

# Deira International School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 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.

Deira International School was inspected in January 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 Festival City, Deira International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from the Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years. The school's curriculum is based on the English National Curriculum with the International Baccalaureate (IB) at the post-16 stage. At the time of the inspection, there were 1193 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was unsatisfactory.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were satisfied with the school overall. They said their children liked school and felt safe and happy there. A minority did not think that their children were making enough progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. They believed that the school encouraged children to behave well, work hard and become independent and responsible. They were particularly pleased with the care and welfare of their children. In particular, parents praised arrangements to help children to learn English as a second language and the ways in which able children were challenged. They believed that teachers gave them good quality information about their children's strengths and next steps in learning. Those with younger children said that the new curriculum information events helped them to support their children's learning. Parents believed that the school celebrated its international identity and promoted diversity well.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Deira International School provided an acceptable standard of education overall. Students' attainment across key subjects was acceptable overall, and good in mathematics. However, their progress in science was limited by didactic teaching and a lack of opportunity to develop the essential skills of scientific investigation. Across several subjects, students were capable of making better progress.

The quality of teaching was highly variable across the school, and very much based on the skills of individual staff rather than whole-school approaches. Students were ambitious and enthusiastic, but too passive in their learning. Staff did not use assessment well to plan lessons, or to ensure that each student made good progress based on their existing skills and knowledge. The school's curriculum gave students a broad range of subjects and ensured that they advanced in each stage in the school. However, the curriculum did not support staff to fulfil the school's aims of nurturing students to be inquisitive, critical-thinking and innovative. Staff had made some good improvements to the IB curriculum. They had increased independent learning and the IBCC programme met the needs of those students who preferred a more vocational curriculum. Students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language were well supported, and a programme had recently been launched to challenge able students. Students were engaging, friendly and keen to learn. They had positive relationships with one another and with almost all staff. However, not all showed mature personal responsibility about attending lessons on time with the correct equipment. A significant feature of the school's work was its inclusive and multi-cultural ethos. This was enriched by many international expeditions and charitable events. Students developed a sense of responsibility through these opportunities and understood benevolence in action.

The school's leadership team had been extended to create co-ordinators for a range of subjects. These staff had improved communication but had not yet had a significant impact on improving standards of learning and attainment. Senior managers did not give teachers enough feedback on the quality of their teaching or appropriate advice on how to improve. They did not yet have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needed to be improved. As a result they had been unable to provide ESOL, the school's managers, with accurate information about standards. Communication with parents had improved. However, parents were not partners in school improvement or governance. The school benefited from good quality facilities but did not make best use of its staff as a resource by training them effectively.

## Key features of the school

- Good attainment in mathematics across the Foundation Stage, primary and middle stages and in English in the primary stages;
- Good preparation within the IB programmes to meet the needs of older students;
- Good quality of pastoral care given to students;
- There were important weaknesses in the leadership of learning and improvement across the school;
- Unsatisfactory teaching and students' progress in science across the school.

## Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress in all key subjects;
- Improve the monitoring and coaching of teachers to improve teaching skills across the school;
- Ensure that all teachers use assessment effectively to track individual students' development of knowledge and skills and use this information to plan future learning;
- Develop opportunities for students to become effective learners, independent and creative thinkers;
- Improve the curriculum so that it achieves the school's aims;
- Develop rigorous approaches to self-evaluation, set high standards and targets for staff in all aspects of their work, and monitor these.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. In the primary school, most students were able to name the pillars of Islam, but too few could list them in the correct order. Most students had acceptable knowledge about the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and could recall basic facts about his life, such as where he lived and the name of his mother. In the middle school, most students could name some of the prophets and recall some stories about their lives. By the end of the senior school, most students knew about economic transactions in Islam. Across the school most students' recitation of The Holy Qur'an was acceptable, but too few students were able to apply recitation rules correctly.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable. Students in the early primary years had a good grasp of Arabic and their progress was good. They were able to read and write the letters of the alphabet in different parts of a word and had a wide vocabulary. However, as students progressed through to upper primary school and into middle and secondary school, they were less confident in speaking and writing Arabic. Most struggled to communicate in classical

Arabic and reverted to English to give clarification. Across the school, writing was in line with expectations. A majority of students learning Arabic as an additional language had poor reading and writing skills. Their progress was limited by work which was either too challenging or far too easy. Across the school, listening was acceptable and most students were able to follow instructions.

