

INSPECTION REPORT

The Oxford School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Oxford School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.oxford.sch.ae
Telephone	04-254-3666
Address	PO Box 50091, Al Muhaisnah, Dubai
Principal	Nikhat Rehman
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to post-16
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,973
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	50 (3%)
Dates of the inspection	14th to 17 th January 2013

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The context of the school

Located in Al Muhaisnah, The Oxford School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 18 years. At the time of the inspection the number of students on roll was 1,973.

The school follows the English National Curriculum. Students were entered for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations at the end of the secondary phase and Advanced Level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase. There were approximately 50 students identified as needing learning support. Eighty-nine different nationalities were represented among the student population, of whom about three per cent were Emirati.

At the time of the inspection there were 115 teachers, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. The Principal was in her fifth year in office. Fifteen teaching assistants gave support to children in the Foundation Stage. All teachers had teaching qualifications and were deployed appropriately across the range of grades and subjects. Thirty one new teachers and nine teaching assistants had taken up posts since September 2012, mostly in the Foundation Stage and primary phases.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The improvement in the progress of students in Islamic Education and their attainment and progress in secondary and post-16 in mathematics and science;
- The outstanding behaviour of students and their positive relationships with all staff members;
- The engaged learners who were keen to be fully involved in the life of the school;
- Committed leaders and teachers who provided good quality teaching, which had a positive impact upon students' attainment and progress.

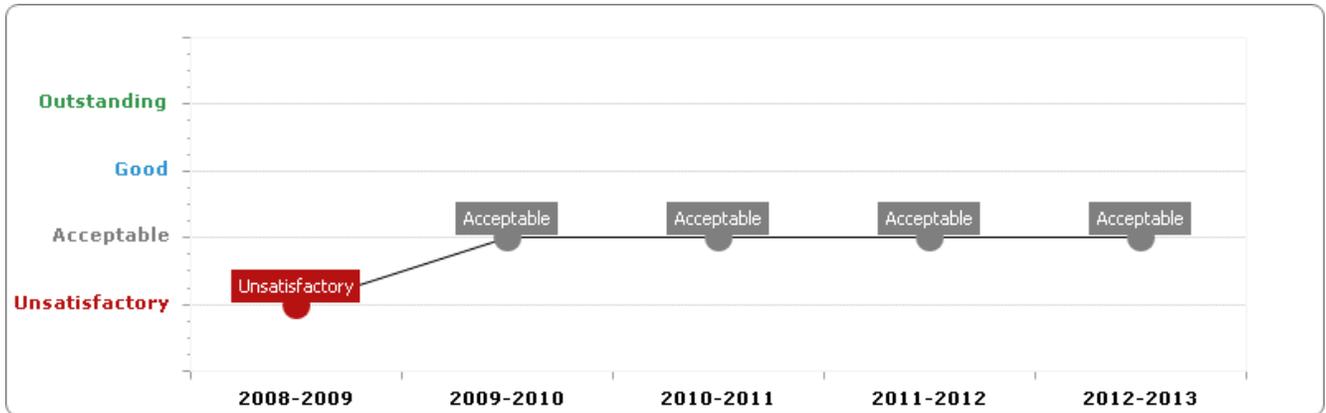
Recommendations

- Continue to improve teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and early primary years;
- Ensure that all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of their students and employ strategies that challenge and engage all of them;
- Improve the quality and variety of teaching resources in the key subjects to enrich students' learning experiences;
- Ensure the consistent use of assessment data by teachers in their lesson planning so as to meet the learning needs of all groups of students.

Progress since the last inspection

- Teachers had begun to raise children's attainment in the Foundation Stage by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Good progress had been made in the quality of support for students with special educational needs across the school;
- Leaders had successfully reviewed and improved the school's self-evaluation processes so that they accurately reflected the school's performance;
- The governors had reviewed policies to have better effects upon the quality of education provided.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects varied, but was more acceptable than good. Most students in Islamic Education displayed acceptable Holy Qur'an recitation skills. They demonstrated strong links between what they learnt and their daily life practices. In Arabic as a first or additional language, student's skills were better in listening and understanding than in writing. They understood most of their teachers' instructions and were able to answer questions correctly. In English lessons in Foundation Stage, children's attainment was acceptable. Reading and writing skills were developing well. Speaking was less well-developed. In the primary and secondary phases, their attainment was good. Students in the primary years wrote for a wide range of purposes. Their writing generally showed accurate application of the rules of English grammar, although they needed more opportunities to write at greater length. In the secondary phase, students wrote well and at length about a range of topics, expressing complex ideas and opinions clearly. Students' speaking skills were very well-developed in the upper secondary classes. In mathematics in the primary phase, attainment was barely acceptable and notably weaker in the younger years. For example, aspects of telling time were not understood well. By Year 6, attainment was much better and most students showed good understanding of shape, measure and data handling. The use of numbers and calculations was strong throughout the school. Attainment progressively improved so that in Year 13 the students' use of calculus in a variety of contexts was outstanding. In Foundation Stage science, children demonstrated skills, knowledge and understanding that were above the expected levels. Critical thinking was an emergent skill in the secondary and post-16 science lessons. In Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 phases, students demonstrated good understanding of science concepts.

