

The Elite English School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 10

Report issued January 2010

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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.

The Elite English School 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 only), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Mamzar, Elite English School provides education for students from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 10. The school follows curriculum of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE). Most students studied Arabic as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, there were 632 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Overall, parents were very satisfied with the education provided by the school. Almost all felt that the teaching was good and that staff expected their child to do their best and encouraged them to be responsible individuals. Almost all were pleased with their children's attainment and progress in English, mathematics, science and Islamic Education, but a few had concerns about spoken Arabic. Parents strongly believed that the school treated students very well and kept them happy and safe. Almost all thought that behaviour was good and that staff were appropriately concerned for students' care and welfare. Parents were pleased with the links that the school had made with them and the local community. Almost all said that they were provided with good information about their children's progress. They were impressed with the speed with which the school reacted to their concerns and they were confident that the school would help them. Almost all parents believed that the school was well led. A few parents indicated that they were not clear about how they could help their children with work at home, and that they would welcome the opportunity to contribute to planning for any changes that affected them or their children.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Elite English School provided an acceptable quality of education with some good features. It demonstrated a good capacity for improvement. The school was well led, ran smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and there were some areas of good practice. Inspectors judged that the attainment and progress overall in mathematics was good in the primary and secondary phases. In English, students' attainment and progress in the secondary phases were good. At all stages of the school, students' attainment and progress in science and in Arabic were acceptable. In Islamic Education students made acceptable progress. In most subjects students were making acceptable gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding but insufficient provision was made for them to apply their knowledge in a practical way. In 2009, Grade 10 CBSE results compared favourably with the CBSE national averages. Students throughout the school were very courteous and they moved around the school in an orderly manner. They were well behaved and enthusiastic to learn and this enabled lessons and activities to be conducted in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students had good awareness of their responsibilities as citizens and they showed knowledge and understanding, as well as respect, for Islam. Students had an excellent understanding of economic and environmental matters and their performance in a national competition led to an award from the Emirates Environmental Group.

Overall, the quality of teaching was acceptable, though good or better in a minority of lessons. The teaching of children with special educational needs was excellent; each student worked to an individual education plan in well-staffed classes in which teachers and teaching assistants used a variety of strategies to promote effective learning and good progress for each child appropriate to their capabilities. However, too much of the teaching was uninspiring and offered students too few opportunities to think for themselves or work independently. Students' progress was assessed regularly but information was not always used effectively to plan for subsequent lessons and match work to students' needs. The curriculum provided a good coverage of CBSE requirements and was both broad and balanced. It was enriched in many ways by well attended co-curricular activities. The school was a safe and secure environment with all necessary steps taken to ensure students' health and safety. Staff were diligent and caring in their support for students and the oversight of their welfare.

Leadership and management of the school were good. All staff had a clear understanding about the goals and direction of the school, although subject leaders had too little influence on the way in which subjects were taught. The school had accurately identified its own areas for improvement but plans to address these required more detail.

Key features of the school

- The strong and effective leadership of the Principal ably assisted by the senior management provided clear and appropriate direction to the school;
- The good behaviour, attitude and maturity of the students of all ages were evident in the school's harmonious multicultural learning community;

- Students' attainment in mathematics at Grade 10 was good in relation to both the CBSE requirements and international standards. Progress in mathematics was good at the primary and secondary phases;
- The level of care and support was outstanding because teachers knew their students well and students felt happy, secure and able to work in an atmosphere which was conducive to good learning;
- The provision for children with special educational needs was a strength of the school. Consequently, these children were confident, integrated well with mainstream classes when appropriate and made progress in their learning appropriate to their capabilities;
- Arrangements for the assessment of students' progress were good but this information was not always used effectively to modify teaching and learning approaches. Students were not sufficiently involved in their own assessment to enable them to improve their learning;
- In many lessons, the quality of teaching did not build well enough on students' enthusiasm for learning;
- Subject leaders did not engage sufficiently in monitoring or supporting teachers in their subjects.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - students enjoy their lessons more and have increased opportunities to discuss ideas and topics, work collaboratively, and to ask questions of their teachers
 - the results of assessment are used more effectively to identify what students need to learn next and to match work to their needs in lessons
 - students are able to assess how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work;
- Increase the effectiveness of subject leaders so that teachers are better supported and guided towards meeting the school's policy of how each subject should be taught and its expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable throughout the school. Most students could memorise verses of The Holy Qur'an. They were developing their understanding of Islamic values and their knowledge of the pillars of Islam. In Grade 3, students knew about the first people the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) invited to Islam. In Grade 4, the majority of students could list the five daily prayers.

