

# International School of Choueifat Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 13

Report published May 2010

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## Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

**Outstanding** – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

**Good** – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

**Acceptable** – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

**Unsatisfactory** – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

The International School of Choueifat was inspected in March of 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 Jumeriah, International School of Choueifat is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 13, aged four to 18 years. The school follows a curriculum comprised of their own proprietary materials (SABIS). Students are prepared for the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE), General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level and Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. During the visit, a large amount of review instruction was observed as the students were being prepared for end of term assessments. Approximately, one quarter of the instructional week was dedicated to testing and assessment activities. At the time of the inspection, there were 3,671 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. The questionnaires showed that parents were generally pleased with the outcomes of the school. A few concerns were cited regarding the inability to speak directly to the teaching staff; instead parents needed to go through senior leadership. Although generally satisfied with their children's results, parents felt the need to speak directly about their children's progress and school experiences with the teachers. A minority disagreed with the statements, "There is a good range of activities which my child finds enjoyable and stimulating" and "The school is good at consulting me on decisions which affect my child." The survey statement "The teachers explain how I can help my child at home with school work" elicited the largest negative response with the majority of parents responding with either disagree or strongly disagree.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The overall judgment for the International School of Choueifat was good. Despite this, the school was non-compliant with Ministry of Education time requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education in the elementary school were acceptable and unsatisfactory at the middle and high school levels. Arabic was unsatisfactory in the elementary and middle levels and good in the high school. Classes for non-Arabic students did not meet the required number of lessons per week. Students' attainment and progress in English were acceptable in KG and good in all other phases of the school. The IGCSE results were good, especially since the majority were early-entry candidates. Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in KG and in the primary phase. Attainment and progress were good in Grades 6 to 9. Students continued to make good progress in Grades 10 to 13, where attainment was outstanding. Attainment and progress in science were unsatisfactory in KG. Attainment was acceptable and progress was good in the elementary level and both attainment and progress were acceptable in the middle school phase. At the high school phase, attainment was outstanding and progress good. The unsatisfactory judgment in KG was due to the lack of a science curriculum at this level. The students' attitudes and behaviour were good at all stages of the school. Students moved around the school in an orderly way and were courteous and friendly towards adults and each other. The students' civic and cultural understanding, and their understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions were acceptable in the KG, middle and high school phases and unsatisfactory in the elementary grades. Students' economic and environmental understanding was good in the high school phase and acceptable in all other phases.

Overall, teaching for effective learning was acceptable in KG and primary and good in middle and high school. Where teaching was good, teachers knew their subjects well, delivered their topics effectively and engaged students in meaningful question and answer sessions. Overall, learning was acceptable in KG and good in the rest of the school. Most students were focused in lessons. Assessment was good. The school implemented a thorough, whole-school and regular system to ensure that the attainment and progress of the students were monitored effectively. The school reviewed the curriculum annually. It was acceptable for KG to Grade 9 and good for Grades 10 to 13. The curriculum was rigorous and sequential and successfully developed students' knowledge and understanding as they moved through the school, particularly in mathematics and science. Cross-curricular links were limited and restricted the appreciation of a wider understanding of the purpose of the skills learned. The school was good in the protection and support of their students. A school safety action plan had been developed to address the six key areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection team and had been implemented successfully. The head supervisors and academic quality controllers collaborated with the classroom teachers to support students with academic, behavioural, or personal counselling needs.

The quality of the leadership of the school was good. Some improvements had been noted since the previous inspection but curricular areas were still to be addressed. There was a large parent response to the survey and, in the most part, parents expressed satisfaction with the operation of the school.

### Key features of the school

- Consistency in the model of instructional delivery;
- High level outcomes in mathematics and science;
- Large class sizes, including for example, up to 48 students in certain subjects;
- About 20 per cent of class time in school was spent assessing students;
- The curriculum was centrally prescribed and strictly adhered to.