Attainment in English was good in the primary stage and acceptable in the Foundation Stage, middle and senior stages. Students were making good progress through the Foundation and primary stages and acceptable progress at the middle and senior stages. By the end of the Foundation stage, almost all children could write their own names and simple words and phrases. By the end of Key Stage 1 students' writing was satisfactory but students were too reserved in their own imaginative stories. In the senior school students wrote competently for a wide range of purposes. They analysed how writers achieved their effects and used this to improve their own writing. At all stages, students listened attentively to the teachers and followed instructions well. However, their skills in listening and talking to one another as part of their learning were less well developed. Those for whom English was a second language made good progress throughout the school.

In mathematics, attainment in the Foundation Stage, primary and middle schools was good and in the senior school it was acceptable. Test and examination results demonstrated that individual students were making good progress across Foundation Stage and the primary school. However, this progress significantly declined in Year 6. Overall, progress in both middle and senior schools was acceptable. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's skills in numeracy were good. They had also developed a good knowledge of shape and number and their use in the real world. In primary and middle school, students' mathematical skills and understanding were good in number, algebra, handling data, shape, space and measure. However their problem-solving skills were under-developed. By the end of Year 13, IBCC students developed their reasoning skills. IBSL students had good skills in algebra and trigonometry, but had difficulty with more complex concepts. IBHL students were performing below expectations in using complex numbers.

Attainment in science was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, in primary and middle schools but unsatisfactory in the senior school. Progress was unsatisfactory at all stages. Where attainment was acceptable, students knew the terms and definitions of lifecycles, body systems and chemical structures. They had some understanding of the concepts upon which this work was based. IGCSE students' attainment was significantly below the world average in all science subjects while the small number of IB students attained above, or in line with, world averages in physics and chemistry. Attainment in biology at this stage was below expectations. Students throughout the school had not developed a sufficiently broad range of scientific skills. They were not able to identify regularly the links between scientific disciplines and use experimentation techniques effectively.

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

Attitudes and behaviour of students were good in the Foundation Stage and in the primary school and acceptable in the middle and senior schools. Across the school students were polite, well behaved and respectful. They enjoyed being at school and reported that they felt safe and valued. However, in the middle and senior school students were not always well prepared for lessons. Those who had not completed homework or brought equipment were rarely challenged by teachers. A few students arrived late for their lessons. The overall attendance of students was unsatisfactory.

Across the school students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good. Students contributed to the life of the school and wider community through a range of planned activities. Non-Muslim students continued to learn basic information about Islam through lessons and from their Muslim peers. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the impact of the multi-cultural nature of the school on them as individuals and in Dubai.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable across the rest of the school. Most students had an understanding of how they may contribute to future of Dubai, but only a few were aware of how Dubai had developed and changed. Students across the school kept their immediate surroundings clean and tidy, although not all could explain the purpose of the school's recycling units. A majority of students had a basic understanding of world environmental issues.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable across the school. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge and a majority knew how to help students to learn in their curriculum areas. Most lessons were well-planned and structured, particularly at the primary stages. Where teachers shared the purpose of lessons with students this helped them to understand what they were expected to learn. Most teachers at this stage matched learning activities to the needs of students. However, across the school, too many teachers did not take account of the full range of student abilities in their classes when planning learning activities. Learning assistants supported students well at the Foundation Stage. However, they did too much for the children, and did not use questions well to encourage them the children to think for themselves. Across the school, teachers did not encourage students to ask questions and explain their thinking. In the secondary school a few staff relied too much on telling students facts, which did not help them to remember effectively. In science, teachers did not give students enough opportunities to learn by practical investigation.

The quality of students' learning across the school was acceptable. Almost all students had positive attitudes to learning. In the primary school and the IB programme, students were given research and creative tasks which enabled them to take responsibility for their own learning. When they had the opportunity to do so, students worked well with others in groups. A few teachers asked students to use information and communications technology (ICT) at

home to carry out independent projects. This enabled them to extend their learning beyond the expectations of the curriculum and a few achieved high standards. Students developed their creative skills well in art, primary drama, music and design technology and were encouraged by staff to use these skills in their learning across the school. In the Foundation Stage, activities were too structured and children had insufficient opportunity to learn by exploring and discovering.

