

# Crescent English School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Secondary

Report issued February 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.

Crescent English School was inspected in November 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

## Basic information about the school

Located in Al Qusais, Crescent English School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Secondary, aged three to 18 years. The school follows an Indian (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 1349 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied with the education provided by the school and with their child's progress in the five key subject areas. Most thought that the school was well led. They felt that their children were treated fairly and that the school helped them to choose a healthy lifestyle. Most thought that communication between the school and parents was good and that the school responded well to parental concerns. The majority thought that the quality of teaching was good or better, but about a quarter felt that it could be improved. About two thirds stated that their child required a lot of additional help at home with their studies. A third of respondents did not know if the school had responded well to the recommendations of the previous inspection. About a fifth did not feel they were effectively involved in the work of the school.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school offered an acceptable quality of education for its students. The school had attempted to address the recommendations of the previous report but its actions had had very limited impact upon the school.

Attainment and progress were broadly acceptable across the key subjects, although with some unsatisfactory performance in science. Students' personal and social development was acceptable, as were the school's general approaches to protecting and supporting them. The quality of the curriculum was generally acceptable and was good in the Kindergarten. The quality of teaching and learning was acceptable overall, but lacked progressive development of learning skills across the stages. The day-to-day management of the school was efficient. Supervisors and heads of departments generally managed their sections and departments competently. However, senior managers did not lead change effectively. The focus of senior managers was not upon improving the quality of teaching and learning and thus raising students' attainment. The school as a whole lacked a common understanding of what constitutes good learning. Leaders did not involve all teachers meaningfully through comprehensive self-evaluation, pedagogical discussion and the dissemination of good practices. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Senior managers did not manage whole school improvement in a systematic and rigorous way. Self-evaluation was the responsibility of senior managers. Other leaders and all teachers did not fulfill their roles as part of a systematic approach. Planning for change and improvement lacked clear aims and achievable targets. The school had the capacity to improve, but required more rigorous management and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders.

## Key features of the school

- The commitment of all leaders and teachers to the school and the level of care for its students;
- The good behaviour and positive attitudes of the students and ethos of the school;
- The vibrant environment in the Kindergarten section which motivated learners;
- The poor quality of student's learning in many classes;
- The under-developed vision, direction and planning for school improvement.

## Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment in all key subjects, especially primary science;
- Establish a common understanding of good teaching and learning and ensure consistent quality of provision across the school;
- Support students experiencing difficulties and offer higher attaining students appropriate levels of challenge;
- Establish rigorous management of the improvement of learning with involvement of all stakeholders;
- Comply with Ministry of Education requirements regarding the time allocated for teaching Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Establish a comprehensive child protection policy and ensure appropriate staff training to support its full implementation.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable at all stages. The majority of students across the school memorised verses and short chapters of The Holy Qur'an, but they did not apply recitation rules. In the lower grades, the majority of students could name the Pillars of Islam and the five daily prayers. They could perform prayers in a group with few errors, and they showed acceptable knowledge about the early years of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) life and his family. In higher grades, the majority of students could distinguish between Sadaqah and Zakah. They knew the purpose of Zakah in Islam and named the kinds of people who can take from Zakah. They had acceptable knowledge of a few events in the history of Islam and understood Allah's promise to help Muslims, for example during the Battle of Bader.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable, overall. In all grades most students listened carefully. In the lower grades, the majority of students could say a few daily phrases and could orally produce a few rehearsed full sentences. Reading and writing skills for students in both primary and secondary grades were less well developed. However, the majority of them could read and write sentences with few errors. With support,

the majority of students in higher grades could understand the meanings of new words. They demonstrated an acceptable level of speaking skills and they could read and write paragraphs mostly correctly. Most students knew simple grammar rules, such as the correct forms of verbs in sentences.

Attainment and progress in English in the Kindergarten were good. In Grades 1 to 12, they were acceptable. In the Kindergarten, children demonstrated speaking, listening, early reading and writing skills above expected levels. Children were eager to respond and contribute to class discussions. By Grade 8, students were increasingly articulate and exhibited improved levels of confidence and fluency using extended vocabulary. Young primary students listened attentively and followed instructions promptly and with purpose. The reading skills of the majority of students were well developed, fluent and expressive. Senior students organised and presented their writing in different ways: all helpful to their purposes. Overall, they were effective writers, producing factual and imaginative writing which was lively and incorporated a full range of descriptive vocabulary.