Students' progress in the key subjects varied, but was more often good than acceptable. Progress in Islamic Education was good across the school. Most students made evident progress in Qur'an recitation skills as compared to their starting points within each grade, and with their understanding of Islamic etiquette and rules. Across the school, progress in Arabic was better in listening, speaking and understanding. Children in the Foundation Stage made acceptable progress in English overall. Progress was more marked in reading and writing. In the primary and secondary phases, students made good progress in English. Students in the primary years steadily acquired fluency in speaking, and wrote with increasingly accuracy. In the secondary years, students read increasingly demanding literary texts, and expressed their ideas and opinions in greater depth, both in speaking and writing. Progress in mathematics in the lower primary years was acceptable overall, but in a few lessons was unsatisfactory. Girls made significantly more progress than boys in the post-16 phase. In the secondary phase higher ability students made the best progress. Very frequent tests on mental mathematics enabled students to progress confidently in calculation skills, but the underdevelopment of higher order thinking skills held progress back for most students. In science, progress

was good in all four phases with increasing gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Overall, students with special educational needs made acceptable progress.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati student's attainment and progress were similar to those of other students. Across the key subjects these ranged from acceptable to good. Emirati students applied themselves to their work, tried hard and were keen to do well. They attended school regularly and were punctual, with no notable difference between them and other students. The Dubai context was given good emphasis around the school and within lessons. Emirati students often took the lead when talking about the Dubai context and on occasion involved their parents in presentations. Transition information was good with additional advice being provided by the Ministry of Education when Emirati students were considering universities to attend. There were a very few Emirati students in the post-16 phase of the school during the inspection. The school had regular contact with Emirati parents but none had yet volunteered to join the Parents Forum or the Governing Body.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's attitudes and behaviour were good in the Foundation Stage and primary years and outstanding in the secondary and post-16 phases. Foundation Stage children had positive attitudes and were becoming self-reliant. They were considerate and demonstrated kindness and friendship towards their classmates. In all phases, most relationships with other students and teachers were respectful and cordial. They demonstrated positive attitudes and took part in activities which promoted healthy living. Whilst attendance was good over the last full term, it was not good during the inspection week. Students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic values. They had secure understanding of the relevance and influence of these values on everyday life in Dubai and on their own lives and experiences. Local traditions and cultural heritage were known and understood by students who recognised their value to the people of the UAE. Students knew about their own cultures but seldom celebrated them. They were less secure in their knowledge of other cultures around the world. Students' participation in the school community was good. The Students' Council was effective and successfully conveyed the views of other students to the school's management team. Students participated in a variety of clubs, such as debating, fitness and environmental education. They were also involved with the local community, including the Dubai Police. The majority of students took care of their immediate surroundings and were aware of important environmental issues. They were sometimes active in schemes which supported sustainability and conservation.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary years and good in the secondary and post-16 years. Teachers' subject knowledge was good and most knew how to teach effectively, especially in the senior years. Focused planning had resulted in consistent lesson formats; to a lesser degree in the Foundation Stage and early primary classes. The lack of quality resources in the key subjects negatively affected the quality and range of teaching methods. A minority of teachers displayed the ability to pace lessons well and this allowed good matching of objectives to specific learning outcomes. In the Foundation Stage and early primary lessons, teachers had a weaker understanding of how young children learn. When effective teaching was seen the teachers had high expectations of their students and used a variety of strategies that challenged them.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary. It was good in the later phases of the school. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners and engaged willingly in the learning process. Students were confident when discussing a variety of learning activities with their peers. Some aspects of lessons were over directed by teachers, who lacked effective questioning skills. When there was

