

Dubai Scholars Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage - Post-16

Report published May 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	9
Summary of inspection judgements	10
Next steps.....	14
How to contact us	14

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 Scholars Private 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, Dubai Scholars Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to post-16, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,290 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

As part of the process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau conducted an on-line survey of parents. Most parents agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of education provided at the school and that their children were making good or better progress in English. A majority of parents felt that their children were making good or better progress in mathematics. A similar number indicated that the teaching was good or better. Almost all parents were satisfied with their children's enjoyment of lessons and enthusiasm for learning. More than a few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the extra-curricular activities provided by the school, and a few reported that the equipment and resources were poor. A majority of parents indicated that they did not know if the school provided support to children with special educational needs. Most parents reported that the school helped their children to choose healthy lifestyles. Almost all parents indicated that the school kept their children safe. A few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school's response to their concerns but a majority reported that reports were regular and informative, as were parent-teacher meetings.

How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Scholars Private School provided a good quality of education overall. It was a school where the climate for teaching and learning were positive and where adults clearly cared for students. The school had made good progress over the past year in improving the quality of teaching and addressed the other recommendations from the previous inspection report. The school demonstrated the capacity to improve further.

Attainment and progress in the key subjects were good, with the exception of the Kindergarten (KG), where they were acceptable. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language were good in all phases. Attainment and progress in English were acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the primary grades. In the secondary grades students' attainment and progress over time were outstanding. In mathematics outstanding attainment and progress prevailed throughout the primary and secondary grades and in the sixth form. In Foundation Stage they were acceptable. Attainment and progress in Foundation Stage in science were acceptable, good at primary, outstanding at secondary and good at post-16. Students of all ages demonstrated outstanding attitudes and behaviour. Islamic, civic and cultural understanding were good in Foundation Stage and primary and outstanding in secondary and post-16. Economic and environmental understanding was good across the school. The quality of teaching and learning was good in all phases, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment of learning was acceptable, as it did not fully indentify students' prior learning and then inform the planning and teaching of lessons. The curriculum was good, with the exception of Foundation Stage, where it was acceptable. Health and safety provisions at the school were good, while support for students was acceptable. Leadership and management of the school were good. The owner and the head teacher were highly committed to their students and had a clear, realistic vision of the school's future. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Governance of the school was acceptable. The school had an advisory council comprised of professionals from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds. Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. All teachers were competent and qualified in their subjects.

Key features of the school

- The outstanding attitudes toward learning and positive behaviour of students;
- Caring and supportive leaders, teachers and staff members;
- Outstanding student attainment in English, mathematics and science in the secondary grades;
- Clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the school;
- Less than good attainment and progress in key subjects in the Foundation Stage.

Recommendations

- Raise writing attainment in Arabic in the secondary grades;
- Raise attainment in the Foundation Stage in English, mathematics and science; Develop assessment of learning to identify better what students know and link this information to curriculum planning and teaching, especially in the Foundation Stage;
- Provide greater support to students identified as having special educational or counselling needs;
- Improve resources for learning in classrooms and the school library.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in all phases. Almost all students could recite The Holy Qur'an with minor errors. In the primary years, almost all students showed good knowledge of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) life in Makah. Most students could differentiate between good and bad habits according to the Islamic views. In secondary school, most students could recite and memorise long chapters from The Holy Qur'an and many of the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). Students showed a good understanding of Islamic values. They displayed good abilities in discussing and analysing higher thinking concepts such as the belief of one God and the evidence leading to this belief. Most students frequently linked their learning in Islamic Education to their daily lives.

Overall, progress and attainment in Arabic as an additional language were good. Almost all primary students developed good listening, speaking and reading skills. Most students responded positively to instructions in Arabic. They were able to read Arabic text correctly from their books. Almost all students could construct complete sentences accurately. In secondary, most of the students showed a wealth of Arabic vocabulary memorisation. They were able to engage in conversations in Arabic and respond correctly to teachers' instructions. Most students used correct grammar when constructing sentences and distinguished feminine, masculine and plural pronouns. Students across the school showed good skills writing sentences and short paragraphs, but had limited skills in extended writing.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in primary. In the secondary years attainment and progress were outstanding. Kindergarten children had good listening skills and were able to follow their teacher's directions. Their speaking skills were less well developed because they were given limited opportunities to communicate during lesson times. By Year 2 students spoke confidently and fluently. The speaking and listening skills of secondary students were well developed. They read well, wrote imaginatively and spoke with conviction. Secondary students demonstrated strong critical thinking skills during classroom discussions and in their writing.

