

Raffles International School (West Campus) Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 11

Report published May 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?	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
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?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	8
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.

Raffles International School (West Campus) was inspected in November 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 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 Jumeirah, Raffles International School (West Campus) is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 11, aged three to 15 years. The school followed a curriculum based on the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate (IB), the Cambridge Lower Secondary programme, the International General Certificate in Education (IGCSE) and was planning to introduce the IB Diploma programme for students when they enter Grade 12. The new Principal was appointed in January 2009 after the school opened in September 2008. At the time of the inspection, there were 738 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents said their children enjoyed school and were generally positive about all aspects of the school. Parents were happy about their children's progress in Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Most parental concerns were in relation to progress in Islamic Education, progress since the last inspection and links with the community. A few raised issues about home/school communication.

How well does the school perform overall?

Raffles International School (West Campus) was providing a good quality of education. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics were good. Students' attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education in the secondary school. In Arabic, attainment and progress were acceptable. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the KG and primary sections. In science, attainment and progress were good in KG and acceptable in the primary and secondary sections. Children got off to a good start in KG, particularly in their social development and in learning early language, mathematics and scientific skills. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good and underpinned by very positive relationships among staff and students. Students were keen and conscientious learners. Another positive aspect of the school was the way students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds appreciated this diversity and got on well together. Students had a good awareness of the benefits of living in Dubai and had good ideas about how they might contribute to the country's continuing prosperity. All students were gaining a good understanding into the Islam and local traditions.

The quality of teaching was good and outstanding teaching was seen in most grades and most subjects. Kindergarten teachers used their expertise about how young children learn to provide a welcoming and stimulating environment. Indoor areas were lively and generally well equipped for practical activities and children's learning was enhanced by their use of the excellent outdoor equipment. Teachers in the primary school were skilled in teaching key ideas through themes which linked English, mathematics and the humanities. Although the teaching of science was acceptable it did not consistently ensure that students built well on their previous learning or developed a wide range of skills. In the secondary school, teachers' good subject knowledge and imaginative approaches were evident in some outstanding lessons in a range of subjects. Common to the best teaching across the school was the way teachers sustained students' interest by maintaining a lively pace and ensuring students of all abilities were appropriately challenged. Procedures for assessing students' work were acceptable overall. A few teachers provided good quality feedback for students during lessons through well structured questioning. Teachers' marking of students' work was inconsistent. The most helpful comments identified the next steps for further improvement. Some teachers, however, did not provide any meaningful feedback to students. Staff members worked effectively to provide a good curriculum for each age group that was in keeping with the school's aim to promote students' personal qualities together with their academic progress. The arrangements for the health and safety of the students were outstanding. The quality of support in the school was acceptable. Systems for tracking their academic achievements and personal development across the school were at an early stage of development.

The quality of leadership and management of the school was good. The Principal, with the strong support of the board and the leadership team, had gained the confidence of parents. There was a commitment to continuous review but self-evaluation was not systematic or rigorous enough and development plans lacked clarity. Good progress had been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous report, and the school showed a good capacity for further improvement. Communication between school and home was acceptable but some parents were unclear about the school's approach to learning. Governance in the school was good. Staffing, facilities and resources were good.

Key features of the school

- Good attainment and progress in English and mathematics across the school, and in Islamic Education in the secondary department;
- An outstanding ethos where students from a wide range of cultures worked and played in a harmonious international community while simultaneously appreciating Islam and local culture and traditions;
- Whole school assessment information was not used systematically to identify emerging trends;
- Good teaching and learning across the school in a wide range of subjects;
- Good progress made in introducing the new curricula.

Recommendations

- Analyse and track all students' academic and social progress throughout the school and base school improvement plans on this information;
- Improve development planning by stating specific objectives, criteria for success, and resource allocations;
- Improve teaching and learning in Islamic Education, Arabic and science in order to raise students' attainment and accelerate their progress;
- Improve communication with parents in order to clarify the school's aims, programmes and methods.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in the secondary school and acceptable in the primary and KG. The older students recited verses of The Holy Qur'an from memory using proper pronunciation. They recited Hadeeth confidently and understood its meaning. Students responded well to questions on basic knowledge of the main principles of Islam. Most of the younger students understood Islamic values such as cleanliness, but too few students understood how Islam impacted on their daily lives.

