

Greenwood International School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to High

Report published May 2011

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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.

Greenwood International School was inspected in January 2011 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 Muhaisnah, Greenwood International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to High, aged three to 17 years. The school follows a US curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 734 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents were very positive about the school in general and listed the leadership, teaching and English instruction as the strongest areas. Parents commented favourably regarding the arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of their children. A minority of respondents indicated a concern that too much homework was assigned each day and too much help was required at home. While the overall satisfaction with teaching and leadership was high, Arabic instruction was a concern to a minority of respondents.

How well does the school perform overall?

Greenwood International School provided a good quality of education overall. The senior leadership team had responded effectively to all of the recommendations from the previous report. Continual and further improvement was planned and the school's priorities were based on an in-depth analysis of its previous performance. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good.

Students' attainment and progress was good in most key subjects, with the elementary, middle and high school demonstrating good progress in English, mathematics and science. The quality of teaching and learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in the elementary, middle and high schools. The curriculum was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in the elementary, middle level and high schools. Health and safety were good across the school. Leadership was good with a clear vision and capacity for enabling the school to continue to improve.

Key features of the school

- Systematic self-evaluation had led to improvements in many areas of the school;
- Improved teaching and learning had developed through effective curriculum review;
- Teaching in Kindergarten was not as effective as in other phases of the school;
- There was good attainment and progress in most key subjects;
- At the high school stage students demonstrated outstanding Islamic, cultural, civic and environmental understanding.

Recommendations

- Ensure consistency of good teaching and learning in Kindergarten;
- Provide extended learning opportunities for higher achieving students throughout all phases of the school by effective use of assessment data, information and communications technology (ICT);
- Ensure all students have sufficient and regular access to the science laboratory;
- Provide a wider range of choice in subjects, particularly in the high school;
- Continue to develop a fully accredited and recognised U.S. High School Diploma.

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

Student's attainment in Islamic Education in elementary was good and acceptable in middle and high school. Progress was good across all phases. In the elementary grades, most students demonstrated good understanding of basic Islamic knowledge. They memorised and recited verses from The Holy Qur'an and teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). In the middle school, a majority of students could identify the behaviour and social manners expected from Muslims and how they should be displayed in their daily life. Few non-Arabic Muslim students memorised verses of The Holy Qur'an beyond what was expected. In the high school, the majority of students understood the rights given by Islam, such as social and economic rights and the rights of women and they related those concepts to their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic for native speakers were good in elementary and acceptable in middle school. In the high school, attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Students in lower grades had listening and oral reading skills above those expected for their age. In the middle school, most students, particularly the girls, were able to analyse and explain poems well. However, students in this cycle had difficulty in applying grammatical knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. In addition, writing was limited to familiar topics. In the high school, few girls demonstrated appropriate speaking skills by orally presenting research materials related to topics studied. On the whole though, writing and oral presentation skills lacked age-appropriate depth and richness of expression.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were good in elementary and acceptable in the middle phase. In the lower grades, students were able to read and write unfamiliar words and use them in new sentences. They had good listening skills and understanding of instructions. A majority of students were able to speak about their countries using short sentences. However, their writing was weak in structure and spelling. In Grade 3, students were able to connect words, sounds and pictures. In Grade 8, students could understand, read and arrange elements of a short story.

Attainment and progress in English were good across the school, except in Kindergarten where attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Children in Kindergarten had under-developed listening skills. Children did not speak regularly or write independently. Across the rest of the grades, listening skills were good. Most students spoke articulately and with enthusiasm. They used context clues to determine meaning and compiled detailed character profiles. By the end of the middle school, most had developed good reading and comprehension skills, using various resources for independent research. High school students gave good oral presentations on a wide range of topics in morning assembly. Extended writing, including creative and narrative forms, was good in high school, where most students constructed detailed persuasive texts. However, boys' writing was, overall, less detailed.

In mathematics, students' attainment was acceptable in Kindergarten and progress was good. Attainment and progress were good across all other phases. Kindergarten children knew, recognised and wrote numbers up to 50. They understood 'more', 'less' and the 'same'. Their

manipulation of lower numbers using grouping and sorting skills was under-developed. Elementary students used the four operations of number accurately, applying them to problems involving money, angles and shapes. They explained differences between lines, rays and segments meaningfully. Middle and high school students competently solved complex percentage and factorisation problems. Self-checking of computation was accurate. High school students solved polynomial equations and applied theoretical processes to probability questions confidently. The most able students identified higher order elements within these questions to demonstrate concept mastery.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in Kindergarten and good in Grades 1 through 11. Kindergarten children used their senses to make simple observations. They had a limited understanding of the conditions required for plant growth, but overall early childhood scientific skills were under-developed. Elementary students performed investigations and reached good conclusions. Practical scientific skills were enhanced through investigative activities in wind and water erosion experiments. Middle school students conducted complex investigations on the physical properties of matter independently. In their work on chemical reactions they effectively demonstrated a sound understanding of fair testing. High school students had well-developed research skills. They used ICT effectively to present research findings, for example, in plant pigmentation.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in all the phases of the school. Almost all students were well behaved and showed respect to each other, their teachers and guests at the school. Student-staff relationships were positive and almost all students reported that they felt valued and supported. Students practised a strong commitment to healthy living. Attendance rates for the last academic term were good and almost all students were punctual in arriving to school and to lessons. A few boys did not behave with the maturity expected of their age

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local tradition and culture were good, except in high school, where this was outstanding. Students in middle and high school explained the clear roles of responsibility allocated to them in the school. They demonstrated good awareness, appreciation and understanding of Islam. Students had a well-established student council with an active role in the school. They showed respect for and awareness of the multi-cultural society in Dubai and saw it as an opportunity to promote good understanding of others.

