

Japanese School in Dubai Inspection Report

Primary and Junior High

Report issued April 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.

The Japanese School in Dubai was inspected in April 2011 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 Wasl, the Japanese School in Dubai is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Primary to Junior High, aged six to 15 years. The school follows a Japanese Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. It was inspected during the first week of classes in the school calendar. The Principal was newly arrived in Dubai, as were two teachers. At the time of the inspection there were 157 students on roll, a significant drop of one-third from 2009. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Parents were very supportive of the school. Almost all indicated satisfaction with the overall quality of education available to their children. Almost all agreed that their children were safe and treated fairly at the school. About half of the parents surveyed agreed that their children's progress in Arabic as an additional language was at least satisfactory but about one-third indicated that progress was poor. Almost half of the parents agreed that progress in English as an additional language was good but a few indicated that it was poor. Most parents agreed that progress was good or better in mathematics and in science. All parents were satisfied with the quality of teaching and two thirds agreed that it was excellent. Parents were satisfied with the school's extra-curricular activities. Almost all parents indicated that the school helped their children choose a healthy lifestyle and agreed that communication with the school was effective and that the school responded well to their concerns. They felt they were effectively involved in the work of the school. Almost all agreed that the school was well led and most agreed that it had responded well to the recommendations of the previous inspection report.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Japanese School in Dubai provided a good quality of education and was successful in achieving its stated goals of cultivating independence, self-discipline and internationalism amongst its students. The school was the focal point of the Japanese expatriate community in Dubai, enjoying outstanding parental support and strong commitment from its leaders and teachers. Significant progress had been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report, but weekly provision for Arabic as an additional language remained below the government's requirement. Inspectors judged the school as having improved on four key aspects since the previous inspection. The school had good capacity to improve further under the leadership of a new Principal and an experienced Vice-Principal.

Students' attainment and progress were good in most key subjects and acceptable in Arabic as an additional language. Students' results were significantly higher than Japanese national averages in Japanese, English, mathematics and science. Attainment and progress in learning the Japanese language were outstanding in the primary grades. Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school and other aspects of their personal and social development were good. The quality of teaching and learning was good in both phases of the school, as was the quality of the assessment of learning. The curriculum was of good quality overall, with a weakness in provision of Arabic as an additional language. The school had enriched the curriculum to provide opportunities to students in English conversation and Arabic. Health and safety provision was good and the support of students was of outstanding quality. The leadership of the school remained outstanding, but self-evaluation and improvement planning were only acceptable. Governance was good and the quality of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable.

Key features of the school

- Students' outstanding attainment and progress in Japanese;
- Students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour across the school;
- The outstanding care and support of students provided by the school;
- The limited resources for science teaching and learning;
- The low number of Arabic lessons provided each week;
- The outstanding leadership and links with parents.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in Arabic as an additional language to a good level;
- Provide Islamic Education to Muslim students;
- Provide Arabic as an additional language frequently enough to meet government requirements;
- Enrich the curriculum when necessary to meet the needs of the most able students;
- Ensure that all students are supervised each morning before classes begin.

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

At the time of the inspection there were two Muslim students in the school. The students' attainment and progress are not commented upon in this public report. Inspectors shared information with the school regarding the students' achievement in this subject.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable in both the primary and junior high phases. Students' listening skills were developing well. The majority of students could follow lessons conducted almost entirely in Arabic. Students in the lower primary grades had acquired a good range of vocabulary and were beginning to use it when constructing sentences orally. Students' oral reading skills were acceptable, but their comprehension skills had not developed to the same level. A majority of students in the junior high grades found it difficult to answer comprehension questions as they did not know the meaning of some questions. In the junior high grades, students did not make expected progress in their writing skills. In all grades a majority of students were still at the copying stage and were not able to construct sentences in Arabic independently by Grade 9.

Attainment and progress in Japanese were outstanding in the primary school and good in the junior high school. In the primary grades, all students were able to read aloud, paying attention to proper rhythm and intonation. Students listened to their teachers attentively and responded to them appropriately. Almost all students were able to write Japanese neatly and concisely with age-appropriate characters in the passages they wrote. Almost all students used proper punctuation and correct grammar in their writing. Students often communicated with peers and expressed their opinions clearly. Notebooks were used effectively to summarise their thoughts and feelings. In the junior high classes, students read fluently and wrote increasingly longer passages accurately, showing good understanding of the literary topics they studied. External examination results showed that students had, on average, achieved consistently higher than Japan's national averages since 2008. Students made good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding, as well as developing different approaches to learning within each curriculum unit.

Attainment and progress in English in both primary and junior high grades were good. Test data indicated that all students were achieving good standards, exceeding grade level requirements. Standardised tests indicated that students in junior high attained levels that were well above the national averages in Japan. Students' skills in listening and speaking were constantly improving and those who had been at the school for a year or more were able to maintain a conversation in English class with their peers, answer their teachers' questions and give explanations when required. Students' reading skills were at a good level and their comprehension skills were appropriate for their grades. Students' writing indicated that they had a good understanding of sentence structure, including the correct use of grammar and they were beginning to use report, recount and procedural genres in their writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in both the primary and junior high. All students demonstrated the knowledge and skills required to complete the first lessons of the

new school year. Attainment records over the past three years showed that the students' averages in all nine grades were well above the Japanese national averages in schools offering the same curriculum. Grade 4 students were able to calculate and apply numbers up to 10 digits to population problems. Grade 6 students could estimate and calculate the area of circles and Grade 9 students understood square roots and the occurrence of non-natural numbers when calculating them. All students demonstrated skill in applying mathematics to the real world and work samples showed good calculation skills in both phases of the school.