In Arabic, students' attainment and progress throughout the school were acceptable. In Grade 1, most students knew the different letter sounds in words and, by Grade 3, the majority could repeat short sentences independently. In Grade 9, most students' speaking skills were acceptable and they used a range of vocabulary and applied grammatical rules well. Whilst most students made acceptable

progress in speaking and reading, progress in writing was weak and few students were able to write at sufficient length.

Students' attainment and progress in English were acceptable. Children in KG and students in the middle and upper secondary grades listened attentively and showed initiative in developing their own ideas. This was less evident in the primary grades where their response was more muted. By Grade 10 students were articulate and showed a good capacity to continue class discussions with the teacher and with other students. Attainment in reading was good in all grades and, in senior grades, very good. Students in these grades demonstrated a good analysis of texts. Those learning English as an additional language in lower grades had acceptable understanding when listening and reading. From a good start in KG, students progressed well in the development of the range and complexity of their writing. They moved from single-word meanings and spelling, to word-matching, written phrases, completed sentences and simple and complex paragraphs.

In mathematics, students' attainment and progress were good in the primary and secondary phases and acceptable at KG. Most students throughout the school could handle number and data confidently and could apply their knowledge to everyday situations. Students' work was often at levels expected for their age, though in secondary stages it sometimes exceeded CBSE curriculum standards. In pre-primary classes, students had made acceptable progress in counting: they could count and order numbers to 15, add single digits accurately and correctly identify common geometrical shapes. In the primary stage students were developing a good understanding of how to work out fractions, decimals and percentage problems with confidence. Students in the secondary grades had a good understanding of shape, space and measure, and they were growing increasingly confident working with trigonometric identities and geometric theorems.

Students' attainment in science was acceptable. In Grades 1 to 5 they demonstrated a broad knowledge of scientific facts such as the difference between solids, liquids and gases, plants and their root systems and the effects of forces. By Grade 8, students' factual knowledge was also in line with age-related expectations but their skills in investigation and experimentation were weaker. The results of external examinations at Grade 10 compared favourably with that of students of similar schools in India. Compared to international standards, their attainment in applying their knowledge to practical tasks was relatively weak. Progress across all stages was acceptable. In the primary classes, students were learning to use the correct scientific terms to explain facts but students' skills in experimentation were developing too slowly. In the secondary stage, students made much better progress in these skills including, for example, reasoning and prediction.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The quality of students' attitudes and behaviour was good. Students were well behaved and there were excellent relationships between teachers and students. Classrooms had a calm and purposeful atmosphere and the orderliness of school events such as assemblies was a striking feature of the school. These were conducted by students and well managed. There were rarely any latecomers to school and attendance was good.

Members of the student council, comprising students from Grades 6 to 10, developed confidence and leadership skills by undertaking various responsibilities in the school such as acting as 'buddies' to younger students and representing the views of students in meetings with the Principal. Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good. For example, older students were able to explain correctly the beliefs of Islam, the nature and purpose of Ramadan and the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). They demonstrated an appreciation of the multicultural nature of Dubai, its local traditions and heritage. A few students mentioned how much they valued their part in its on-going development.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good and had been recognised by an award from the Emirates Environmental Group. Senior students were able to explain the local effects of the global economical crisis accurately and this was seen in an assembly when they enacted a compelling story about the recession and its effects on people. Students in all year groups were proud of their school, showing care for its buildings and resources. Their respect was evident, for example, in the way they disposed of litter and in their care for the school grounds.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching throughout the school was at an acceptable standard overall but there was significant variety, from unsatisfactory to outstanding. Although most of the lessons were acceptable or good, the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons was too high. In the unsatisfactory lessons the teacher talked for long spells or set work that was too hard for some students and too easy for others. In a few lessons students had little opportunity to think for themselves or develop their ideas independently. In the outstanding lessons teachers made it clear what students were expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Expectations were high and explanations were given accurately and clearly, using visual or other aids when appropriate. In these lessons, students learned at a good pace. They were involved in the lesson by the teacher's skilful use of questioning which extended their thinking and allowed them to contribute ideas. In the best lessons seen, students had opportunities to work independently and collaboratively when appropriate and, as a result, they left the lesson with a sense of achievement and renewed enthusiasm. The teaching of children with special educational needs in the newly formed resource rooms was excellent. Each student worked to an individual education plan in well-staffed classes in which teachers and teaching assistants used a variety of strategies to promote effective learning and good progress for each child appropriate to their capabilities.