The use of assessment across the school was acceptable. The school had recently introduced revised assessment arrangements but these had not yet had effect on students' attainment. Staff had begun to consider how their students' performance compared to international standards. However, teachers did not yet use regular assessment of students' skills and knowledge to plan their lessons. Well-maintained student profiles at Foundation Stage showed how well students were learning but did not take account of, or enable staff to build on, their prior learning. In best practice, a few teachers ensured that students understood the criteria by which they would be assessed. In these classes, students checked their own and one another's work and understood how to improve. Too many staff did not regularly mark students' work and those who did rarely gave comments which students could use to make improvements.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and middle schools and good in the senior school. The school followed the English National Curriculum through to Year 11. The International Baccalaureate Diploma [IBDP] and Career-related Certificate [IBCC] programmes were delivered in Years 12 and 13. The curriculum was satisfactorily planned and provided most students with sufficient breadth, balance and progression. The curriculum co-ordinator and curriculum committees across the key stages had begun to help all staff to follow the same planning guidelines. The curriculum was reviewed regularly. As a result, the senior stages of the school had developed more appropriate courses and programmes to meet the needs of all students. The IBCC programme provided good opportunities for students to learn in real life situations and to contribute to their own personal and academic development. The IBDP programme gave other students the opportunity to pursue their development through mature reflection, co-operation and project work. The rationale for the curriculum in the other phases of the school was less clear. Teachers understood the syllabus they had to teach but they did not appreciate the need to use the curriculum to support students' development of a wider set of attributes as defined in the school's aims. The school provided an extensive range of extra-curricular activities to students of all ages. Many of these activities supported in-school work and challenged students to enhance their learning.

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

The school had good arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students. The building was well-maintained and secure. There were weaknesses in practice in microbiology in science which needed to be addressed. There were appropriate arrangements in place to supervise students at intervals and on school transport. Staff helped students to develop healthy lifestyles and encouraged healthy eating. Almost all staff understood the school's child protection procedures and who to refer to for advice

The quality of support across the school was acceptable. There were positive and supportive relationships between students and staff. The school had made exemplary efforts to support a few students who experienced personal difficulties. Teachers were approachable and students had confidence that staff would deal with any concerns in a sensitive way. Medical staff and tutors took good care of students' care needs and ensured that teachers knew how students should be supported. Specialist staff helped those students learning English as a second language and those who needed support with their learning. However, teachers' monitoring of students' progress varied across the school. A few staff used English National Curriculum levels to assess students' work but students did not yet understand how to reach these levels.

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

Leadership of the school was unsatisfactory. The school had recently created a range of leadership roles for staff. Some of these leaders had begun to work together to improve their work. A few were sharing their ideas with their colleagues. There were more positive relationships between staff as a result of improved communication. However, improving learning had not been given sufficient priority and the majority of leaders had not given teachers high quality, up-to-date advice on learning and teaching.

Self-evaluation was unsatisfactory. Although the school had recently introduced a staff appraisal system, teachers were not given feedback following lesson observations to enable them to improve. Staff did not use information about students' attainment effectively to identify weaknesses or set targets for improvement. Subject department audits were not yet used to inform the school's improvement plans. They did not consistently evaluate their own work, and were not held accountable for reaching improvement targets. The school had not monitored how well it succeeded in its stated mission. The school's improvement plans were based on external reviews. Overall, self-evaluation had not yet enabled senior managers to improve standards.

The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was acceptable. In the Foundation Stage and the primary school, staff explained to parents what their children were learning and how they could support them at home. In the middle and senior schools, reports gave parents information about their children's strengths and learning targets. The Director had asked parents for their views about aspects of the school's work, and had given them a summary of the school's improvement plans. However, parents were not sufficiently informed about the school's performance, or involved in identifying areas which needed further improvement. The

school had a number of useful community links in a few curriculum areas. There was scope to extend these further to enrich learning and make it more meaningful.

Governance was acceptable. The school was managed by the ESOL group on behalf of the owner. Representatives of ESOL had a sound working knowledge of the school's day-to-day operation, but not of its standards. ESOL had supported the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers and management on teaching and learning. Regular surveys to gather parental opinion on a range of issues was ongoing. A formal role for parents to participate meaningfully in the management of the school was still not fully in place.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. Staff made good use of the school's facilities. The layout and routines in the primary building enabled parents to access staff and see their children's work. The middle and senior schools' building was well resourced for the full range of subjects. In particular, the suite provided for IB students encouraged increased independence and a more mature approach to learning. Across the school, ICT resources were not widely used in teaching and learning. The school benefited from ample staff at all levels. However, too many did not have a sound current knowledge of what represents best practice in learning in their field.

## 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	Middle	Senior
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Middle	Senior
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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](mailto: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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