### Recommendations

- Comply with Ministry of Education requirements with respect to Islamic Education and Arabic ;
- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic for all students;
- Deliver on the school's promise to parents and students to develop problem solving and critical, higher order thinking skills;
- Develop and implement a science curriculum in KG that is practical and enquiry-based;
- Develop a body to involve greater dialogue with parents and improve two-way communication.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education in the elementary school were acceptable and unsatisfactory in the middle and high school. Most students in elementary could recite and memorise short verses from The Holy Qur'an and could recite Prophetic saying "Hadeeth". They had acceptable knowledge about Islam. At the secondary stage, few students demonstrated a wide understanding of many details of the Islamic religion. Most non-Arabic speaking students had little understanding of the basic principles of Islam. They had difficulty reading a few short verses of The Holy Qur'an. Across the school most students' recitation skills were weak. Students did not memorize enough of the required verses from The Holy Qur'an. Few students across the school understood how Islam impacts on their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic in primary and middle school were unsatisfactory and good in high school. In Grade 1 most students were able to write and read letters. They could recognise short and long vowels and form simple words from the syllables. In Grade 2 most students were able to identify the link between nouns and their adjectives. In Grade 5 most students understood the key ideas of a short story. In Grade 6 most students were able to write a composition containing four paragraphs. In Grade 9 most students could write compositions from nearly 300 words about safety but most non-Arab students could not understand instructions and therefore could not follow them. Most students in high school made better than expected progress in relation to their starting points, especially in writing compositions and demonstrated good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Students' attainment and progress in English were acceptable in KG and good in all other phases of the school. Results in IGCSE were very good, especially since the majority were early-entry candidates. Advanced Placement and IGCSE results were broadly average compared with international results. Children in KG learned to read and write simple sentences and hold short conversations. By the end of the primary phase students could read with expression and explain and use new vocabulary. Grade 9 students read and understood difficult texts, conversed confidently and wrote grammatically accurate English. Students could not offer personal responses to literature until they reached the upper grades where they could think critically and express individual opinions in fluent, sometimes stylish, prose.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in KG and in the primary phase. Attainment and progress were good in Grades 6 to 9. Students continued to make good progress in Grades 10 to 13, where attainment was outstanding. Children in KG could recognise order, write and use numbers up to 10 and some children, up to 20. By the end of Grade 5, students' mental arithmetic and written calculation skills continued to develop and most were competent to multiply and divide using 2, 3 and sometimes 4 digit numbers. However, in the majority of lessons in KG and primary classes, students were not given sufficient opportunities to develop their problem solving skills through investigations and enquiry. In Grades 6 to 9, students successfully worked on more challenging aspects of mathematics to solve complex problems in geometry and algebra. Students gained good IGCSE and exceptional Advanced Level results.

Attainment in science was outstanding and progress was good in the high school. Students had a strong theoretical knowledge and could solve problems by applying concepts from more than one area of science. All students sitting external tests achieved outstanding results but practical skills development was weak. In the middle school, attainment and progress were acceptable. Students were challenged with applying some mathematical models, but by Grade 9 students knew a number of formulae and were able to apply them. Attainment was acceptable and progress was good in the elementary grades. Students knew key terms and described simple concepts, such as systems and interactions. By Grade 5 students could answer questions about controlled investigations. There was no science curriculum in KG and, consequently, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour across the whole school were good. Students moved around the school in an orderly way and were courteous and friendly towards adults and each other. Students showed determination in their studies and were keen to succeed. They played sensibly at break times and mixed well with each other whilst prefects took responsibility for younger students. Relationships with staff were respectful and co-operative and there was a positive and purposeful atmosphere within the school. Attendance and punctuality were good.

Students' civic responsibility, their understanding of Islam, local traditions and culture were acceptable except in the primary. The majority of students showed an acceptable level of civic understanding and knew their responsibilities within the school. The majority of students' understanding of Islam was acceptable as was their understanding of their culture, heritage and traditions. They could talk about the positive and negative aspects of Dubai's multi-lingual and cultural society.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in all areas of the school and good in the final phase. Younger students recognised the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and appreciated the safety it offered. Older students understood key business and economic trends and were aware of current international economic problems. They had clear ideas as to how they could help in the development of Dubai and older students had ambitions to make a professional contribution to society after their studies. Whilst most students could speak about environmental matters, their knowledge and recognition of how they could contribute towards sustainability were limited.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Overall, teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the KG and primary phases and good in middle and high school. Where teaching was good, teachers knew their subjects well, delivered their topics effectively and engaged students in meaningful question and answer sessions. Typically, teachers focused on dissemination of knowledge. Significant time was allocated to ensuring the teachers provided students with the knowledge required to pass the examinations. Teachers consistently specified elements of answers that would result in higher marks than other types of answers. Where teaching was acceptable, teachers adhered rigidly to the lesson plans and texts provided by the school. Textbooks and examination papers were the principal resources used. Teaching did not differentiate for a variety of learning style and abilities. Teachers provided students with set content, dominated communication interactions, advanced rapidly through the programme and questioned to assure completion of pre-determined tasks. In these lessons also, teachers did not permit any deviation from the knowledge to be acquired by any students.



