

Queen International School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

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.

Queen International 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 Deira, Queen International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum and students complete IGCSE examinations as part of their studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 1227 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Most parents reported a high degree of satisfaction with the leadership of the school and the quality of education their children were receiving. They said the school provided good learning opportunities for their children. Most parents felt that the school kept their children safe. A minority of parents said that the major area of focus for school improvement should be additional opportunities for activities outside of the classroom. Overall, parent respondents felt their children were well-cared for by all school personnel. Large class sizes in the Foundation Stage and some early grades were a concern for some parents.

How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of Queen International School was good. The school had responded well to the recommendations of the previous inspection, particularly in Foundation Stage where there were improvements across most subject areas. Overall, there was a good capacity to support further improvement.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in primary to post-16 except in secondary where attainment was acceptable. In Arabic as a first language, attainment and progress were good. Attainment and progress at all stages were acceptable for Arabic as an additional language. In English there was good attainment and progress across the school, with Foundation Stage children showing outstanding progress. Attainment and progress in mathematics and science were acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary stages and good in the secondary and post-16 phases. The attitudes and behaviour of students were judged to be good throughout the school. Student's civic and Islamic understanding was good in primary and post-16 and acceptable in Foundation Stage and secondary levels. Their economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good at secondary and post-16 levels. Teaching and learning were acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good at secondary and post-16 levels. Assessment was acceptable at all stages. The school's curriculum was acceptable. Significant improvement was noted in the Foundation Stage and primary phase. Arrangements for the promotion of health and safety were good across the school while support for students was acceptable. Leadership and management were good. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable due to the lack of a systematic and continuous process for determining and implementing necessary change. Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Governance was acceptable. Staffing, facilities and resources were good.

Key features of the school

- The school was viewed by parents and students to be a very caring and supportive environment from Foundation Stage to Year 12;
- The leadership team maintained a strong focus on school improvement;
- Attainment in English as an additional language was good across the school;
- Good overall improvement in the Foundation Stage;
- Active learning was not promoted consistently throughout the school.

Recommendations

- Ensure continuity and consistency in learning opportunities for all students;
- Develop assessment practices that support teachers and help all staff make effective use of data;
- Share the elements of the best teaching with all staff to incorporate hands-on discovery experiences and independent activities to improve students' learning and engagement;
- Initiate and develop a formal and systematic career and guidance counselling program to assist all students;
- Establish a rigorous, on-going self-evaluation process with measureable objectives and success criteria;
- Accommodate the needs of all students within the curriculum.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education in primary and post-16 stages were good except in secondary school where attainment was good and progress was acceptable. Most primary students had good knowledge of Islamic concepts such as prayer, the Prophets and the angels. They could memorise and recite verses of The Holy Qur'an with confidence, clarity and accuracy applying Tajweed rules well. They showed good understanding of a range of Islamic manners and could talk about how Muslims should treat and respect their parents. In secondary school most students could infer rulings and guidelines from the text of The Holy Qur'an, but a few students in each class were not developing their Qur'an recitation skills as expected.

The attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good across all phases of the school. In Year 3 most students developed good listening skills as they answered the teacher's questions accurately and confidently. Most secondary and post-16 students showed good levels of reading ability and could identify and summarize the main points. Most could apply the grammatical rules learned during the lesson to their answers and demonstrated this in their oral and written work. However, across the school students' writing was not always developed beyond what was required in their text books.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable across the school. Primary students made evident progress in their listening and speaking skills as many start in Year 1 with Arabic being their third language. In Year 5, the majority of students understood directions and questions and were able to answer in full sentences and applied the grammatical rules well. Older students only read from their textbooks limiting their progress. Their writing was confined to paragraphs about familiar topics and they completed little imaginative or creative writing.

Attainment and progress in English was good overall with significant variation in most years. A few children joined Foundation Stage with little or no English but made rapid progress, as English was the language of instruction. Listening with understanding and speaking were the strongest skills, although their pronunciation varied from good to acceptable. Younger children learned letters, sounds and words while lower primary students enriched their vocabulary, speaking and wrote two-clause sentences by Year 3. Year 8 students understood and analyzed Shakespearean characters, supporting their opinions with textual reference. Post-16 students demonstrated good understanding of texts and poetry and could discuss the inferences from those texts confidently. Extended writing remained underdeveloped.

