

Little Flowers English School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 7

Report issued February 2010

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report	2
Basic information about the school	2
How well does the school perform overall?	3
Key features of the school	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?	4
How good is the students' personal and social development?	5
How good are the teaching and learning?	6
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	7
How well does the school protect and support students?	7
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
Summary of inspection judgements	9
Next Steps	13
How to contact us	13

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.

Little Flowers English School was inspected in December 2009 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 its 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 Hor Al Anz, Little Flowers English School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 7, aged three to 13 years. The school is not affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) but follows a CBSE curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 574 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was unsatisfactory.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents felt that their children liked the school. Almost all believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, and the majority felt that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all parents commented positively about behaviour in school: that the teaching was good and that teachers showed care and concern for their children's welfare. Almost all expressed the view that staff expected their children to work hard and that their children were treated fairly. Almost all thought that the school kept their children safe and healthy and that they were provided with good information by the school. Most thought that the school had good links with parents, that they were well consulted, and that they would be comfortable when coming into school to express a concern. Most also thought that the school encouraged their children to be independent and responsible and that the school was well led. A majority commented that there was a good range of activities in the school and that there were good links with the community.

How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school's performance was unsatisfactory. The KG did not provide a suitable environment for the education of young children and their attainment and progress in all areas of the curriculum were unsatisfactory. In two key subjects, Islamic Education and Arabic, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory in the primary phase. Students did not have sufficient understanding of their religion and were unable to hold a conversation or write sufficiently well in Arabic. Attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were acceptable in the primary phase, but reading and writing skills were not well developed. In mathematics, primary students could perform routine calculations but they were unable to apply those skills well to solve problems. In science, primary students showed the ability to learn facts and some older students could grasp simple scientific concepts. As in mathematics, however, students were not able to apply their knowledge in practical ways and had little experience of scientific experiments. The students' personal and social development was acceptable. They were well-behaved and spoke enthusiastically about Dubai and Islam. They were less secure in speaking about environmental matters, however.

Teaching, learning and assessment in the KG were unsatisfactory: the methods of teaching were not suited to the needs of young children. The teaching, and hence the learning, were better in the primary phase, although here too there was insufficient attention paid to challenging the more able students and supporting weaker ones. Students with special needs were not catered for and there was too limited a range of teaching styles. Students were not asked to apply their knowledge to practical tasks and their progress was limited by the lack of opportunities to take control of their own learning. Assessment was not used sufficiently well to help students to learn. The quality of the school's curriculum was unsatisfactory. In the KG it was too formal and children had no opportunities to learn through activity and play. Students did not learn creative subjects and there was too little physical education available for them. Teachers did not review the curriculum in order to meet the needs of all students and there were limited opportunities for work beyond the bounds of the classroom. Some extra-curricular events took place but, in general, the students' learning was not enriched by additional activities or by linking their work in different subjects. The school's attention to health and safety was acceptable, but some matters, such as child protection policy and evacuation drills, were insufficiently formalised. Students did not benefit from a formal programme of support and guidance and their progress was not tracked or monitored.

Leadership and management of the school were unsatisfactory because there was no system of delegated authority to initiate and implement improvement activities. In addition, there was no strategic planning to effect improvements and raise standards. The school leaders did not draw on the skills of parents or the wider community and no governing body existed to offer support and act as a critical friend. The facilities and resources in the school were inadequate to offer the students an acceptable educational experience.

Key features of the school

- The large number of different nationalities represented in the student body;
- The high absentee rate;
- The lack of attention to the needs of different groups of students, particularly those with special needs;
- The inappropriate nature of the teaching, particularly in the KG;
- The poor quality of facilities to support learning.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in the school across all areas of learning;
- Develop teaching skills to promote active learning and to address the needs of all students;
- Design a broad, balanced curriculum to provide opportunities for sport and creative subjects;
- Introduce more active teaching methods and an activity based curriculum in the KG;
- Provide support for students with special educational needs;
- Develop leaders in the school who have the capacity to initiate and implement change in order to raise standards;
- Create a governing body to advise, support and monitor the leadership of the school.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were unsatisfactory. Younger students could memorise a few short chapters from The Holy Qur'an and differentiated between The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's (PBUH) saying (Hadith). Grade 2 students could name the Pillars of Islam and provided a few details on how daily prayers are performed and on the time and place of Pilgrimage. In Grade 3, only a few students made acceptable progress with understanding the story of prophet Ibrahim. By Grade 7, students' understanding of Islam was below the expected level and was limited to the knowledge of a few very basic facts. Only a few higher attaining students had an acceptable understanding of how Islam affects and guides family life. In addition, most students made limited progress in their understanding and accurate recitation of the verses they learnt from The Holy Qur'an.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory. Younger students were able to recognise words in common use with the aid of pictures but their pronunciation was often poor. They could use short texts to answer simple questions. By the time they reached Grade 5 the majority of students could follow the dialogue in the lesson and recognise new words as they occurred. However, students' speaking skills in the higher grades were poor and few had sufficient command of Arabic to conduct an extended conversation. Although students could read individual words accurately and with good pronunciation, they could not read extended passages with age appropriate levels of fluency. They were able to copy words but they produced insufficient work to improve their handwriting and their independent writing skills were weak.