In Arabic, attainment and progress were acceptable across the school. Almost all students listened well and understood instructions. Most students had a good knowledge of functional grammar and were developing a good vocabulary. Students' listening and reading skills were generally better developed than their speaking and writing skills. Students in the secondary school were able to understand the main ideas in a poem, although they found them difficult to explain in Arabic. Some students were gaining good oral skills, although their skills in extended writing were underdeveloped.

Attainment and progress in English were good throughout the school. Younger students practised their phonics skills through creative activities. Listening skills were good. Older students read a wide variety of poetry, novels and non-fiction, some of which linked to other curricular areas. Secondary students drew good comparisons of universal themes in poetry. Students at all levels of English fluency were able to answer challenging comprehension questions. Students used a variety of strategies to plan their writing and conducted complex poetry comparisons by Grade 10. All students produced good quality writing in reflection journals or through daily class work.

Attainment and progress throughout the school in mathematics were good. In KG, children could count and recognise number confidently and they had a good knowledge of shapes and their properties. In the primary school, students used mathematical language to explain their methods and displayed good problem-solving skills, for example, when constructing a compass. There were, as yet, no final IGCSE examination results but the oldest students were all preparing for the higher tier paper. Students could interpret decimals and percentages and convert from one to the other. In trigonometry they could explain the meaning of sine and cosine and use these functions in calculations.

In science, attainment and progress were good in KG. In the primary and secondary schools, attainment and progress were acceptable. Most KG children could describe their senses in more detail than would be expected for their age. The majority of students in the primary school knew about healthy eating. Through carrying out experiments, older students knew the conditions which enabled bacteria to turn milk into yoghurt. They could also explain how to control variables to ensure that their experiments were valid. In biology, chemistry and physics students could recall earlier work in line with expectations for their age.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were good. Students spoke positively about student-staff relationships, felt accepted and safe, and talked with pride about their school. They all enjoyed the extra-curricular activities and the opportunity to be with students of all nationalities. Students participated in a variety of charitable activities. Attendance was acceptable.

Students' understanding and appreciation of their culture and of Islamic traditions were also good throughout the school. Respect for local traditions and culture was evident in colourful student artwork and in many types of teacher-made displays on hallway walls. Students raised the national flag each morning while others stood in respectful silence. Students were aware of their responsibilities in the larger community, particularly concerning environmental issues. Their concern for charitable causes was reflected in their recent shoebox collection for migrant workers during Ramadan.

Students spoke knowledgeably about industries in Dubai, and understood the importance of business, tourism and industry in the economy. They recognised their responsibilities in improving the environment and referred to programmes about the environment presented in school. They listed a wide variety of career choices open to them and realised that some could actively contribute to improving economic quality and progress in Dubai by remaining in the country after further study. All cited a key strength of Dubai was its welcome of a diversity of people from around the globe.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching and learning was good. Most sessions were planned to include opportunities for students to learn from first hand experiences. When playing with a large colourful parachute, for example, children were learning to cooperate with one another and take turns. Occasionally, teachers spent too much time introducing ideas to the whole class before setting children off to learn from practical tasks. In primary and secondary classes lessons were generally well planned. Teachers sustained students' attention by using a good range of visual resources. Outstanding teaching was seen in Arabic, English, mathematics, business studies and geography. In these lessons, teachers capitalised on students' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm by setting out appropriate levels of challenge.

In most lessons, students demonstrated their enthusiasm for learning. Kindergarten children maintained their attention levels when given interesting activities. They were keen to demonstrate how quickly they were learning to recognise the initial sounds of words and show off their early counting skills. Students in the older classes were becoming confident in reflecting on their own learning and setting themselves personal goals. Students' pride in their work was seen in their good efforts to record and communicate what they had found out. Most set out their work neatly and many showed a flair for imaginative presentation using diagrams and illustrations. Students used computers to create multimedia presentations as they progressed through school. They increasingly used the internet to find information and

became skilful in using the sophisticated library research tools. However their use of information and communication technology as a day-to-day tool for learning was limited.