Mathematics attainment and progress were good in the Kindergarten and acceptable through primary and secondary grades. Recognition and sequencing of numbers, identification of two and three-dimensional objects and the description of their characteristics by almost all Kindergarten children met age-appropriate expectations. In the primary grades, most students were skilled in mathematical operations, but through rote and repeated drills rather than full understanding. Thus their ability to identify mistakes or derive conclusions based on logical deductions was quite limited. The majority of students in Grades 9 to 11 required support from their teachers in the application of mathematical formulae to complex problems. The internal and external examination results also indicated a drop in student attainment and progress in the senior grades.

In science, attainment and progress were good in the Kindergarten, unsatisfactory in the primary grades and acceptable in the secondary school. In the Kindergarten, children showed good understanding about the world around them. Most children could name wild and domestic animals and knew how to care for them. In the primary years, a majority of students met the expected standards. They could classify plants in Grade 2 and recall facts such as the functions of various organs in Grade 4, but their general scientific knowledge was underdeveloped. In secondary classes, students could state the laws of heredity, demonstrate refraction of light and carry out titrations. Students had too few opportunities to transfer their learning to unfamiliar situations or to use problem-solving and investigative skills independently.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The personal and social development of students across all grades was good. A responsible Student Council took part in school life. They held responsibilities such as maintaining discipline during recess and organising special events. In classrooms students were well behaved and allowed delivery of lessons without disruption. The high school students were self-driven and focused on learning. Overall attendance was at an acceptable level.

Student's civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable throughout the school. A majority of the students appreciated the good relationships between various groups of people in Dubai. Most students had a acceptable level of knowledge of the basic principles of Islam and tried to include this learning into their lifestyles, such as giving charity and conducting regular prayers. Many knew about the important mosques in the Islamic world, the new mosques and some local cultural traditions. Students appreciated the multi-cultural dimension of Dubai and were proud to live in the city. They were attracted to the local culture of the old city and the beautiful mosques, as well as modern Dubai.

Most students knew about the economic crisis and its effects around the world. However, the senior students' understanding of the economic vibrancy of Dubai was limited. Awareness of various environmental issues was not just at local level but also at the global level among most students. Most were aware of the need for environmental protection and had made efforts such as participation in activities for cleaning the beaches and recycling.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten, unsatisfactory in primary and acceptable in the secondary levels. Teachers had good relationships with students and offered appropriate praise and encouragement. In the Kindergarten, teachers emphasised learning through activities such as number jingles and nursery rhymes. Most teachers in the Kindergarten and primary had secure subject knowledge, planned well, made links to previous lessons, shared learning objectives and gave clear explanations. In the primary grades teachers had sufficient subject knowledge, but lessons in these grades were frequently over-directed and textbook-based without adaptation to make them more interesting and appropriate. Teachers tended to use closed questions to elicit facts from students. Teachers knew their students well enough, but there was little evidence of differentiated provision. Consequently, the lower attaining students were not supported well enough and higher attaining students were not challenged sufficiently within lessons. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) and other resources for teaching was limited.

The quality of students' learning in the Kindergarten was good and in the primary and secondary, acceptable. Kindergarten students demonstrated a very strong capacity to memorise. Most students in secondary took responsibility for their learning in limited ways. They made notes and completed textbook exercises to reinforce classroom learning. When given opportunities, some students showed the ability to apply their learning to unfamiliar situations. Most of their learning was too passive. Most students in primary grades had the ability to remember vast amounts of factual knowledge along with some level of understanding about them. A few students could use ICT in limited ways to enhance their learning. Occasionally, project work allowed independent learning among students. When asked to work together in paired discussions and small group work, students did so effectively, but such opportunities were infrequent. Students were occasionally able to develop enquiry and research skills and to work collaboratively on presentations or do practical activities.

The quality of assessment was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the primary and secondary sections. Assessment practices were generally inconsistent. The school focused upon examination outcomes and information about learning was not used to inform teaching. Teachers used assessments to test understanding and adjust the pace of teaching a concept. Feedback from formative and summative assessments did not provide sufficient advice about the next steps individual students should take to improve their work. Students' notebooks were marked, but diagnostic comments were lacking in most cases. Examination results were recorded to calculate the number of students performing above or below expected levels.