In mathematics attainment and progress in Foundation Stage was acceptable and they were outstanding across the other phases. In primary and secondary, students did project research that enabled them to learn about mathematics in the context of their everyday lives. Students' understanding in secondary was well above the international expectations. Students solved problems of increasing complexity and demonstrated effective skills in this aspect of their work.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in Foundation Stage, good in primary and in secondary, outstanding. In post-16 attainment and progress were good. A few Foundation Stage children could classify objects that would float or sink. Most Year 4 students understood the functions of fruit and most in Year 6 knew that microbes caused diseases. Year 8 students could observe and describe accurately the phases of the moon. In Year 9 all could measure acceleration due to gravity. Year 11 students plotted the shape of a magnetic field and a few wrote ionic equations. Year 12 students could identify inorganic compounds. Year 13 students could calculate momentum and kinetic energy for elastic and inelastic collisions. Practical science skills were improving but there were still insufficient investigative opportunities.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students of all ages demonstrated outstanding attitudes and behaviour. Respect and consideration for others and self-management were encouraged from the youngest children and practised independently by almost all students. Respect for learning, both academic and non-academic, was evident throughout the school. Attendance was outstanding and almost all students arrived punctually at lessons. Students were aware of and keen to practise, the components of a healthy lifestyle. They had viewpoints on how healthy living could become an even greater focus for all students in the school. Students did not have the opportunity to participate in any formal student school government.

Islamic, civic and cultural understanding was good at Foundation Stage and primary and outstanding in secondary and post-16. Muslim students were able to explain how their faith influenced their personal behaviour. Muslim and non-Muslim students had a good understanding of Islam and showed understanding and appreciation of local culture and traditions. The national anthem was played and sung in Arabic to a high standard. Students gave their time to practise its performance. Students were appreciative of the opportunity to live in a harmonious multi-cultural community. Older students undertook responsibilities to help care for younger students. Groups of students were involved in a number of school initiatives to support less advantaged sections of the local and global community.

Economic and environmental understanding was good throughout the school. The students could describe, and give mature, reasoned and age-appropriate opinions about Dubai's development as well as make comparisons with other emirates. Recycling bins were used regularly and supported by teaching of the recycling process as part of the curriculum from Foundation Stage onwards. Students understood how recycling is connected to wider local and global issues of the management of finite resources.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was good across the school. Kindergarten teachers provided for the children's social, performing art and physical skills better than their early academic development. Across the school, the majority of teachers had improved their abilities to engage students with active learning. Teachers were speaking less and students were thus able to participate more fully. Teachers' questions were often thought-provoking and differentiated. Teachers' subject knowledge was good and the range of teaching strategies used had expanded in an effort to meet students' needs. Lesson planning across the entire school was in place and lesson time was generally managed well. Where teaching was good teachers effectively used worksheets, flash cards, discussions, team projects, songs, presentations, practical activities, role play and quizzes in addition to the text books. Students and teachers brought practical resources into the lessons to make the learning more exciting, allowing all students to be involved. However, meeting the needs of the more and less able students was underdeveloped and inconsistent.

Learning was good. There was engagement through active participation in Islamic Education and Arabic. Students collaborated well. They could apply their learning to the real world in science and mathematics and in English among the older students. Some students asked interesting questions demonstrating strategic and imaginative thinking. Enquiry and research skills were well developed in mathematics and science, but the lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure inhibited this in a few classes. Critical and higher order thinking occurred in Islamic Education and English in the higher grades.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. In a number of lessons teachers assessed prior learning at the beginning of the lesson and recapped at the end. There were also quizzes, questions and homework assignments that provided assessment data. This resulted in the teachers having knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. There were many timetabled tests, but the class teachers kept the assessment results. As a result, cross-grade and whole-school analysis could not be carried out. Thus the assessment information did not help track students' progress in English and science. Linking of assessment information to the curriculum was taking place in Islamic Education, Arabic and mathematics. Teachers fed back well to students in lessons and books were usually marked. There was no clear expectation for 'next steps' advice, but parents reported that they knew what these were.