good learning evident, students worked independently and in groups to complete tasks, achieving common goals. Making a connection to prior learning and linking it to real life was mostly evident in the secondary and post-16 years. Independent learning was encouraged by a range of curriculum enrichment tasks. Students displayed their talents through intra-school and inter-school competitions. Insufficient resources in some subjects prevented a greater range of profitable learning experiences for students.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary years and good in the secondary and post-16 years. The school had comprehensive systems for gathering data and monitoring students' progress. Evidence of self-assessment was noted in student portfolios and regular use of assessment rubrics was observed in most classes. Spontaneous and planned observations and tracking of students' progress was undertaken on a systematic basis across the phases. Students were assessed through structured and unstructured written and oral tests. The interpretation of some assessment data required greater rigour and more consistency when used for planning the Foundation Stage and primary curricula. Students' attainment and progress were analysed on the basis of gender, age, nationality and special need. Almost all teachers had good knowledge of student' learning outcomes and reports were given to parents on a regular basis. Assessment information was used to plan effectively for students with special educational needs.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and good in all other phases. It was based on a rationale of on-going self-evaluation and shared values, which promoted relevance, choice and enriched learning experiences for all students. Almost all teachers had good knowledge of the curriculum. There was good subject choice evident for all students, especially in the secondary and post-16 years. The curriculum timetable was enhanced by a number of enrichment activities. The continuity and progression of the curriculum from Foundation to Year 1 was uneven. Curriculum review procedures were indicative of a thorough and reflective approach. As a consequence, subject leaders and teachers had ensured that cross-curricular links and different strategies featured in the lesson planning. A wider range of curricular activities was inhibited by limited resources. This consequently limited the level of challenge for students of higher ability.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provision was good overall. Checks took place regularly and the premises were well maintained. The school's medical doctor was supported by two nurses, who maintained appropriate health

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

records and administered first aid when required. Accidents were rare but were dealt with promptly and efficiently. Fire drills were undertaken regularly and the results were appropriately recorded. Students knew what to do in an emergency. Firefighting equipment was regularly checked and maintained and staff members helped to ensure that the site was secure. Students were supervised by monitors and senior students as they boarded buses and traveled to and from school. Students routinely wore seatbelts on school buses. Parking and traffic management at the beginning and end of the school day required improvement. The overall quality of support was good. Students' attendance and punctuality were effectively monitored to ensure good levels of attendance. The school managed behaviour well, ensuring that a calm and harmonious learning environment prevailed. A culture of mutual respect had inspired confidence and promoted trust among teachers and students. Staff-student relationships were very positive and respectful. Well-planned programmes across the school supported students' personal development effectively. These programmes provided age-appropriate guidance on health and well-being, personal effectiveness, and for senior students, advice on future careers or education. The school counsellor provided high quality and individual support to students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The school had appropriate systems to identify students with special educational needs. Procedures to assess individual learning needs and set specific targets for improvement across all the categories of special needs were developing well. In-class and withdrawal from lessons provided effective support for students. This enabled most to make acceptable or good progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The overall leadership of the school was good. The Principal displayed high quality leadership skills and communicated a vision that was clear and supported by all staff members. She was ably supported by the recently appointed Vice-Principal, who provided clear guidance and support to the supervisors and heads of departments. Teachers, support staff and ancillary staff members were fully involved and valued. Relationships and communication at all levels of the school hierarchy were positive and professional. The school was well placed to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Systematic self-evaluation processes were fully embedded in the schools' improvement planning. The school knew itself well. Leaders recognised its strengths and had identified the areas where improvement was still needed. The school's action plan was detailed and provided the staff with clear guidance on what was needed to ensure further improvements.

The school had made good progress in tackling most of the recommendations from the last inspection report. Whilst progress had been made in improving teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and early primary years, there was scope for further development.

Partnerships with parents and the wider community were good. Parents were supportive of the school. Regular reports on students' learning provided parents with clear information about the progress of their children. Parents said that the school dealt with concerns and complaints promptly. The 'open door' policy adopted by the Principal ensured that parents felt welcome in the school. They were assured of a quick response to any pastoral or academic matters. Parents were often involved in the visits to places of interest in Dubai. They also visited classes in order to observe teaching and experience classroom life. Students learned about the needs of others by fund-raising for local and international charities.

Governance of the school was acceptable. Statutory requirements had been met. There were frequent opportunities for the school to present progress reports during the academic year and for the board to hold leaders accountable. The governing body included representatives from different groups, including parents and teachers. It regularly sought and responded well to the views of all stakeholders of the school.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. A significant team of ancillary staff helped ensure the smooth running of the school. There were sufficient qualified teachers, almost one third of whom had been at the school for only a short time. A carefully planned induction programme ensured that new teachers were well prepared to work in the school. Some learning spaces were too small and restricted the scope of activities. Informative displays enhanced the learning environment in the majority of classroom and around the school. A lack of resources to support the teaching of science in the Foundation Stage and the upper years hindered students' development. Some learning resources, including information and communication technology for students, were conspicuously absent.

[View judgements](#)

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	138	17%
	Last year	248	32%
Teachers	32		28%
Students	113		79%

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

Less than a quarter of parents responded to the survey, fewer than last year. Just over a quarter of the teachers and three quarters of the senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents who responded believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Just over half thought that their children were making good progress in Arabic as an additional or first language. They were pleased with the quality and frequency of school reports and knew how their children were progressing at school. A majority of parents believed that the school was well led. Almost all parents indicated that their children enjoyed school. They believed that the school delivered well on its promise to parents regarding the quality of education provided to their children. Almost all students and teachers who responded to their surveys held positive views about the full range of school provision. Some students reported that they had insufficient access to information and communications technology.

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

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