

Al Basateen Kindergarten - Al Khawaneej Inspection Report

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.

Al Basateen Kindergarten - Al Khawaneej was inspected in November 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 Khawaneej, Al Basateen Kindergarten is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten 1 to Kindergarten 2, aged three to five years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. The school is part of a non-profit social institution, Dubai Women's Association. Fees are kept low to enable the children of local women attending the college to receive early childhood education. At the time of the inspection, there were 122 children on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed parents' responses to on-line questionnaires. Most parents were appreciative of the education the school offered their children. They felt their children were safe, learned well and were treated fairly. Almost all noticed that their children were enthusiastic about learning. The school provided them with useful and timely information about their children and the school's events and plans; it was responsive to their concerns. They believed that children were encouraged to practise a healthy lifestyle.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Basateen Kindergarten provided an acceptable standard of education with a number of good features. The leader and her staff had pursued a determined focus on improvement since the last inspection. The children's attainment was good in Islamic Education, Arabic and English, while progress in these subjects was acceptable and was capable of further extension in the second year of Kindergarten. Children reached acceptable standards and made acceptable progress in mathematics and science. The leadership had a good understanding of the action that would lead to further improvement and teachers were enthusiastic about taking the school forward. The school had responded well to the last inspection and made some improvements in key aspects of its work.

Children's attitudes and behaviour were good. They had a good understanding of their Islamic obligations and behaved well. The extensive programme of community links and activities helped them develop responsible action towards the environment and understand the functioning of the wider community. The quality of teaching and learning was gradually improving, although there was scope to introduce more active learning. Twice-yearly student profiles were compiled and shared with parents and a weekly assessment process was being piloted. Children's all-round development was supported by good healthcare provision and by teachers who were attentive to their social and emotional development. Children were safe and well supervised. The school leader had good relationships with her staff and parents and maintained a focus on following the DSIB recommendations in order to achieve improvement. The school was well supported by its governing board, which sought sponsorship to supplement the low fee structure. The school's premises were well-maintained, safe and provided adequate space for the range of children's activities. Teaching resources were limited, but supplemented by teachers' creativity in making and collecting materials to enhance learning.

Key features of the school

- Positive and productive relationships among children, teachers, parents and the local community;
- A strong focus on speaking in Arabic and writing in English;
- Well-maintained, safe, bright and clean premises which supported a healthy, caring environment for children;
- Effective use of community links and resources to extend the range of children's learning experiences;
- Improving assessment practice, though this is not yet sufficiently developed or used to support planning.

Recommendations

- Carry out baseline assessments on entry and use these with ongoing assessment to plan for the individual needs of children, including those with special needs;
- Review the Kindergarten 2 curriculum to plan better for progression from Kindergarten 1;
- Make greater use of the good community links to extend and reinforce learning in the key subjects;
- Improve experiential learning in science to extend the children's knowledge and understanding of the world;
- Improve self-evaluation and improvement planning to identify success criteria and timescales for achieving them.

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was good and progress was acceptable. Most children could memorise the opening chapters from The Holy Qur'an correctly. They appreciated Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and learned various Islamic supplications for different situations such as eating time. In Kindergarten 1, most children could repeat the five pillars of Islam; they also started to perform prayer correctly with their teachers. They showed good behaviour and adherence to Islamic values; they enjoyed helping other people and contributed to maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of the classrooms.

Attainment in Arabic as a first language was good and progress was acceptable. Most children listened well and responded appropriately; they could answer questions about stories told to them. Most children in Kindergarten 2 developed their speaking skills. They could take part in extended conversations, express their opinions and use sentences to describe pictures. They could identify the sounds of the letters and words they had learned and repeat familiar words with confidence. Most children in Kindergarten 1 could copy letters and most children in Kindergarten 2 were able to copy familiar words with legible handwriting.