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

The curriculum offered by the school was good in Pre-primary and acceptable in the rest of the school. There were significant weaknesses in some areas. The curriculum did not meet the Ministry of Education requirements for provision of Islamic Education and Arabic. The Kindergarten stages included a variety of activities and events to make learning logical and progressive. However, lessons were taught as separate subjects and the lack of free-flow activities prevented the effective development of communication and other key skills. In the primary and secondary years, the choice of subjects was narrow. The range of co-curricular activities was limited. Although cricket, football, karate, keyboarding and painting were offered, these were not accessible to all students. Similarly, field visits, intramural and inter-school competitions, cultural, sports and community initiatives provided some students with opportunities for development. However, these were sporadic. Annual events took place but these did not help the consistent development of students' talents. The student council allowed students to practise civic responsibility and model leadership, but more delegation of duties would enable its potential to be more fully exploited. The curriculum review committee met regularly to review syllabi and yearly plans and ensured smooth transitions between grades. However, each syllabus was dictated by the textbooks and lessons were not thematically connected to make learning meaningful. The review process did not consider



planning for enrichment or for challenge and support, which were clearly needed for the many mixed-ability classes.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements in the school were acceptable. Students felt safe and staff members fully understood their duty of care, ensuring secure safety procedures were in place. Safe transport arrangements were ensured by designated and vigilant adults. The premises were clean, hygienic, regularly checked and maintained. Risk assessments for field visits were rigorous. Medical arrangements were effective and the management of the clinic was very good. Regular fire drills were held and staff members were aware of the procedures for fire drills and evacuation. The promotion of healthy living was shared across the school and even the very youngest children knew the food they should eat or avoid. The school had not ensured that all staff were fully aware of child protection and knew their roles and responsibilities. Science laboratories were not always locked when not in use, presenting a safety hazard.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Staff-student relationships were a positive feature of the school and students knew their contributions were valued. Basic tracking procedures were in place to support the academic and personal development of students. Teachers knew their students very well and a positive environment permeated the school. Changes in students' health or personal circumstances were monitored and the information led to appropriate support by the school nurse or counsellors. Special educational needs had been identified. Rigorous records were kept regarding student attendance and punctuality was monitored. The information from student assessment was insufficiently analysed and thus needs were not always addressed. Students with special needs required further assistance to enable them to improve their levels of achievement.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership at the school was acceptable. As a result of the commitment of the senior managers, day-to-day management was efficient. Supervisors and heads of departments generally managed their sections and departments competently. However, senior managers did not focus on leading change. Improving the quality of teaching and learning was not a priority. The school as a whole had not agreed a common understanding of what constitutes good learning. Leaders did not meaningfully involve all teachers through comprehensive self-evaluation, pedagogical discussion or the dissemination of good practices.

The school's self-evaluation processes were unsatisfactory. The school improvement plan was weak and had effected little change. Senior managers did not manage whole school improvement in systematic and rigorous ways. Self-evaluation was the responsibility of senior managers alone, not involving other leaders and teachers as part of a systematic approach. Self-evaluation and planning did not focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and thus raising attainment. Planning did not set achievable targets or indicate responsibilities and timescales. Classroom observations were not part of self-evaluation processes.

Links with parents and the community were acceptable overall. The school had established good two-way communication with parents. It issued regular informative circulars and organised six 'Open House' events per year to enable parents to meet teachers. It also arranged further events to inform parents about changes in syllabi and assessment. A Parents' Executive Committee had been established to give parents a stronger, united voice. Overall, parents remained insufficiently aware of the school's priorities and its plans for improvement and their views were not sought by the school.

The quality of governance was acceptable. There was a close working relationship between the Executive Chairman and the school's managers. He had very sound understanding of the day-to-day as well as the longer term management of the school and held it accountable at regular meetings. The school had established a Parents' Executive Committee, a development which they welcomed.

The staffing, facilities and resources at the school were acceptable. The school had sufficient qualified teachers to deliver its curriculum, but new teachers were not appropriately integrated or supported. The premises generally met the needs of the school's curriculum. A larger mathematics resource base and a music room had recently been added. The school buildings were well serviced and maintained. The school library lacked resources and computers to support independent learning and research.

## 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	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

**How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?**

Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

**How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?**

Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

**How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?**

Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

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

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

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

**How well does the school protect and support students?**

Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

**How good are the leadership and management of the school?**

	Overall
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

**How well does the school perform overall?**

Acceptable
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## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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