Overall, learning was acceptable in KG and good in the rest of the school. Most students were focused in lessons. They listened well and answered almost all questions accurately. Where learning was good, students took some responsibility for their learning. They knew their strengths from the regular assessment information provided in each classroom. They were consistent in their efforts to improve their test results. Some of these students knew the connections between different topics and subjects. They supported other students by checking the accuracy of their work. Where learning was less than good, students were passive participants in the lessons. They responded only to set questions and did not display any critical thinking abilities. They were aware of their progress but depended completely on the teachers to provide a learning experience for them. Their independent learning skills of critical thinking, leadership, interpersonal communication, accountability and co-operation were underdeveloped.

Assessment was good. The school implemented a thorough and regular, whole-school assessment system to ensure that the attainment and progress of the students were monitored effectively. Children in KG and students in Grades 1 and 2 were tested weekly. Student Life Organisation students measured the attainment of KG students in key aspects of the curriculum using a checklist. At upper primary, students were tested between three and five times per week using the academic monitoring system. Here, centralised on-line tests recorded progress. Assessment of middle and high school students was expanded in this system across the subject range. This rigorous approach to testing and tracking progress ensured that students experiencing difficulty were supported weekly through extra sessions. The assessment data of high-achieving students were not used to extend their learning experience. These students supported others but there was a poor understanding of assessment for learning that would identify the learning needs of all students and adapt teaching strategies to facilitate a wide range of learning experiences. This was particularly relevant in the development of key learning skills such as problem-solving, formation of hypotheses and imaginative development.

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

The school used the SABIS curriculum, which the organisation reviewed annually. The curriculum was acceptable for KG to Grade 9 and good for Grades 10 to 13. The curriculum was rigorous and sequential and successfully developed students' knowledge and understanding as they moved through the school, particularly in mathematics and science. Since the previous inspection, the KG curriculum had been modified to take greater account of the importance of structured phonics teaching. However, the curriculum for KG and the early primary years lacked elements of breadth, such as the development of investigative and inquiry skills. There were weaknesses in the curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic and the time allocated to these subjects was below Ministry of Education requirements. The English curriculum enabled students to acquire a wide vocabulary and good technical skills; though the use of a narrow range of prescribed texts inhibited the development of wider understanding. The mathematics curriculum was primarily focused on the development of number skills in the early years.



## How well does the school protect and support students?

Protection and support of students were good. The school safety action plan had been developed to address the six key areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection team and was effectively implemented. A school emergency team was also in place. There were good measures in place to ensure student safety and protection. Security guards were stationed at main entrances to the school. Fire safety equipment was regularly checked and drills were conducted twice a year. Toilets were clean, well maintained, and suitably resourced. The student pick-up and drop-off area and the traffic-flow procedures were well supervised by school staff and security guards. Possible solutions to alleviate the traffic congestion at the front of the school had been taken up with municipal agencies. A child protection policy and procedures had been developed and implemented.

The Health Clinic staff provided services in accordance with Department of Health guidelines. Required medical records were maintained. General medical exams were conducted regularly for new admissions and at KG, Grades 1, 5, 9, and exit year. Medical checks related to body mass index, weight and height were conducted and recorded in student files. Medications were properly stored and secured and administered with parental consent. Student-staff relationships were good. Children and students were polite and respectful in accordance with the school's strict behaviour code. The head supervisors and academic quality controllers collaborated with the classroom teachers to support students with academic, behavioural, and personal counselling needs. Guidance for future education and careers was in place. Supervisors monitored attendance and punctuality and kept detailed records.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the International School of Choueifat was judged to be good. However, in the SABIS system leadership remains outside of the school. Nevertheless, the senior administration within the school demonstrated suitable knowledge and understanding of the processes needed to manage a school. Staff professional development needs were based on the students' examination results and appropriate training was provided.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning arrangements were acceptable. Yearly curriculum reviews were carried out at the corporate level and changes were shared with the school. However, the instructional model of the school did not allow for individualised teaching and learning. The school had made some progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report but most of this had been in the non-instructional areas.

Partnerships with parents and community were acceptable. A large response to the parent survey revealed a number of parents expressing concern about the inadequate level of

feedback on their children's progress from the school. Parents had suggested the development of a parent organisation to serve as an intermediary with the leadership around their areas of concern as well as a means of support for the school.

Governance was acceptable; it was actively engaged in the daily running of the school. However, no formal structure for parent input to the governance structure existed and the school was not compliant with all Ministry of Education requirements, notably in terms of curricular provision in key subjects.

The staffing and facilities were acceptable. The library was well organised but was under-utilised. Resources for ICT in the classrooms were limited and were not used well for students to extend their 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:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Good

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	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?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

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