Attainment in English was good and progress was acceptable. Children started Kindergarten 1 as beginners in English and were introduced to the letters of the alphabet through songs and visual resources. By the time they reached Kindergarten 2, they had attained acceptable listening skills and were able to follow their teacher's directions. Writing skills were good, with most children forming upper- and lower-case letters independently. Less emphasis was given to the development of speaking skills, so only a few children spoke confidently. Children were at the stage of very early reading skills, as they had limited opportunities to experience the enjoyment of exploring books and hearing many stories read aloud in the classroom. Children's critical thinking skills were less evident during classroom discussions, as opportunities to work independently and collaboratively were limited.

Both attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable. In both year groups there was a strong focus on rote counting, recognising and writing numerals correctly and recognition of geometric shapes. This was supported by the use of resources such as pictures and collections of objects, which were mostly well used by the teachers. From Kindergarten 1 to Kindergarten 2, children made acceptable progress in rote counting and the ability to match objects to numerals. In Kindergarten 2 there was greater focus on writing numbers correctly and independently. Children were not encouraged to think about and describe their daily life or the school's activities such as growing plants, visiting farms, holding produce markets, in mathematical ways and so link their learning to their lives.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. Most children knew basic information about their bodies. They could name the different parts of their bodies and the five senses. Children were instructed by the nurse in how to clean their teeth. Most children developed their knowledge about animals. In Kindergarten 1, children named pets and wild animals and identified some of their characteristics. In Kindergarten 2, most children could name additional animals; they knew how some animals live and reproduce by visiting farms in the locality. However, science in the classroom focused on vocabulary and description; children's scientific skills did not develop enough through the exploration of materials and the opportunity to experiment and record their observations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of children were good. An atmosphere of mutual respect and care characterised the Kindergarten. Children interacted positively and respectfully towards each other and with staff and their enjoyment of school was evident during lessons and break times. They were motivated to learn and, during break times, held lively discussions and played games happily with each other. Attendance was acceptable. Punctuality on arrival at school required improvement. . Despite activities to promote healthy eating for children and parents, there had been limited impact on making choices for a healthy diet.

Children's civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions were good. The majority understood and respected the customs and significance of Islam for Muslim students and families. All children memorised short chapters from The Holy Qur'an and they could name the five pillars of Islam. Displays of children's artwork around the school illustrated and celebrated the traditional and multi-cultural environment of Dubai.

Children developed good economic and environmental understanding through local visits and activities, such as the produce market. They were acquiring an awareness of the city of Dubai and its place in the world. Older children could name some areas in Dubai and they could name the UAE President and Ruler of Dubai and name other emirates. Most children had some knowledge of basic environmental concepts. Their commitment to the school environment was evident through the litter-free school grounds and the care they took of their classrooms.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable across the school; most of the lessons observed were of acceptable quality or better. Almost all teachers showed acceptable subject knowledge, but too many lacked an awareness of how their subjects were learned. Some teachers were aware from earlier training of interactive methods such as activity corners; however, not all had the confidence to use these strategies to enable children to learn in more active and open-ended ways. Lesson planning across the school was acceptable, but was generally oriented towards activities rather than specific learning objectives. Planning was not based enough upon what children already knew and could do, and so was not aimed at taking children smoothly to the next stage of their learning. The timing and pace of lessons were satisfactory, but varied; at times children spent too long listening to teachers talking. Subsequently, learning was not interactive enough and children missed opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Resources were limited but teachers had been creative in constructing or collecting additional materials to aid children's understanding. Occasionally, teachers did not use the available resources to support learning effectively. Teacher-children interactions were always positive, but teachers' questions to children frequently failed to promote critical thinking.

Learning was acceptable across the school, with children engaged almost all of the time. Although they were responsible learners, they were more compliant than independent in classrooms. They co-operated well, but did not collaborate enough to share skills and acquire new ideas. Enquiry and research skills were limited; children did not have opportunities to find things out for themselves. Local visits and practical activities in collaboration with members of the local community provided opportunities for children to relate learning to their lives and learn through observation and questioning. Critical and higher-order thinking were, however, generally limited by the nature of teachers' instruction.

