of the global and local economic crisis. Students realised their own responsibilities towards the environment. The youngest children were aware that they needed to help to keep the school clean. The older students were aware of environmental action such as re-cycling, planting trees, eco-friendly buildings and using solar power and the problems of pollution relevant to Dubai and the world.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning throughout the school were acceptable. Teachers generally had sufficient subject knowledge. However, management of time was inefficient; a few teachers, attempting to vary their teaching strategies, spent more time organising the student groups than teaching the students. Tasks were not always well matched to the range of students' needs; all students were taught at the same level. Almost all of the teachers lacked understanding of learning objectives. A high proportion of teachers used a limited range of strategies and resources. When questions were asked, they were usually closed and replies were chanted back to the teacher. Delivery of teaching was usually didactic in all grades except Foundation Stage. On a few occasions, this strategy was effective and helped students acquire knowledge particularly, for example, in mathematics and science. In a few lessons there was a good balance between independent and supported learning and effective dialogue, between students and the teacher, which helped to build understanding.

Across the school, almost all of the students showed positive attitudes to their learning. Almost all students could explain clearly and enthusiastically what they had learned. In almost all lessons, learning was undertaken individually with little effective collaboration. When planned learning took place, there was limited encouragement for students to make connections with previous learning or to apply the learning to new contexts. There were insufficient opportunities for students to practise their enquiry and independent research skills and engage in critical thinking. In a few instances, new learning was secure and acquired at an appropriate pace, most notably in mathematics and science. In almost all classes, students who were finding concepts difficult were not supported effectively and those students who had already mastered the learning were not sufficiently challenged.

Assessment was unsatisfactory across the school. There was little evidence of assessment which informed teaching and learning throughout the school. Students' books were marked regularly by the teachers, but this did not inform future lessons or give advice to the students about how they could improve their work. Assessment of progress and achievement was solely through a schedule of tests and examinations and teachers did not use information gained from lessons to inform the curriculum. Test results were analysed in terms of student knowledge and subject coverage but teachers could not track individual student progress. Tracking using assessments was difficult because of the way in which the results were recorded; separate sheets for separate years. The school did not use external benchmarks to gain a picture of how the students were doing in relation to international expectations. The co-ordinators and Principal had established a system for monitoring outcomes and teachers were required to explain poor results and the remedial actions which were used with the students.

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

The school provided an acceptable curriculum that led to IGCSE after the completion of Grade 10. The curriculum was designed to meet the requirements of Islamic Education and aspects of the English National Curriculum. The school aligned the curriculum resources and purchased curriculum materials to ensure student success at final examinations. The school expanded the breadth of the curriculum through extra-curricular activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum was a well-planned series of activities that were relevant to young children. Students followed a common curriculum, from Grade 1 to Grade 8, after which it was divided into science and commercial streams. The language curriculum included five languages to meet the needs of the diverse student body. There was a lack of opportunities in the English curriculum for extended writing and the study of literature. Primary and middle school mathematics only covered numeracy and paid insufficient attention to aspects such as shape and measurement. Islamic Education, offered in the English medium, was based on outdated text-books. Opportunities for the aesthetic and creative development of students were underdeveloped. The curriculum was reviewed annually by teachers in order to promote progression. However, there was limited evidence of planned cross-curricular links or progression within a subject for different age groups or abilities. Planning for curriculum continuity, throughout the grades and within grades, was under-developed. Curriculum delivery was text-book driven and did not reflect the needs of a culturally diverse and mixed-ability student body. The students' research and independent study skills, and critical thinking were not evident in classroom observations.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health, safety and security practices at the school were good. Students moved around the building safely throughout the day. Play areas were well-supervised by staff and student leaders. Despite the age of the facility, school buildings were clean. Maintenance was good but some toilets lacked soap, toilet paper, paper towels and many hand driers did not work. Management and supervision of transport was good but there were potential safety hazards to pedestrians when buses arrived and departed. A fire drill was successfully conducted once a year. Fire extinguishers were monitored regularly. The school employed a full-time nurse and a doctor for two hours twice weekly. The nurse was active in the daily life of the school; besides her nursing duties, she provided classroom teaching and counselling of students and parents. The doctor saw students who were referred by parents, and staff. He conducted medical check-ups for all students in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 5 and Grade 9, and when students left the school. Immunizations were monitored and administered, with parental consent. Comprehensive health records were maintained and updated by the nurse.

The staff cared for students and continuously sought to promote a supportive, friendly environment. Positive staff-student relationships were a feature of the school. The parents confirmed that behavioural issues were handled promptly and effectively by the teachers. Effective systems were in place for the management of student attendance and punctuality. Assessment of academic progress, by teachers, was not consistent. Monitoring of student progress was not formally linked to tracking of personal or academic development.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Overall the leadership of the school and its management were acceptable. The leadership of the school consisted of a small team of the Principal, two co-ordinators and the heads of the curriculum areas. The respective roles of the Principal and the two co-ordinators were not clear and not aligned to the stated needs of the school. There was a strong commitment to school improvement within the parameters of Islamic Education. There were well established systems and practices for reviewing and monitoring aspects of school performance, such as performance management. However, the developments did not fully involve staff other than the leadership team. For example, self-evaluation systems did not involve students or parents. The senior staff of the school had a shared vision and direction; however some of their management skills needed to be developed further. The capacity of the leadership to make improvements was acceptable.

School self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. A large amount of data was collected and monitored regularly. However, the information was not entirely accurate or reliable and consequently, the school leaders did not know the school's weaknesses well enough to prioritise and plan for its improvement. The two co-ordinators were helping to improve teaching and learning in the school. The monitoring of teaching took place twice a year but was not aligned to a criteria framework or to evaluating the progress of the action plan. There had been little progress with the recommendations from the last report. The use of specific teaching areas in the school and knowledge of the history of Dubai and its various cultures had been developed.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Links with the parent community were felt to be strong by the school; concerns had been raised about some teaching material which resulted in prompt changes being made by the school. Parents agreed that the school acted on their concerns. They expressed a desire to become involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways; helping in class, accompanying visits and being part of a Consultative Board. Although the student diaries were welcomed, there was some dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of home-school communication. The parents were unclear about the school's educational vision and its plans. The school had little involvement in the local community.

Governance was unsatisfactory. Additional to the lack of parental or student involvement in school self-evaluation or planning, the school had no governing or consultative body. Consequently, the considerable knowledge and skills of the school and local communities were not being utilised to accelerate the school's progress.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school had sufficiently qualified staff deployed appropriately across the grades although there were three vacancies that remained unfilled. The school had considerable recruitment and retention challenges. The lack of high quality and appropriate training, for all staff, was a considerable barrier to future progress. Accommodation was sufficient and there was a proposed new build in January 2010. There was a lack of basic resources; calculators, books, physical education equipment. The computers were in need of updating and several items were not working. The school library and primary classroom collections had a minimal number of books and many were outdated. Some progress had been made in the effectiveness of the use of space for teaching and learning; the computer and science labs were occupied for the majority of the time and the library had been re-planned to provide small, flexible teaching areas with a few appropriate research tools and materials.

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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good
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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

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	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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