

Al Sadiq Islamic English School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Secondary

Report Published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding - exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

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

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

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

Al Sadiq Islamic English School was inspected in October 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Qusais, Al Sadiq Islamic English School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 11, aged three to 17 years. The school follows a broadly modified UK curriculum and students complete IGCSE examinations as part of their studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 1959 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 (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most parents thought that their children were making good progress in most aspects of their studies, except in Arabic where almost half either did not know or had concerns. Most thought that children were treated fairly at school and a majority thought that bullying was dealt with effectively. Most said that that teaching was of good quality, that their children enjoyed learning and were encouraged to choose a healthy lifestyle. However, half thought that their children required a lot of additional support at home with their studies and a few had concerns over the lack of school books and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. One quarter of the parents who responded did not know if the school provided good support for students with special educational needs. Most thought that the school had made good progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous report. Almost all parents considered that the school was led well. Almost all parents interviewed wanted the opportunity to become more fully involved in the school and wanted more information on their children's progress to enable them to help their children learn.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Sadiq Islamic English School provided an acceptable quality of education. The leadership provided an acceptable level of direction and the school had taken a number of effective steps to meet the recommendations of the last report. There had been some progress towards meeting the needs of all students but improvements were inconsistent across the school. There remained significant weaknesses in the quality of support for learning.

Attainment and progress were acceptable across the school except in Arabic as a first language where attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in the Foundation and Primary stages. Teaching and learning were acceptable across the school but assessment at all stages was unsatisfactory. The curriculum was acceptable overall but offered a narrow range of learning experiences. Arrangements for health and safety were good although the quality of support for students was unsatisfactory because there was insufficient focus on meeting students' variable needs. The school's capacity to evaluate itself and make appropriate plans for improvement was unsatisfactory. Partnerships with parents and the community, and governance were also unsatisfactory. There had been improvements in the facilities and resources for English, mathematics and science but there were weaknesses in the quality and range of resources to support learning, particularly in the teaching of Arabic.

Key features of the school

- The friendliness and respect shown between all members of the school community within a secure and caring environment, reflecting the Islamic faith;
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour towards each other and their teachers;
- Insufficient opportunities for students to be responsible for their own learning;
- Weaknesses in the assessment of students' needs to support their learning;
- Variation in the quality of teaching and in the monitoring of teacher effectiveness;
- Limited opportunities for parents and members of the wider community to support the school and the governing body.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by building on the best practice in teaching to ensure a consistently high level of learning across the school, particularly in the teaching of Arabic and aspects of Islamic Education;
- Identifying and planning more effectively to meet the varying needs of students in the school, in particular students with special educational needs;
- Developing more consistent arrangements in assessment to improve teaching, inform parents and enable students to identify the next steps in their learning;
- Involve parents and the wider community more directly in the life of the school and in the work of the governors.
- Continue to develop leadership and self-evaluation skills at all levels.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable with some weaknesses across the school. Most students recited The Holy Qur'an to an acceptable level with a few good examples of progress. At all stages, however, students' understanding was limited. They understood some aspects about Islam in their community, such as the cultural elements of Islamic celebration. They had very limited knowledge about relevant Islamic sources of knowledge. They knew significant Islamic personalities especially the ones mentioned in The Holy Qur'an. Students made limited links between different areas of Islamic knowledge. For example, they rarely used the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings to support and explain the text from The Holy Qur'an. Few students were able to discuss their Islamic knowledge in depth and relate this to their personal experiences and daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were unsatisfactory across all stages of the school. Most students could understand and follow simple instructions. Less than half of students' at the primary and early secondary stages were achieving appropriate skills in reading and speaking. Most students in the senior classes were confident in reading texts but had limited understanding of what they were reading. While many students in Grades 6 to 10 showed an acceptable understanding of grammatical rules, only a few students were able to apply these successfully. Across the school students' skills in extended writing were significantly underdeveloped.

Overall, students' attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable across all stages of the school. A majority of students had developed good listening skills. Most could follow the teachers' instruction and respond accurately using a limited range of vocabulary. Across the school most students could read sentences with few errors. Their ability to read fluently and with meaning and expression was less well developed. Most students showed an understanding of grammar in the secondary school to a standard which was broadly in line with the expected progress for their stage. Students at all stages had limited skills in extended writing.