Assessment strategies were good in KG and acceptable throughout the rest of the school. In KG, teachers kept good individual records of children's development across all areas of learning. They successfully applied this knowledge to the next step in learning. The quality of feedback and assessment was inconsistent across the primary and secondary schools. The most effective marking praised students' success and also indicated the next steps for improvement. Some marking, however, was rather cursory with little or no indication of the success criteria on which it had been based. A promising start had been made in the secondary school humanities and in some primary grades to involve students in evaluating their own achievements against the key skills they were intended to acquire.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good throughout the school. It had a clear rationale and provided the foundation for delivering the school's mission. At each stage there was breadth and balance, and good planning supported a variety of teaching strategies. All students could make appropriate choices in what they learned at each stage. In the primary school there were opportunities for students to choose tasks to extend their learning. Throughout the school, students could select a new language, either French or Mandarin. Information and communication technology was taught at each stage in the primary and secondary schools. Students could choose from a suitable range of subjects in the secondary school. Teachers had made good progress in introducing the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate from KG to Grade 5. They met weekly to share their evaluations and reviewed the programmes. Planning was well advanced for the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. In the secondary school, students followed a suitable range of courses from the Cambridge Lower Secondary Programme. Teachers organised induction programmes during the final session to help students to progress from Grade 5 to the secondary school. The curriculum in KG and primary schools provided good opportunities for students to link learning from different subject areas. For example, students could see good applications of mathematics in science in Grade 4. A well organised health week for the whole school helped students to learn from each other and develop team working skills. There were many good opportunities for students to learn from and participate in activities in the local community. Through very good partnership working, teachers and students set up a recycling project with a local company. This engaged students well and helped families in the immediate neighbourhood to recycle waste.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for health and safety were outstanding. The school had a comprehensive set of policies and guidance documents detailing procedures for emergency evacuation of the building, safety on school transport and for the safe storage of hazardous substances and medication. The school worked with its partner school to provide students with healthy choices in the cafeteria and had made the decision to have nut-free classrooms in order to safeguard students with acute allergies. Healthy lifestyle was further promoted through the curriculum and through the extensive range of sport and play facilities available for all students. Staff understood their responsibilities with respect to child protection.

The quality of support was acceptable. Positive relationships between staff and students resulted in students always having someone to talk to about their concerns. The level of support by teams dedicated to learning and language needs was outstanding. As a result, all students were enabled to work to the best of their abilities. There were few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. This was due to staff's diligence in meeting students as they arrived and preventing minor disagreements between students from escalating. However, the arrangements for registering attendance did not provide wholly accurate information. Although students were encouraged to register their arrival electronically, the school was aware that this was not reliable and also kept manual records. Although students' academic progress was monitored by individual teachers, with the results being collected by grade and subject coordinators, a whole school system for collecting all the personal and academic information about individual students was not in place. There were examples of good practice in several sections of the school but a lack of consistency meant that there was no whole school view of the effectiveness of provision.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of school leadership was good. The Principal played a pivotal role in expediting improvements and helping the school through a turbulent period. He had taken up his position four months after the school had opened and quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents, many of whom had expressed concerns during the first few weeks. He had been well supported by other senior staff in establishing an extremely positive ethos and a common sense of purpose to create an international school which welcomed students from across the world. This central vision was communicated very well to students.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The leadership team was committed to improvement. They had consulted with parents, students and staff and had collated the views gathered. However, the school had yet to develop a systematic approach to monitoring students' attainment and progress, how to gain insights into emerging strengths and identify and prioritise key areas for development. This meant that the school improvement plan was prepared on the basis of a limited range of suitable evidence.

The school's partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. There was no school-wide parent organisation, though one was being planned. The school welcomed parent representatives from each grade level and involved them in planning activities for their grade. Informative meetings about curricula and school programmes were held for parents. The school maintained a website which provided general information about its work. Most teachers communicated daily with parents through the students' diaries. Parents indicated a need for greater communication between them and the school.

The quality of governance was good. Board members played a significant role in promoting the school's underlying principles and ensuring the school met its commitment to parents. They made well-informed and insightful suggestions during joint meetings with curriculum leaders. Plans were in hand to invite parents and older students to attend board meetings and contribute to decision-making.

There were sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers in each section of the school. Support staff with expertise and experience in teaching students with English as an additional language or who needed additional help were deployed effectively across the school. The buildings were spacious and generally well designed for learning. However, the openness of the gym and dining areas meant that some of the adjacent areas were too noisy for regular use. The outdoor learning and recreational spaces were outstanding. These included swimming pools of varying depths, high quality climbing apparatus for the younger students, many shaded areas and sports fields and play areas with artificial turf. Library facilities were outstanding. The library was well stocked with books, and students and staff benefited from a sophisticated and user-friendly retrieval system. This enabled them to locate library books immediately and access links to relevant information from reliable internet sources. The availability of modern technology was acceptable but not yet reflecting the school's ambition to provide routine access to high quality resources for teaching and 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:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
 Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next Steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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.