Attainment and progress in English was unsatisfactory in the KG and acceptable in Grades 1 to 7. The majority of children in the KG could recite rhymes, form their letters and respond to simple instructions, but their oral and reading skills were poor for their age. By Grade 2 students could imitate correct pronunciation, read short passages and write answers to a few simple questions with guidance. By Grade 7, students could take part in short conversations but were not able to assimilate new vocabulary or use a dictionary. Students could use their reading skills for finding facts and drawing conclusions. However, most could not read at length. Students could write essays and letters but their ability to write creatively and for a variety of purposes was not well developed.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were unsatisfactory in the KG and acceptable in the primary stage. Children in the KG were able to count and add small numbers together. However, they were restricted in their ability to use their knowledge and apply it to real life situations. By Grade 5, students were able to calculate and use all the four mathematical operations with confidence and had started acquiring geometrical knowledge. By Grade 7 they were able to measure, calculate perimeter and were well versed with the terms used in algebraic expressions. Students showed both knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts in their written work. Problem solving skills were weak, however, and students did not demonstrate higher order thinking or data-handling skills.

Overall, attainment and progress in science were acceptable. In the KG, however, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory as the children were unable to work practically and discover things for themselves. In Grade 3, students could accurately copy a diagram about food groups and in Grade 4 they could give examples of carbohydrates and proteins. By Grade 7 most students were able to demonstrate an understanding of some concepts in science at a rudimentary level. They were unable to take part in investigative work and lacked experience of the scientific method and of conducting experiments. Students were able to research scientific topics to a limited degree, could use scientific vocabulary and respond to questions about facts. A few students could relate what they had learned to real world situations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social behaviour were acceptable. Students of all ages behaved in an orderly way around the school and in lessons. They showed courtesy towards adults and each other. Their relationships with teachers were respectful and the teachers were friendly towards them. Students in Grades 3 to 7 showed confidence in participating in assemblies and older students demonstrated responsibility when fulfilling duties. Punctuality to lessons was good but attendance across the whole school was unsatisfactory.

Older students demonstrated civic understanding of Dubai by comparing it with their home countries. They valued the cleanliness, the modernity and peacefulness of Dubai and girls commented appreciatively on the fact that they felt safe. Although students could recite the national anthem they did not understand the meaning of the words they chanted and they did not show an understanding of the cultural heritage of Dubai. They could speak with appreciation about Islam, however. Students could talk about the injunctions to respect parents and teachers, to behave well and to read The Holy Qur'an.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was less well developed. They considered that Dubai was a rich and racially diverse country and that it earned its living from tourism and business. They could not discuss environmental issues, however, and showed little awareness of global concerns. They were keen to contribute to the development of Dubai by furthering their education and working there in a professional capacity.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Overall, teaching and learning were acceptable but, in the KG, they were unsatisfactory. Teachers were knowledgeable about their subject areas and this was reflected in their teaching across all grades. In the KG, however, the teaching techniques used were not appropriate for very young children. Students were often taught as if they were much older. Although the relationship between teachers and students was formal and somewhat distant, teachers knew their students. They were aware of students with special educational needs but did not give them appropriate work to do. Lessons in Grades 1 to 7 showed that teachers had spent time planning and collaborating with each other. Almost all lessons were characterised by excessive teachers talk and there were few opportunities for students to work independently, with a partner or in a group. Teachers demonstrated some level of creativity in planning lessons and in dealing with the lack of resources, for example, a library. They worked collaboratively and shared materials with each other to supplement the textbooks and provide additional materials for their students.

The quality of student learning was acceptable overall but unsatisfactory in the KG. Students enjoyed being at school and participating in class. The quality of teaching in the KG, however, was a barrier to learning as students were not engaged actively in their lessons or able to learn through play and discovery. Older students responded well to the teachers' directions and questions and showed understanding of their lessons and were engaged in their learning. They were not able to think critically, however, and the more able students, in particular, were not challenged to demonstrate higher order thinking and so their progress was impeded. Rote learning predominated in all classes and so students did not develop sophisticated enquiry or research skills and did not become self-directed or independent learners.

