

# Dubai Gem Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

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.

Dubai Gem Private School was inspected in December 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 Oud Metha, Dubai Gem Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 18 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 1364 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. A high percentage of parents responded to the on-line survey. There was a high degree of satisfaction with the school overall and specifically with the new Principal. Additionally, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the teaching process and almost all respondents supported the work of the school. Communication between the school and the home was considered to be good. Almost all parents requested a greater stability in the leadership of the school to continue the school's progress in supporting their children. Efforts to improve procedures for students' when arriving and departing from school were appreciated and parents approved the efforts of the school to keep their children safe and secure.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Gem Private School provided a good quality of education overall. New leadership, working with the governing board, had responded to all recommendations from the previous report. Continual improvement was planned and the school's priorities were based on an in-depth analysis of its previous performance.

Student attainment and progress were good in most key subjects, with the secondary school and post-16 areas demonstrating outstanding attainment in English, mathematics and science. The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum were acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary school and good in the secondary and post-16 age ranges. Protection and support were good. Leadership had a clear vision and capacity for enabling the school to continue to improve.

## Key features of the school

- High levels of attainment in all key subject areas in the secondary and post-16 age ranges;
- Outstanding students' attitudes and behaviour throughout all levels of the school;
- High levels of pastoral care and support for all students;
- Support for the work of the school by almost all parents;
- Observable impact of new leadership in almost all aspects of the school in a short period of time.

## Recommendations

- Comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Education for Arabic as an additional language in Grade 9;
- Implement training for teachers to ensure their assessments of students' attainment are accurate, especially in Foundation Stage and the primary stage;
- Improve the tracking of progress to ensure that students are provided with challenging learning targets;
- Ensure that the tasks planned by teachers meet the learning needs of all students, particularly those with special educational needs;
- Expand the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in all subjects.

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was good throughout school. Progress was acceptable in the primary section and good in the secondary and post-16 age ranges. In early primary years most students could recite the prescribed Qur'anic chapters with few mistakes. Their knowledge and understanding of the basic principles and values of Islam were in line with expectations. In secondary and post-16, memorisation of The Holy Qur'an and recitation skills were well developed for most students and their understanding of the meaning of verses they learnt was deep and mature. They used quotes from The Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth to support their views on different issues. They also had good knowledge of the major events in the early history of Islam.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable in the primary stage and good in secondary. Most students repeated short sentences and short rhymes accurately. In reading, most students were able to read an appropriate range of familiar sentences when supported by prompts. Most of them copied sentences in Arabic cursive script. At secondary level, most students could orally produce long sentences to describe what they saw in pictures. Almost all students could follow teachers' instructions in standard Arabic. In upper grades, most students could read long passages and their writing skills were good.

Attainment and progress in English were good in the Foundation Stage, and in the primary and post-16 phases. Attainment was outstanding at secondary level and progress was good. In all sections of the school, students had a very good command of the English language. They listened well and almost all were confident in communicating with adults. Foundation Stage children had developed good word recognition skills and used new words appropriately in sentences, often composing their own stories. Primary students explored a range of texts which included literary devices such as simile and alliteration. There were very good examples of insightful writing in different genres in the secondary and post-16 phases.

Attainment in mathematics was good in the Foundation Stage, acceptable in the primary phase and outstanding in the secondary and post-16 phases. Foundation Stage children were confident and, as a result, made good progress. They could sequence numbers and could count, sort and match objects well. In the primary phase, progress was acceptable and in the secondary and post-16 phases it was good. Students developed their independent, higher-order thinking skills and understood how problem solving relates to real life situations. For example, students calculated rates of acceleration and this promoted good links with practical physics. Nevertheless, insufficient use was made of investigative mathematics to develop problem solving skills by younger students.

Attainment and progress in science in the Foundation Stage were acceptable. In the primary phase they were good. Students made good progress throughout the secondary phase and outstanding progress in the post-16 age range. Attainment was outstanding in both of these phases. Results in the IGCSE examinations and at AS level were consistently well above UK and international averages. Students' enquiry skills developed well throughout the school. In Kindergarten children investigated why some objects sink and others float. In the upper primary and lower secondary age range, students learned skills of scientific classification. Older students carried out controlled practical work, for example to discover Hooke's Law in physics and, in the post-16 phase, they could describe different molecular structures and understood the differences between various types of cells.

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

Students' behaviour and positive attitudes were outstanding features of the school. Students showed respect towards each other and to all adults and visitors. The school's caring ethos provided students with a strong set of moral values. Students were highly motivated and had high expectations of themselves and of each other. School counsellors, prefects and the school council provided students with opportunities to take on leadership roles.

Students' Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was outstanding in the primary phase and good in the rest of the school. Throughout the school, students were responsible. They contributed to the school in many ways. Almost all school displays were students' own work. Students also contributed to their community by participating in many projects and collecting donations for charitable works. They appreciated living in Dubai and regarded Dubai as an example of a multi-cultural city that enriches their understanding of the world. Students also showed respect for the local culture and Islam. They understood the role of Islam in making Dubai a tolerant and peaceful place in which to live.

