

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Carmel School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Carmel School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaicarmelschool.com
Telephone	04-2675424
Address	PO Box 89212, Al Nahda, Dubai
Principal	Alia Abu Younis
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-16 / Kindergarten to Grade 11
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	834
Number of Emirati students	162 (20%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 30th January to Wednesday 1st February 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Nahda, Dubai Carmel is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 16, from Kindergarten to Grade 10. At the time of inspection there were 834 students on the roll. One hundred and sixty two students, representing 20 per cent of the total cohort, were Emiratis. In addition to the mainstream classes, six further classes offered places for 42 students with significant special educational needs.

The school offered a UK curriculum and students studied for IGCSE examinations in Grade 10. Although the students completed IGCSE examinations in their final year, the school did not implement UK assessment procedures in the earlier stages of the school and relied mainly on text book materials to provide structure to the curriculum offered.

Seventy four teachers were employed in the school. Although almost all held a first degree, only a few held a recognised teaching qualification.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai Carmel School continued to provide an acceptable quality of education. A key mission of the school was to offer places in a mainstream educational context for students with significant needs. The school provided a caring environment for students with a range of specific learning difficulties, including autism and Down's Syndrome. However, there was scope for improvement in the curriculum offered in the special classes in order to meet the needs of students more fully. The school maintained its good provision for the health and safety of students and its links with parents. In most key subjects, students' attainment and progress were acceptable. The quality of teaching was variable across the school. Despite the efforts of senior managers, there had been little significant improvement in teaching, learning and assessment in key areas of the curriculum.

The recommendations in the previous inspection report focused on teaching for effective learning. The school had provided professional development for staff and had recently introduced new self-evaluation and assessment procedures. These had yet to lead to notable improvements in student achievement. The

school had developed governance arrangements and had taken useful steps in reviewing and amending the structure and content of the curriculum in the primary years. Overall, the school leaders and most of the recently appointed middle management leaders demonstrated the capacity and drive to support ongoing improvement. However, the school staff lacked awareness of best international practice in certain aspects of their work.

Key strengths

- Strong Islamic values permeated the life and work of the school;
- Students with special educational needs were welcomed as an integral part of the school community;
- Students in the primary phase made good progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic as a first language;
- The school enjoyed good partnerships with parents and these were developing to include greater involvement of parents in the wider work of the school.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment in all key subjects and ensure that teachers' expectations and the challenge offered to students are appropriately high;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the secondary boys' section, to support better progress in all key subjects;
- Implement effective assessment procedures across all subjects and include appropriate international benchmarks at key points to monitor students' progress;
- The curriculum in the special classes should be improved to better meet the individual needs of students with specific learning difficulties;
- Develop more accurate, rigorous and objective self-evaluation arrangements which involve parents, students and teachers.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Islamic Education			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Click here to enter text.			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Students' attainment in key subjects was broadly acceptable, with better achievement in the primary years in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. Most students in primary demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of Islamic key concepts and related this well to their lives. They had good memorisation and recitation skills. In the secondary classes, students' skills in reading and memorising The Holy Qur'an were age-appropriate. In Arabic, although attainment was better for native speakers in the primary classes, across all stages students' writing skills were underdeveloped. In English, girls outperformed boys and demonstrated better skills in speaking, reading and writing. This was notable in the upper stages of the school where most students did not read regularly for pleasure and lacked confidence in critically analysing texts. In mathematics, Kindergarten and primary-aged students were competent in calculation but were less skilled when applying their mathematical understanding with complex problems. In science, students were knowledgeable regarding most scientific facts but their skills in investigation and scientific enquiry were underdeveloped.

Progress was mostly acceptable across the key subjects. Often, progress was limited because lessons were characterised by too much teacher talk. There were too few opportunities for students to contribute in lessons or to practise their skills. Students with significant needs made acceptable progress in their special classes because the teachers knew them well and provided individual support to assist each child. However, in mainstream classes, work was not suitably adapted to ensure their effective progress. The use of specialist subject teachers from the earliest years and in the special classes led to some discontinuity of learning for students and, consequently, their progress was often too slow.

Around 20 per cent of students in the school were Emirati. The largest proportion was in the early years and primary classes. Their attainment and progress were broadly acceptable but there was considerable variation between subjects and between boys and girls. For example, in English in the upper secondary phase, girls' reading and writing skills were better than those of boys. In Arabic, particularly in the primary years, Emirati students made good progress in speaking, listening and reading, although writing required improvement. The presentation of students' work across all subjects required greater care and attention. In science and mathematics, Emirati students performed at expected levels but were often capable of much better achievement.