Economic and environmental understanding was good in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school and outstanding in high school. Almost all students understood and appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. They celebrated diversity while being very proud of and knowledgeable about their own culture and heritage. Most students had detailed knowledge of the economic development of Dubai and could offer possible solutions to the current challenges. Most students showed excellent care towards their school's cleanliness and environment. Almost all high school students had good knowledge and a very well-developed

commitment to the protection of local and global resources. Students discussed environmental issues with passion and high levels of understanding.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge. Where teaching was good, there was a sound understanding of how students learn. This understanding was inconsistent in Kindergarten. In Kindergarten classes many teachers spoke excessively, encouraged loud chanting and did not successfully develop independent learners. Most Kindergarten teachers did not promote children's specific language, mathematical and scientific skills. In most other lessons across other grades, there was good classroom and resource management. Teachers used questioning effectively to explore ideas and share outcomes. Teachers planned activities which promoted students' independence. Teachers used ICT effectively. In the majority of lessons across all phases of the school, teachers did not provide sufficient challenge for higher achieving students.

Learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Kindergarten children had not yet become independent learners, were mostly passive participants and only used resources as specifically instructed. In the older grades, students were self-motivated, active and focused. They worked well, both independently and collaboratively. Most could apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts, demonstrating good interpretation of literature, mathematical problem-solving and scientific process skills. Middle and high school students regularly demonstrated a good capacity to be critical and inquisitive learners. When challenged appropriately, they attained well. Good project work, where students supported each other in a range of cross-curricular activities, was a common feature of learning.

Assessment was acceptable. Significant developments had taken place since the last inspection. External testing was in place. Rigorous and regular collection of data was a feature of all phases. Assessment data reflected quiz results, participation rates, project and homework quality. All parents received regular updates about test results. However, in lessons, there was insufficient use of the data to ensure that appropriate levels of challenge were in place for all students. Students were not encouraged to construct independent hypotheses, use ICT to explore topics of interest or report outcomes to their peers.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the later stages of the school. The school had made significant improvements in the way the curriculum was planned and delivered. A clearly-defined system for whole school curriculum planning was established. Effective review mechanisms were in place and the curriculum had been restructured as a consequence. Significant impact was seen in teaching and learning as a result of this restructuring. A curriculum manual, specific to the school, was well advanced. The curriculum

was broad and balanced. It had continuity and progression, offering opportunities for cross-curricular links, particularly through English, mathematics and science. The curriculum provided stimulating learning opportunities for students and most students were well-prepared for the next stage of education. However, the curriculum did not consistently provide well for the most able students. The school offered a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enhance the curriculum. Many of these provided opportunities for students to work in the community and local environment. For example, in Grades 10 and 11, students were provided with opportunities to discover more about their career aspirations with visits to local institutions and education fairs. There was a limited range of subject options at high school level.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provision was good. There were systematic and rigorous procedures for record keeping and monitoring students' health. The medical staff contacted parents regularly and also kept the staff informed of student health issues. Students were well supervised at the beginning and end of the day. Healthy living was promoted by the school through the nutritious food available in the cafeteria. Maintenance of the building, buses and equipment was performed on a regular basis and equipment was safe. Buses were well supervised. High standards of cleanliness were apparent throughout the school and outside areas. Fire drills were conducted on a regular basis and accurate records maintained. There was a good awareness of child protection policies and procedures amongst all staff.

The quality of student support was good. Behaviour management was effective and students were safe in school. There were positive relationships between staff and students and the school had a well-developed ethos of care and support. Support systems were in place for students with special educational needs and an elevator was available for those requiring physical assistance. Tracking of students' academic progress was thorough and rigorous. Management of attendance was good and students were punctual. Parents were contacted promptly when students were late or absent. Counselling was available for students identified as experiencing difficulties in the classroom.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school was good. The Principal was knowledgeable of all aspects of the school and its programs and effectively involved the other senior leaders in the decision-making and leadership processes. Open communication with the entire school community was positive and productive. Almost all senior and middle management leaders had high levels of professional competence. School leaders had created a shared vision among all staff. An effective distributive leadership model was in place. Teachers felt confident to explore new ideas about teaching.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had a good, accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Effective processes were in place to support

continual improvement. Senior leadership had identified and successfully implemented necessary curricular and instructional changes. This had resulted in improved outcomes for students. The engagement of an external educational consultant had supported this work effectively. Thorough and reliable teacher appraisal, peer observation and specific target-setting had improved teaching and learning. The school had very effectively addressed all recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. Highly effective parental engagement was in place. Parents were committed to using the interactive internet portal which provided more meaningful opportunities for their involvement with their child's school experiences. Informative reporting of student progress was conducted on a regular basis. Visiting speakers, community involvement activities and the exploration of future career options were some of the elements of productive links with the community.

Governance was acceptable. A governing committee was in place and provided support and guidance for the school and contributed to plans regarding future improvement. Governors ensured compliance with all Ministry of Education regulations. The development of a Parent's Council provided parents with direct and meaningful input into the strategic direction of the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Almost all teachers were appropriately qualified. Extra staff members were employed to provide additional support for students. The overall premises and learning environment were of a high standard. Laboratories were clean and safe. Chemicals were securely stored. The location of the science laboratories restricted access and limited practical investigative opportunities for girls. ICT facilities were used appropriately by most students. Libraries were well resourced with an increasing stock of titles, but there were no computers available for students to use for research.

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:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
89% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
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	Acceptable

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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

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