Students' work was set out systematically and with care, though the date was omitted indicating when each topic was started. This made it difficult to judge the progress that students had made over time. Procedures for assessing the students' work were mostly acceptable. There was, however, too little consistency in the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment information to plan for subsequent lessons and match work accurately to all students' needs.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good. There was a clear rationale for the way in which it was planned, which ensured that all prescribed areas were covered to a sufficient depth. The school used the CBSE review and evaluation procedures to update and amend curriculum content, although the results of this were not well documented or used effectively enough to drive innovation or to encourage more imaginative teaching. The curriculum content allowed students to build on what they had learned in previous grades. However, in too many instances, teachers did not interpret curriculum texts with sufficient flexibility and, consequently, students' progress was limited. The curricular programme for students with special educational needs successfully promoted their progress; each student had an individual learning plan, which was tailored to their needs and regularly reviewed. The core strength of the curriculum was the rich and diverse co-curricular programme covering creative arts, physical education, debating clubs and cultural events. This programme underpinned many of the links that students were able to make in their learning and helped them to develop their learning in different contexts. For example, the debating society enabled some students to extend their communication skills and gain confidence in addressing a range of audiences. As a minimum, two annual extra-curricular activities were organised for each grade throughout the school. The school ensured that students' learning benefited from its community links and location, including, for example, through outside guest speakers and visits to the locality.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good. The school environment was secure, safe and hygienic and buildings were maintained to a good standard. A risk assessment of each classroom, washroom, playground and all equipment was regularly undertaken and records of these checks were kept. At the start of each academic year, teachers and students were made aware of the procedures for reporting health and safety issues. Staff were watchful and diligent in supervising students as they moved around the building and in encouraging them to behave in an orderly way during arrival and departure times. Systematic and detailed health records for each student were kept during their time at school. A 'Healthy Lifestyles' programme ensured that all students from KG to Grade 10 learned, with increasing detail, about diet, exercise and what they needed to do in order to stay fit and healthy.

The quality of support offered to students was outstanding. Relationships between staff and students were outstanding. Staff had a thorough knowledge of each student, including their well-being, achievements and personal circumstances. They gave a high priority to supporting students and ensuring that they had a sympathetic hearing for problems or concerns that arose. Students felt that their teachers and carers were firm but fair, and that their good behaviour was noticed and rewarded. The school had a good knowledge of students' overall development, including their progress in academic and social aspects, and their level of attendance and punctuality. Students who were falling short of expected progress or development were quickly spotted and effective support was arranged.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management were good. The Principal, ably assisted by the senior management team, provided clear and appropriate direction to the work of the school. The cohesive vision of the senior team ensured that the focus of their work was keenly directed at improving the quality of teaching and student attainment. The Principal, senior management and governing body shared common goals for the development of the school and they have done much to ensure these were known and understood by all staff. Consequently, teachers at all levels felt able to contribute to, and to influence, decision making and knew their views were valued. There were effective performance management procedures in place and these arrangements had enabled the school to evaluate accurately and address the professional needs of all teaching staff.

The work of the teaching staff was evaluated and recorded systematically throughout the year by the senior management and Principal. A programme of continuous professional development was in place and teachers were required to attend on a weekly basis. Subject leaders have insufficient influence on the way in which subjects are taught and not all subject leaders were carrying out their role adequately in relation to monitoring and supporting teachers. At this level of the school's work there was insufficient impact of school leaders on the quality of teaching or students' attainment and progress. Nevertheless, the school's processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and there were effective procedures in place to monitor performance through the collection and analysis of data. Planning for action to address the weaker areas or to share good practice was, however, not robust and contained too little detail or indication of responsibility for agreed action. The views of parents, staff and students were sought on matters concerning improvement and change.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. Parents were very pleased with the information they received from the school and they indicated that they were always made to feel welcome. The school's reports on students were very informative and parents were actively involved in supporting their child's learning and improving their attainment in school. The school involved external speakers to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of teachers, parent and students. Other schools had been invited to participate in this programme. An education academy had been created to which the parents and families of students were invited after normal school hours. They had access to the buildings, facilities and to courses run by teachers and members of the community.

The governance of the school was good. The governing body was representative of parents, teachers, owners and the community. They met regularly, made recommendations for improvement to the facilities and educational provision, occasionally visited classrooms and provided effective support to the Principal.

The staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school had sufficient well-qualified teaching staff to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. However, many were new to the school and some arrived having had no professional training; these issues were addressed by regular training. The buildings were clean, safe and provided mostly well-resourced classrooms of adequate size. Plans to supplement resources by providing another science laboratory and an increase in the number of computers were well advanced.

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:	Pre- Primary Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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	Good
Governance	Good
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

Next Steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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

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