Students were assessed regularly with a variety of tests, quizzes, activity sheets and oral questioning and careful records were kept of students' results. There was, however, no attempt to track the progress of individual students. The feedback the students received on their written work was largely restricted to ticks and crosses, with the occasional helpful comment. Although results were communicated to students and their parents, there was no analysis of the data to diagnose the students' needs or to help them to improve their work. Assessment information was not used to modify teaching methods or to adapt the curriculum to suit the learning needs of the students.

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

The quality of the curriculum across the school was unsatisfactory. It was inadequately matched to the needs of students of different abilities. The KG curriculum was based entirely on textbooks. There were no opportunities for active learning, for self-expression or for learning through play. The primary school curriculum concentrated on literacy, numeracy and sciences, with a choice of three second languages. There were no facilities for creative subjects such as drama and music and few options in art beyond colouring. Arabic and Islamic Education were the weakest areas of the curriculum because students were not given the opportunity to build on what they knew and could do before moving to the next topic. The process of curriculum review was limited to the review of textbooks with little attention to content and delivery, and there was no attempt to consult parents or students. Continuity of students' learning between grades was provided only by the choice of textbooks. Little appropriate guidance was given to assist transition from KG to primary grades. The curriculum provided few opportunities to develop meaningful links with the community. The school made little use of its surroundings to enhance the curriculum. Learning from the local environment was limited to a few field trips, whose impact was weak. The school offered some extra-curricular activities, but they were linked only loosely to the formal curriculum.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for safety and health were acceptable but the quality of support was unsatisfactory. Safety measures were adequate in the school and on the buses. Students were effectively supervised during school hours and while arriving and departing on school transport. The school had qualified medical staff with appropriate medical facilities; first aid kits were provided in all buses and in all buildings. The school promoted healthy habits and hygiene through a programme of health education. School equipment was checked regularly for safety but the results of the checks were not formally recorded. Although fire-fighting equipment was available and the Civil Defence had visited, no fire drills had been recently conducted. The classrooms were of sufficient size and appropriately equipped. Facilities provided for the students were well maintained and hygienic although some outdoor equipment for the KG was unsafe. The staff understood the school's child protection procedures but there was no formal policy in place.

Most of the teachers had good relationships with students and were aware of their strengths and weaknesses, but there was no professional provision for students with special educational needs. Information about the students' personal and academic progress was shared regularly with parents in meetings at the end of each term. However, there were no effective processes to ensure improvement by discussing with the students and parents how they could achieve targets. There was no tracking of students' progress and no formal procedures for supporting, advising and guiding students. There were no clear guidelines regarding attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of the school's leadership and management was unsatisfactory. The Principal was committed to the growth of the school and communicated a clear sense of vision centred on her belief in the value of education. This vision did not have sufficient impact, however, as authority was not delegated to enable the vision to be implemented by others. The Principal was the chief leader in the school and, although there were teachers with named middle-management positions, they did not constitute a team with responsibility to initiate the changes and improvements the school needed to make.

The Principal held regular meetings with staff to discuss how to improve standards and to review developments. She kept detailed planning notes but the planning did not involve an analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the whole staff. Consequently, there was no corporate understanding of what the school needed to do to raise standards and no strategic plan mapping out the steps to be taken to effect improvements. The school's development plan consisted largely of a list of hoped-for additional resources rather than a structured strategy for raising standards. The teachers' performance was monitored and recorded by the Principal, who also offered staff training. Professional training from outside bodies was rare.

The school had formed strong links with parents. The Principal communicated regularly with parents. Meetings to discuss students' progress were held frequently and parents were also kept informed by regular reports. However, there were no partnership activities involving parents to enhance the curriculum. Similarly, parents' views and suggestions were not sought and there were no links with the wider community. In consequence, the school failed to benefit from contributions that could have provided additional resources for learning.

The school did not have a governing body and thus lacked independent advice and support. The Principal was answerable to the owners of the school but there was no regular monitoring of her performance as the lead educator in the school. The owners were supportive of the school and expressed interest in setting up a governing body to represent the community and provide a means of offering accountability procedures and advice to the Principal.

The school was adequately staffed and the school premises were neat, clean and safe. The facilities were insufficient, however, to offer art, music, science and physical education. The school lacked a prayer room and library and the outdoor equipment for the KG was unsafe. Overall, the resources in the school were inadequate to support and extend the students' 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.

The four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Acceptable
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 7
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

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	Unsatisfactory
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Staffing, facilities and resources	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school perform overall?
Unsatisfactory

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.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau will undertake a Follow-Through Inspection of Little Flowers English School within three months of the original inspection and report to parents regarding 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.

Copyright 2010

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.