In mathematics, attainment and progress over time were acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good in secondary and post-16. Secondary and post-16 students' above average examination results were reflected in the understanding demonstrated in lessons. Younger children knew simple number rhymes and matched objects accurately to symbols. All primary students counted and estimated reliably. Across Foundation Stage and primary many lacked the skills to work practically, how to test their ideas and how to use standard and non-standard units to measure. From Year 6 almost all made good progress in understanding operations. By the end of Year 10 many used formulae confidently. In Years 11 and 12 almost all students applied the rules of ratio to solve a problem.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary years and good in the secondary and post-16 phases. Foundation Stage children were developing their knowledge of colours and the senses. At the primary level, most students knew some scientific facts, vocabulary and scientific processes. In secondary, students had some skills in investigation and enquiry. Attainment in biology, chemistry and physics was well-above the international averages. However, other than students' limited time in the laboratory, little emphasis was given to empirical knowledge. Progress was not consistent in any of the year levels.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Across the school, students' attitudes and behaviour were consistently good. They took turns fairly and shared their ideas confidently with their teachers and with each other. All were eager to learn. By the end of Year 10, all had a well developed sense of responsibility. They had constructive relationships with adults. Almost all were well aware of the importance of living healthily and taking regular exercise. They responded sensibly to the good advice they were regularly given. Attendance was good and students almost always arrived punctually. They were keen to work.

Students' civic responsibility, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local tradition and culture were good in all phases except in secondary where they were acceptable. There were opportunities for students to help around the school. In primary, most students were able to talk about heritage and the traditions of the UAE, such as local sports, horse and

camel racing. Most students in secondary school demonstrated a good understanding of Islam's values, its role in their lives and its relevance to a multi-cultural society, for all people.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good in post-16 and acceptable in the other phases. Most students in the upper years had a mature understanding of current local and global economic issues. They expressed enthusiasm to coming back to Dubai in the future as many of them were born here. In the other phases, a lack of practical activities limited students' understanding of how they could help sustain the environment, both as students and as responsible citizens.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and good at secondary and post-16. In the more effective lessons, teachers used their good subject knowledge to explain concepts in relevant and useful contexts. Activities were carefully planned to consolidate learning outcomes clearly shared with students. The majority of teachers were resourceful and creative in making and using resources which aid in learning, but in a few lessons, teachers relied mainly on textbooks for content and challenge. In the upper years, teachers consistently used questioning effectively to check students' understanding which resulted in strategies to support the less able. When teaching was less effective it rarely included challenging activities to extend the knowledge and skills of the more able students.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good in the secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all students had positive attitudes to learning and were keen to do well. In the upper years, students were responsible learners, focused on good academic performance and often supported each other in their studies. They communicated their learning outcomes with confidence and were adept at using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support their learning. In the lower years, students were learning to work collaboratively and interact more positively with their peers. Research projects were allowing them to make connections between their learning and real life. In more than a few lessons however, activities and questions did not allow for the promotion of critical thinking and independent learning. In these lessons, teachers read the questions and dictated the right answer to all.

Assessment was acceptable in all phases of the school. In Foundation Stage, continuous class assessment broadly informed teaching and reports to parents outlined progress made in skills acquisition and areas of personal development. However, assessment procedures lacked information on students' standards in relation to age-appropriate expectations. In the other phases of the school there were good arrangements for record keeping of summative assessment data. This data, however, had not been sufficiently analyzed into information to be used by teachers in order to enhance individual learning. Furthermore, effective on-going assessment remained a feature of the successful lessons and not a common feature throughout the primary school.