Foundation Stage children had a good understanding of economic and environmental issues. Throughout the rest of the school, students' understanding of the economy of Dubai and how Dubai had developed in a short period of time was outstanding. Most students had an excellent awareness of the economics which underpin the success of Dubai. They made positive contributions through their involvement in a wide range of school and community activities. Students were proactive in improving their environment through many eco-projects. They had a clear understanding of the importance of supporting sustainability and conservation, and older students understood how economic decisions affect the sustainability of the environment.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and in the primary phase. It was good in the secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all teachers had very good subject knowledge and used it to enhance learning opportunities for students. Almost all teachers, particularly in the secondary and post-16 age ranges, planned appropriately within their subject groups. However, at primary level the lesson objectives were not closely matched to the curriculum attainment targets. In the Foundation Stage the teaching strategies were improving but learning objectives were not always carefully linked to the Early Years learning goals. Almost all teachers made good use of the resources available. Most teachers gave students positive feedback, encouragement and praise for correct and good attempts. However, questioning techniques, worksheets and tasks were not always well matched to the learning needs of students.

The quality of learning was acceptable at Foundation Stage and in the primary phase. It was good in the secondary and post-16 phases. All students respected their teachers and were enthusiastic in lessons. Often, students worked together productively in small groups and used good research skills. Debating skills, acquired in English lessons, were very well developed. These were used well across the curriculum; for example in Grade 11 science lessons, when students spoke confidently about Chernobyl and the cause of that disaster. In most lessons, particularly in the secondary and post-16 phases, critical thinking skills were promoted.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary phase. It was good in the secondary and post-16 phases. Teachers regularly provided oral and written feedback to all students. Students' progress was reviewed regularly by the class teachers in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and by specialist teachers and subject coordinators at secondary and post-16 levels. Assessment was an integral part of almost all lessons, but was not yet being used consistently enough to improve learning and progress. Monitoring of progress did not fully assist planning for the development of students' learning. The marking of students' work was inconsistent. It did not yet fully contribute to target-setting.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Foundation Stage and in the primary phase, and was good in secondary and post-16 phases. It was soundly planned and was broad and balanced, although it did not completely comply with Ministry of Education requirements in Arabic as an additional language in Grade 9. The curriculum was based on national standards and included international benchmarks. A 'Scope and Sequence' of the standards from Kindergarten to Grade 13 was being developed to take into consideration students' developmental stages and conceptual understanding. Benchmarks for assessment had been agreed upon for some subjects and grade levels, but not yet for all. The curriculum was reviewed regularly and was a work in progress. Older students were able to choose from a wide range of subjects. Transition to the secondary phase was good, but was less effective between Foundation Stage and Grade



1. Cross-curricular links were being established, but, at the time of the inspection, they were insufficiently developed in literacy, numeracy and ICT. There was a range of extra-curricular opportunities and students had good access to learning within the local community. There was variability in terms of curriculum improvement across grades and subject areas, with a broader range of courses and real-world applications in place at the high school level.

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

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students were good. Frequent and thorough checks ensured that the site was secure and buildings were well maintained, clean and hygienic. Supervision of students was good. At the end of the day the staff were vigilant and they ensured that movement on and off buses was safe. The school's records and policies were of good quality and a well-equipped clinic and effective counselling ensured students' health needs were well met. Staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements. Evacuation procedures were in place, but the time taken to exit the buildings was too long. A recent competition showed that students understood what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, but almost all the food sold in the canteen was unhealthy.

The quality of support was good. Relationships between teachers and students were good. Behaviour management was excellent and, as a result, students behaved well. Students showed respect and concern for each other and, in almost all lessons, were not afraid to ask questions or request help. Students received good information and guidance on a range of matters including the next stage of their education. Other agencies were involved well in supporting individual students and families. Students' personal development was tracked well, but tracking of their academic progress was less effective. Strategies to improve students' achievements did not always have sufficient impact. Students with special educational needs and more able students did not always make the progress of which they were capable because lessons were not planned and taught well enough to meet their needs. Parents received regular reports. Attendance and punctuality were tracked effectively but the data were not always used well enough to bring about improvement.

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

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal provided a clear sense of direction for all aspects of the schools' development through a shared leadership model. All levels of school leadership were beginning to accept the challenge of the change process. Senior leadership was successful in identifying professional development needs, the impact of which was clearly evident in the Foundation Stage.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school's priorities were based on in-depth analysis of previous performance. Progress in responding to all aspects of the previous report was evident, although the use of ICT was not always effective. Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parent survey responses and interviews indicated a high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school. High



levels of support and care for all children were appreciated by parents and the re-emergence of a Parent-Teacher organisation was well received. Communication with all levels of the school was satisfactory.

Governance was good. The governors committee had effectively responded to most aspects of the previous inspection report. Governors were actively engaged in the operation of the school. They gave the Principal responsibility and expected accountability for necessary improvements. A formal process for parent input into the governing board had been initiated.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There were sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the school and the curriculum. The school building was acceptable, but limited opportunities to use ICT restricted learning. Science laboratories were used effectively, but were insufficient to fully promote investigative learning. Library resources were improving but there were not enough books in Islamic Education or Arabic for students.

## 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:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

## Next steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

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

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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