Students' attainment in English was acceptable across all stages. At Grade 10, English IGCSE results were in line with international standards. Progress was good at the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary and secondary stages. Students at all stages listened attentively for extended periods of time. Kindergarten children made good progress in speaking despite a majority being second language English learners. In Kindergarten 2, children knew phonetic sounds, named letters and matched pictures to initial consonant sounds. By Grade 10, most students spoke fluently and with proper intonation. Primary students read effectively for understanding and responded well to oral questions and workbook exercises. Secondary students summarised key points in literature passages and identified key ideas. Students showed little extended reading, especially in the secondary school. Handwriting and presentation in student workbooks was consistent with age-related standards but skills in creative and original writing were less well developed. Students at all stages showed appropriate understanding and use of grammatical rules in their writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable at all stages. Students in the Foundation Stage were confident in counting beyond 30. Most could recognise and accurately sort shapes. At the primary stage, most students were making appropriate progress in developing their mental arithmetic skills and in calculating, using fractions and decimals. However, at all stages, students' problem-solving skills were not well developed and they had limited appreciation of how to apply mathematics in real life situations. Nevertheless, there had been a steady improvement in IGCSE results over the last three years. The attainment of students at this stage was in line with international expectations.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable at all stages. Almost all Kindergarten students had attained a good understanding about parts of the body. Students in Grade 5 could plot the magnetic field around bar magnets. The majority of Grade 10 boys knew the rules relating to electromagnetism and almost all Grade 11 girls could correctly describe common macromolecules. Older students' understanding of the importance of science to the outside world was developing. The number of students achieving the highest IGCSE grades in biology and chemistry had increased over the last three years and compared well with international standards but attainment in physics at this level was below international standards. Students' knowledge and understanding at all stages was significantly better developed than their investigative and practical skills.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and primary phase and good in the secondary phase. Students displayed exemplary behaviour during classes and around the school. They were keen to learn and worked well together. All students showed respect to their teachers and colleagues. Students demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living and the younger students, in particular, followed the school's advice in this regard. Attendance was good and almost all students were punctual to school and to their classes.

Students' civic and Islamic understanding was good. Students were very responsible, taking various roles around the school and in the community, although the range of their community activities was narrow. Islam was a central part of students' lives and behaviour. They displayed respect and appreciation for their religion. They also understood and respected the local tradition and culture.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable across the school. Students had acceptable knowledge about the current major events in Dubai and were aware of the factors that made Dubai and the UAE international destinations. Students were positive about their contributions to Dubai and how to make it a better place. Students had a basic knowledge about environmental issues such as recycling and global warming. They looked after their immediate environment yet their involvement in supporting environmental improvements in the wider community was less evident.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable at all stages. Most teachers had an appropriate knowledge of their subjects and taught effectively using a limited range of strategies. They used homework to support classroom learning. A few used questioning well to support factual recall but most often only required group answers. Too often teachers used repetition and chanting to help students learn, resulting in the students acquiring a limited set of skills. There was very little evidence of teachers summarising the main learning objectives at the end of the lessons. The recent focus in the school on sharing good practice in teaching had resulted in some teachers using more interactive teaching approaches and, where these were used, students' learning had improved. Most teachers' short-term planning was not sufficiently detailed and there was little evidence of longer-term planning including assessment and review. Teachers did not plan sufficiently well to meet students' varying needs. There was an insufficient focus on group work, use of computers and other information and communications technology (ICT) resources to support students' research and critical thinking skills.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable across the school. Students had positive attitudes to learning and could explain clearly what they had learned. In the best lessons students made connections between new and previous learning. In a few lessons they were able to work well in groups and showed effective critical thinking skills. Students responded well to the limited opportunities for independent learning through, for example, holiday assignments and an annual project. These students were developing their enquiry and research skills and use of ICT. Students showed effective critical thinking skills when given the opportunity to solve problems, for example, in mathematics.

Assessment was unsatisfactory at all stages. Formal examination results and procedures were in place and had been modified in the last year to take account of the introduction of in-class assessments carried out by teachers. A few teachers were skilled in using questioning during lessons to confirm students' understanding and abilities to recall information but this was not yet consistent across the school. Teachers used short tests and questioning during lessons to assess students' progress. The quality and consistency of these assessments varied considerably within subjects and across departments. There was very little formal marking of students' work or feedback to students on their strengths and development needs. The school did not benchmarking students' attainment against international standards to provide teachers with an overview of students' performance in the wider context.