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

The curriculum was of good quality, with the exception of the Foundation Stage, where it was acceptable. Most students experienced a broad curriculum which prepared them well for the next stages of their education. Language development was good and students were offered Hindi, Urdu or French in the primary years. Physical and arts education were available to most students and a range of activities were offered in a double period each week. Regular assessment in the key subjects was stronger and in most subjects this information was used to review the curriculum. This ensured good continuity and progression. The curriculum leaders met regularly to ensure that the curriculum focused upon the changing needs of students. There had been some improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the provision of well-organised extra-curricular activities. These included drama, arts and crafts and discussion of world events. Sports provision was good and all students benefited from the swimming pool. Many students took pleasure in being members of the school choir and performing at morning assemblies. There was infrequent specially planned provision for gifted and talented students or those who needed additional help to learn. Some students beyond Year 9 chose not to study science. There were some good links with the community beyond the school.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety was good across all phases of the school. The school clinic was staffed full-time by a registered nurse. In addition to her responsibilities in the clinic the nurse played a major role in the delivery of the school's health and wellness program, including classroom activities and programmes supporting healthy choices by all. There was a well-developed system for the administration and storage of medications, and teachers were informed of those students who had medical issues that required monitoring. The nurse was the safety supervisor and conducted inspections of the buildings and grounds, canteen and water supply. Concerns were noted and reported immediately to administration for action. A doctor also visited the school twice a week to give medical exams, consultations and to support the operation of the clinic. Roles for all persons responsible for health and safety were clear and well documented. The building and grounds were well cared for by the maintenance staff. Findings from daily inspections were logged and appropriate actions taken. Fire drills were carried out at least twice a year and equipment was inspected yearly by the local authorities. Play areas were safe and properly supervised. Security at the school was good. Students, faculty and staff indicated they felt safe. The school had a written child protection policy.

Support for students was acceptable. The school provided an overall ethos of care and support for all students. Teachers and leaders knew every student well. No formal counselling programme existed although informal counselling and college and career planning was provided by different faculty members. There was no formal process for the identification and

support for students with different learning styles, exceptional talents or special needs. Attendance in all phases was well managed as were the very few incidents where students' behaviour was challenging.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management of the school were good. The owner and the head teacher were highly committed to their students and had a clear, realistic vision of the school's future. This vision was shared and acted upon by teachers, who worked collegially to improve their daily practices. Subject leaders exercised authority in their domains and worked continuously to pursue improvements. Leaders showed a thorough understanding of the school and fostered positive relations in all areas of it. Student leaders took their roles seriously and contributed to the overall smooth operation and caring environment.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had achieved a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning across all phases of the school. The school's development plan included priorities that had been acted upon, with results already evident during lessons. Teaching was regularly appraised by leaders and good records were kept to track and promote teachers' development. Professional development included teachers' self-evaluation as a key to further improvement.

Links with parents and the community were good. The school had a Parent's Forum which met on Saturdays, as well as an informative website. Teacher-parent contact books were used extensively to monitor students' progress between home and school. Links with the local community were also good, including sponsorship of children in India, supplies and an Iftar dinner for local labourers, environmental actions, visits to a home for the elderly, a children's hospital and fund raising for charitable causes.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The school had an advisory council comprised of professionals from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds. These advisors provided both guidance and resources for the school, but their influence upon student outcomes was still not fully developed. The advisory council had not formally held the school leaders to account for their success as measured against the school's mission.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. All teachers were competent and qualified in their subjects, but the school lacked a counsellor due to a recent resignation. Teacher turnover was low, maintaining stability for the students. The school building was clean, rooms appropriately furnished though one classroom was overcrowded. The hallways and classrooms were decorated with stimulating boards, displaying a range of students' and teachers' work. Furniture was in good repair, but a few chairs and desks had graffiti on them. The ICT laboratory was well-used, but computers and projectors were not available in most classrooms. The school library remained under stocked and thus did not provide significant resources for 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:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable

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	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable

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

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

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	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
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:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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