Special education classes

Students were welcomed as an integral part of the school community. The quality of care and support provided was good and enabled students to take a full part in the life and work of the school. Teachers knew their students well. They were aware of their social and emotional needs and managed relationships positively. Overall, students made acceptable progress in their learning. They made good progress in English. Progress in mathematics and science was acceptable. In these subjects, students' needs were not always clearly identified. Teaching strategies often focused on memorisation and rote learning and were

not always tailored to help understanding. All students had an individual education plan with clear targets. Progress was recorded regularly and communicated to parents. The curriculum did not always meet the needs of students. Teachers' planning did not link well to the targets in individual education plans and tasks and activities were not always adapted to students' needs. For example, tasks were not sufficiently practical and related to meaningful contexts and, as a result, students' understanding was not secure. The high numbers of teachers involved in teaching different subjects to students with complex learning needs did not provide appropriate continuity in learning or support.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

Attitudes and behaviour were good in Kindergarten and primary and they acceptable in secondary. Relationships between students and teachers were mostly positive and supportive. Student responsibility was encouraged and members of the student council took their civic duties seriously. Most students made healthy eating choices and displayed well-developed awareness of healthy life-styles. Attendance and punctuality during the inspection were good though the school's figures for the last semester indicated outstanding attendance. Most children in Kindergarten were very confident and demonstrated excellent knowledge in their understanding of Islam and were able to explain Islamic values such as respect and charity, in their own words. In primary and secondary, most students demonstrated a good understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai. They appreciated local tradition, heritage and the positive aspects of Dubai's multi-cultural society. The school placed considerable attention on promoting students' understanding of Islam. It had been successful in creating an ethos where Islamic values permeated the curriculum and relationships in the school. All students had a good understanding of their responsibilities as members of the school and local community. They knew how Dubai had developed

and understood many reasons for the changes in Dubai over recent years. Their environmental awareness was well developed and they took part in numerous activities to help to improve the local environment.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching was acceptable throughout. While there were instances of good teaching, equally there were unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers generally had appropriate subject knowledge but there were variations in expertise. A few teachers had high expectations, but many had too low views on what students could achieve. Coupled with lack of pace and lack of demand, low expectations meant that learning was not challenging enough in many classes. In general, lesson objectives were not clear or sharply focused. Questioning was too general, with too many questions that required one word answers. In Arabic, for example, there was often too much teacher talk with not enough opportunities for students to express their views. Teachers of English, in some cases, displayed good questioning skills, but there was, on occasion, poor modelling of English language. Teachers provided appropriate differentiation in mathematics, but their questioning was generally not effective. In some cases there was no discussion of learning objectives. In science, many teachers' presentation skills were weak. There was little meaningful group activity or discussion in many classes. Teaching in other subjects, including French, art, business studies and physical education was also acceptable, though here too, similar aspects of teaching were in need of development.

Learning was acceptable at all stages. There was too much inconsistency throughout the school. Many students listened attentively, co-operated with their teachers and enjoyed learning. Many could persevere to complete their tasks. However, they were generally too dependent on the teachers, and had few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Most were passive learners with underdeveloped thinking skills. They had limited opportunities for discussion or for the development of collaborative

learning or research. However, in English, students did experience collaborative sharing of ideas. In mathematics, learning tasks lacked application to real life and, in science, students lacked opportunities to conduct practical work, to hypothesise or to investigate. Students in Islamic Education could make good connections between new and previously learned content. When given the opportunity, students co-operated effectively in their learning in Arabic.

Assessment was acceptable. Teachers carefully collated test and examination results. Data was very efficiently collected and organised, with some analysis. Teachers had a broad understanding of the abilities of different groups and individuals. However, in most subjects, there was limited oral questioning for assessment and inconsistent marking of written work. Students did not have regular feedback on how to improve. Teachers were unfamiliar with the interpretation of external examination data and international comparisons, leading to an inaccurate view of attainment and progress.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable across the school. At Kindergarten, Primary and early Secondary, the curriculum had breadth and balance. It met the needs of most students but its implementation had some weaknesses. Transition arrangements for new students, as well as between the phases, ensured that the majority of students were well prepared for the next stages of their education. As a result of the annual review of the curriculum, the school had introduced new programmes to offer more continuity and progression. The curriculum offered limited choice to senior groups of students in both the science and commerce streams. The curriculum included a variety of enrichment activities which effectively supported students' personal development. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were few and inconsistent across the grades. A few cross-curricular links enhanced learning, especially in the Kindergarten. A limited range of extra-curricular activities was offered to students including sports during the school day; however, there were too few opportunities for inter-school competitive sports or for a wide activities programme to meet students' needs and interests.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