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

The curriculum across the whole school was acceptable. There was some review and development of the curriculum with heads of department and teachers. There was an annual review of class texts. Although not required, the school offered Arabic as a first language and Arabic as a second language in the Foundation Stage which supported progress in the primary stage. The curriculum had a clear rationale with the GCSE and IGCSE examinations in the secondary and post-16 phases. However, there was not a clear rationale for the curriculum at the Foundation Stage and primary levels. It lacked a clear range and progression so that there were obvious links and advances in what students learned. The curriculum across all phases did not have enough breadth and depth in the range of subjects offered. The curriculum was not regularly reviewed in detail to see that it met all students' learning needs. Continuity and progression relied almost exclusively on tests rather than on teachers' understanding of how an effectively developed curriculum directly impacted on student learning. There was a very limited co-curricular programme involving some creative arts and a Physical Education (PE) programme. There were a few curriculum links with the community. There were no cross-curricular links. There were no extra-curricular activities for students. Students with periods without class instruction did not have the option of an extra-curricular or electives programme.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Across the school arrangements to ensure the health, safety and security of all were good with strong features. There were rigorous systems to make the school safe, hygienic and secure and to provide a conducive environment for learning. There were high levels of supervision and care for all students as they moved around the school. Transport to and from school was very thoroughly supervised and organized to ensure that all travelled safely. Buildings and the exterior areas were very well maintained, clean and attractive. However, space for the younger children in some classes was limited and they lacked the facilities to be active learners. Ground floor access for those with a physical disability was good. Outstanding systems were in place to provide for the health and well-being of all students. These included good arrangements for the school nurse and doctor to review all students' physical development and to help them understand how to live healthily. Related links with parents were well established and effective. The school had appropriate procedures to ensure that no child was at risk in any way. All staff knew what to do if there were concerns.

The quality of support was acceptable. Teachers provided good informal advice based on their knowledge of their students when they were considering the students' futures. There were no formal structured arrangements to give career guidance. A new electronic system has recently been installed to judge students' progress in a few subject areas. There were insufficient mechanisms to identify and support any students with special educational needs.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management team of the school was good. All members of the leadership and management team demonstrated care and respect for the student body. The Principal displayed a vision for the school and senior management worked collaboratively towards the agreed goals. Teaching staff were aware of the vision of the school but were inconsistent in their approach and levels of commitment to its implementation.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. In some curricular areas there were high levels of knowledge of how the students and teachers were performing but this was inconsistent. The school lacked a systematic process to achieve this end. Unsatisfactory areas identified in the previous report were successfully addressed by the leadership team and senior management worked with supervisors and co-ordinators to implement desired changes.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and the leadership team. The current website provided parents with access to school announcements and other items of importance to their students. A new interactive website set for launch in October was demonstrated during the inspection. Parents expressed satisfaction with the amount of communication from the school. A school newsletter was being produced by the post-16 students. Parents and students expressed a desire for more extra-curricular activities as well as more opportunities for learning trips outside of the school.

Governance was acceptable. The governing committee met the statutory and instructional needs of the school in an effective manner. Community representation was not present and suggestions for potential community representatives were shared. Little impact of the governance system was evident in the work of the school.

The staff of Queen International School were appropriately qualified, with 13 new staff members this academic year. Professional development assisting them into the systems of the school was provided prior to the beginning of school. The premises of the school were safe, clean and well supervised. Play areas were appropriate for the age of the students. Parents reported that pick-up and dismissal procedures had been improved since the previous school year and buses and cars no longer competed for space in front of the school. The school's library was not sufficient for the instructional program, lacking resource materials and technologies that students could use. Classrooms were of acceptable size but large class numbers, especially in Foundation Stage and primary limited learning opportunities. Teachers would benefit from additional resources to enhance student's engagement in the learning process.

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 | Good |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Good | Acceptable | Good |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| 78% 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 | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress in Arabic as a first language | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Good |
| Attainment in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| Progress in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |

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

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

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

| How good is the students' personal and social development? | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attitudes and behaviour | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Islamic, cultural and civic understanding | Acceptable | Good | Acceptable | Good |
| Economic and environmental understanding | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Good |

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

| 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 | Acceptable |
| Partnerships with parents and the community | Good |
| Governance | Acceptable |
| 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:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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