Assessment of learning was also acceptable. Although activities in most lessons kept children busy, they were not skilfully matched to their abilities. This was because teachers did not use assessment information enough to plan activities that could take children to the next stage of their learning; the needs of children who were capable of higher attainment were not well met. Similarly, teachers did not track and assess the rate of children's progress accurately enough. On-going assessment during lessons was also inconsistent, as most teachers did not routinely check for children's understanding before proceeding to new topics.

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

The curriculum, based upon textbooks following the Ministry of Education model, was acceptable. All the expectations for Kindergarten children were addressed, although staff did not maximise these curriculum resources to extend the variety and depth of learning opportunities. Children's social, emotional and physical development were all comprehensively addressed. The curriculum in the key subjects did not offer much opportunity to develop

thinking skills or creative expression. The varied programme of visits and collaboration with community members contributed significantly to children's personal development. Visits to farms, the zoo, museums, municipal projects, sports and arts events and significant locations in the city broadened children's experience. They were introduced to people of local significance and learned how their work contributed to the community. The opportunity to make closer links to learning in the classroom by extending these themes through discussion, reading, drawing and investigating with real materials and objects was not taken up. The curriculum offered the potential to help children to understand the world around them better and give meaning to their academic learning. For example, farm visits, planting and growing activities, the sale of vegetables in a community market and instruction in nutrition for healthy living all represented good opportunities to promote language, mathematical and science skills. The curriculum design and implementation required a high level of teacher direction so that children were expected to spend a large amount of time listening to the teacher talking or watching one classmate respond.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provisions were good in the school. The school had safe, secure premises which were well-maintained and clean. Classrooms were of good size, allowing room for various learning activities. The health-care team fulfilled their responsibilities to monitor the health and welfare of the children. The transportation arrangements were well organised and ensured the safe arrival and departure of the children. There was a child protection policy, which was implemented well.

The quality of support was acceptable. Crucially, the school climate was positive, the result of caring teachers who were genuinely interested in children's welfare. Teachers maintained close contact with parents; calls were made if children were late or absent or if there was any cause for concern. All classroom teachers made individual efforts to support the children's learning needs, although there were no systems to promptly identify and support children with special needs. The tracking and support of children's academic progress was not yet implemented. There were no significant behaviour problems at the school and the school's record of incidents was shared with parents. The well-organised induction systems facilitated children's smooth transition into the school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was good and had enabled the Kindergarten to maintain cohesive values and a steady course of improvement. Working relationships among the Principal, administrative and teaching staff were very positive and their decisions dedicated to furthering the academic and personal well-being of the children. The Principal effectively supported teachers and parents in managing children's behavioural issues. She monitored teaching quality and provided feedback to teachers, although there was scope for this to be more explicit and so provide teachers with clearer direction about the strategies that

best helped children to learn. A number of training opportunities, including computer skills, had been arranged for the teachers, but there was still scope to develop more active and independent learning by encouraging recently recruited teachers to implement and share all the knowledge from their college training.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. There were a number of improvement plans in progress, but these did not have clear enough goals in terms of impact on children's learning and lacked well-defined timeframes for achievement. While the school provided parents with twice-yearly profiles of children's development, it had not developed systems for the regular collection and analysis of data about children's personal and academic development.

Links with parents and the community were good. The school had open and trusting relations with parents and maintained active communication with the local community. Through regular written communication and meetings, parents were kept informed about what and how their children were learning; they were supported in helping their children to learn well through the provision of workshops and events such as a book fair for children, their families and the local community. The activities manager arranged a varied programme of links with local businesses and community organisations, which enriched the children's learning through visits and their shared expertise.

The quality of governance was good. The governance through the board of the Dubai Women's Association was fully supportive of the Kindergarten, which it regarded as a service to the community. While maintaining affordable fees, the board sought sponsorship to improve resource provision. It was kept well informed of progress on the school's action plan through regular monthly meetings, but did not hold the Kindergarten directly accountable for the outcomes of its children.

The staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There was an adequate number of suitably qualified staff. There were a variety of spacious teaching areas, a number of computers had been purchased and teachers had worked hard to make and collect classroom learning materials. There was a need for additional materials to provide for active practical learning.

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
Attainment	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?	
100% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.	
Age group:	KG
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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