Arrangements for ensuring health and safety were good. The school provided a safe, hygienic and secure environment. The buildings were clean and maintained in good condition. Security personnel guarded the gates and safeguarded the premises. Some doors were locked during the day and this posed a potential hazard to students in evacuating the building in an emergency. The arrival and departure of students were well supervised and students' safety on buses was carefully monitored. Fire safety drills and maintenance of equipment were carried out regularly. Medical staff maintained comprehensive files on all students and kept detailed records of treatments administered. They promoted the schools' healthy lifestyle policy through well planned health education programmes. However, not all snacks available to students were healthy. All staff had received thorough guidance and training on child protection procedures.

Most staff managed students' behaviour constructively. They showed a strong knowledge and interest in their students and there was mutual respect and trust. However, a few teachers did not respond positively to older students and relationships became tense. The school provided useful guidance on further education and career paths. Students with special educational needs were welcomed as an integral part of the school community. The good quality care and support enabled them to take a full part in all aspects of school life. Arrangements to record and monitor attendance and lateness, including prompt communication with parents, reinforced the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

Leadership was acceptable. The Principal and Vice-Principal communicated a strong vision for the future development of the school. This included a commitment to inclusive education for all which was an important strength of the school. There had been a positive response by the school management and governors to a number of comments in the previous inspection report, particularly in relation to attainment in Arabic and to health, safety and governance. Leadership had been devolved to section and subject leaders, most of whom had a sound grasp of the curriculum. They were actively developing their expertise as evaluators of teaching quality, curriculum content and academic success. Despite these strengths, senior leaders had not been fully successful in improving key aspects of the work of the school. In particular, the quality of teaching and students' achievement had not seen significant improvement from the last inspection. Awareness of best international practice was limited. The school needed support to make the required improvements to the quality of teaching for effective learning.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school sought the views of parents, teachers and students and used the information to review strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, school leaders did not have a sufficiently accurate understanding of students' levels of attainment, and evaluated the quality of teaching using too narrow measures. The school recognised the need to place greater focus upon student outcomes. The ongoing introduction of a new management information system offered good opportunities for teachers, parents and school leaders to track progress of all students more effectively.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents reported good systems of communication and appreciated the access which they had to teachers and senior staff as and when required. There were good arrangements in place to discuss their children's progress, including regular open evenings and termly reports. The reports required further development to give parents more accurate information regarding achievement levels and next steps in learning. The school website gave

regular information about homework and key events. Parents wanted more detailed information about the schools' plans for improvement because they were very supportive and keen to be involved to help with initiatives.

There had been a number of notable improvements to the governance arrangements for the school since the previous inspection. The governing body included representation from members of the community, including individuals with significant professional experience in education. The group met regularly and received reports from school leaders regarding initiatives and, more recently, examination results. Members of the governing body had met with parents and students to help in gathering an objective view regarding the work of the school and areas that might require improvement. Despite these positive steps, the governing body did not sufficiently hold the school to account. It faced some challenges in ensuring full objectivity in reviewing the school's performance.

The operational management of the school was acceptable. School leaders made effective use of the limited space available. Certain classes, including the Kindergarten and Grade 1, were overcrowded and this limited the range of teaching strategies used by teachers. The school had invested in data projectors which were available in most classes. A new project, the introduction of I-Pads, interested students but, overall, the students did not have sufficient access to information and communications technology to support their learning. Other essential equipment, such as mathematics resources and reading books was lacking. Staffing levels were appropriate. However, a significant proportion of staff did not have teaching qualifications and those working in the special education classes lacked specific training in relation to the particular learning needs of students in their care.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	207	43%
	Last year	131	24%
Teachers	34		38%
Students	29		95%

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Around half of the parents completed the on-line survey. Of those who responded, most stated that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science. A significant number felt that their children's progress in English was slower. Most parents felt that the school was well led but expressed concern about their lack of involvement in decision-making and the broad work of the school. Students and parents wanted the school to offer a wider range of subjects. A relatively high proportion of parents and students felt that the school could deal more effectively with incidents of bullying, when they occurred. Both students and parents stated that they had not been informed of the school's actions following the previous inspection report. A majority of teachers completed the survey. They were pleased with the work of the school and commented positively on the behaviour of students at Dubai Carmel School.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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.

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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