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

Overall the curriculum was acceptable. It had been adapted to support early English language development at the Foundation Stage and to allow senior students at Grades 10 and 11 to achieve internationally recognised certification in some subjects. The curriculum reflected Islamic culture through Islamic Education, Arabic and the UAE syllabus for social studies, although the provision in some of these subjects was weak. Teachers had recently revised and enriched course materials in English, mathematics and the sciences but despite these improvements there were insufficient opportunities to develop students' creativity, research, independent study and extended reading or writing skills. Learning activities were not developed well enough to support gifted and talented students or those students who needed additional help. There was limited subject choice for secondary students. For example, science was not taught to those students in Grades 9 and 10 who chose the commerce option. Cross-curricular themes or extra-curricular activities were few although some teachers were making appropriate connections in learning across subjects.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements and procedures were good. The movement of buses was effectively co-ordinated and safety standards were of a high quality. Good security services, policies and procedures were in place for emergencies, including regular fire drills. Facilities were clean and safe and student movement was effectively supervised. Last session the school had introduced a well-equipped and expanded clinic, staffed by a full-time medical doctor and two nurses. Medical records were securely kept and continuously updated. All new students received physical examinations with subsequent examinations at Grades 3, 5 and 11. A healthy life styles club provided support to overweight children. Health education was provided in all grades on topics appropriate to their ages. The clinic staff promoted good eating habits, as did some classroom teachers but, although the canteens were clean, nutritious food options were limited. The school doctor provided staff training on the signs of child abuse and staff were aware of procedures for reporting violations of child safety.

The quality of support to students was unsatisfactory. Staff-student relationships were positive and based on the strong Islamic ethos in the school. A recently formed students' committee met with the Principal to raise issues but did not represent the views of a sufficiently wide group of students. Career guidance was provided by subject teachers and the school kept appropriate records of any behavioural issues. However, the school did not identify and track groups of students who required additional support or challenge in their learning. The school kept records of students test results but had insufficient strategies and programmes in place to cater for students with special educational needs, including the more able. Managers did not analyse information sufficiently to identify trends in attainment or to plan for improvement. Class teachers kept attendance records for each class but there were no central data available to provide an overview of students' attendance.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Recent initiatives were helping the Principal and his staff to develop their leadership skills. Following the last inspection, management responsibilities had been reviewed and managers were at an early stage of applying their new roles. A post of Vice-Principal had been established, and section and subject heads' roles had been expanded to focus more directly on monitoring the quality of teaching. Senior managers carried out annual staff reviews and a three-day best practice teaching workshop had been provided at the end of last session. The school planned to include this staff development model into its annual calendar. Nevertheless, teachers had not yet benefited sufficiently from sharing of teaching through classroom observations or team teaching activities. Regular monitoring of students' attainment was helping managers discuss student progress with teachers.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Managers had yet to evaluate the impact of their enhanced roles. They had started to monitor teaching through planned classroom visits. This was helping support self-evaluation but it had yet to lead to consistency within and across stages and departments and address the weaknesses in teaching and learning. The school had taken successful steps to meet the recommendations of the last inspection but insufficient information on the timescales, staff responsibilities and impact of a number of identified priorities did not help managers measure the success of their actions. Classroom teachers were responsible for improving teaching and learning but senior managers had not agreed targets with their teachers to ensure that there was an appropriate, systematic and consistent focus across the school. Nevertheless, school initiatives had resulted in improvements in students' learning but there remained weaknesses in aspects of teaching and learning. Better use could be made of assessment to inform teaching and to plan learning activities for all groups of students including the most and least able.

Partnerships with parents and the wider community were unsatisfactory. The school had improved communication with parents at the end of last session by introducing a school newsletter and use of texting. Parents were able to attend an increased number of parents' meetings linked to school examinations but they had insufficient information on their children's progress, school programmes and courses to assist them in helping their children to learn. Parents were not encouraged sufficiently to visit the school to provide a wider educational experience for students. There were insufficient links with the wider community, limiting students' experience of the world of work and their understanding of the environment.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The Board of Governors consisted solely of the owner and his representative. The representative held the school accountable through regular visits and analysis of students' attainment. There was no consultative forum for parents or members of the wider community or mechanism through which parents could be consulted.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school had significantly improved its facilities and resources by providing laboratories for science, mathematics and English. Computer equipment had been increased. Despite these improvements there remained important shortages in teaching resources across all stages of the school.

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
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
22% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

Next Steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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