Attainment and progress in science were good across the school. In the junior high grades, students conducted scientific experiments after listening to the teachers' explanation attentively and forming their own hypotheses. Students were able to follow the proper procedures and kept records of their observations on worksheets. Almost all students demonstrated sound understanding of the topics they were studying. Students' notebooks showed good attainment in the various science topics they studied last year. School data on external examinations showed that students had been making steady progress, while some high-attaining students consistently improved their test scores over two years. In the primary school, lower-grade students were able to recall and reflect upon what they had learned the previous year. This included a review of plants' names, as well as a comparison of weather and climate in Dubai and Japan. Junior high students had begun using microscopes to develop their investigative skills.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in all grades. All students were punctual to start the day and arrived in good time for lessons. Textbooks, notebooks and personal belongings were neatly organised in every room. All classes began and ended with ceremonial greeting and thanks to their teachers. Almost all students were well-disciplined and yet clearly enjoyed their learning. In many classes a warm family-atmosphere was observed and rapport between teachers and students was positive. Most students were friendly and were happy to explain to visitors what they were doing in the classes. The community spirit was nurtured both in and out of the classrooms. The relationship between students and support staff was also good. Students understood the importance of team building and developing a culture of helping others. Attendance over the last full term and during the inspection was outstanding.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam, their appreciation of local traditions and culture were all good. The school provided ample opportunities for students to learn about local cultures through social studies and other grade-level cross-curricular studies. Most students knew that Dubai is a multi-cultural society where 80 percent of the population came from overseas. Students were aware that this provided them with rare opportunities to develop their understanding of the culture of the UAE, Islam and other religions. Older students indicated that they wanted to improve their Arabic and English conversation skills because they are in a multi-lingual Dubai society. A few students said that they enjoyed the mix of modernity and old traditions seen in Dubai's society.

Students' understanding of the economic and environmental issues in Dubai was good. They understood that Dubai had developed very rapidly. Older students were able to articulate reasons for the recent changes in Dubai. Almost all students showed care for their school and local environment; there was no littering evident in the school. Through social studies and cross-curricular activities, older students in the junior high grades understood the need to protect local, national and world resources.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. There was excellent rapport between teachers and students at all times. Teachers had well developed lesson plans, good subject knowledge and they generally made good use of time in classes. Teachers in some subject areas developed additional resources and different teaching strategies, such as group work, to engage students and improve their learning. Teachers collaborated with each other and utilised peer observation in order to reflect and share good practices. Objectives of lessons were often shared with students beforehand, as were the assessments. Teachers engaged students during lessons by providing various activities and the skilful use of questioning to check for understanding. Some questioning was for simple recall of facts, not allowing for the development of critical thinking skills. Text books from Japan were used widely throughout the school, but teachers developed supplementary work sheets and activities in order to enrich the learning. This strategy was not always used to provide challenging activities for the more able students. Teachers in some departments had changed from whole-class instruction to working with students grouped according to their levels of attainment, resulting in improved student achievement.

The quality of learning was good. Throughout the school, students were engaged in learning and exhibited positive and responsible attitudes in all lessons. Students responded to their teachers' directions with respect and were on task for almost all of the activities. They worked well in groups, sharing resources and collaborating in discussions. Most students were confident enough to report to their classmates. Students were very supportive of each other and encouraged shy classmates to be more confident. Students were not afraid to ask questions of their teachers. Students were encouraged to make connections between their learning and the real world, for example in mathematics, science and social studies. They were willing to try out new activities. Students' critical thinking skills were evident in a few lessons.

Assessment was a regular part of teaching and learning at the school and was of good quality. In the junior high grades, the students took standardised tests three times per year, as well as school-based tests at the end of each term. In addition, teachers assessed students regularly during each term and in the classroom through class activities and questioning. In the primary section, assessment took place after each unit was covered, using both commercial and teacher-made tests. Some departments had developed assessment rubrics that covered content and participation in class to track students' progress. Teachers gave feedback to students on their participation and attainment during lessons, during the daily home room activity and privately when needed. Teachers met monthly to discuss students' progress. They

used test data to understand trends in students' progress and made changes to their teaching when necessary. Teachers asked students to review and reflect upon their learning and to work on improving their performance. Students did self-assessments and drew graphs of their progress in each subject over the school year.

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

The curriculum was of good quality in both phases. The school offered an enriched version of the Japanese Ministry of Education curriculum, which provided a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities to all students. The curriculum aimed to produce students who recognise their own talents, are respectful, strong and internationally minded. Following a review, the school had added 'Minaret' classes to the curriculum for Grades 3 to 9, allowing non-Muslim students weekly opportunities to learn about Islam, Dubai and the Arab world. Music, moral education and art were provided to all students; homemaking and industrial arts were offered to those in Grades 5 to 9. All students studied Japanese, English and Arabic, although provision for the latter did not meet government requirements for Arabic as an additional language. All students had daily reading time to develop literacy in Japanese, as well as morning exercises and school cleaning before classes began. The curriculum was challenging for almost all students and it had good progression, both within years and year-to-year. The Japanese national curriculum was integrated with lesson plans that required teachers to address four levels of student attainment. Consequently, teachers provided differentiated instruction in their regular practice. Cross-curricular links were part of the Japanese curriculum and co-curricular activities included several field trips around Dubai and exchanges with three local schools. After-school clubs were provided as options for students. Each trimester of the school year featured a school-wide festival; drama, sports and music themes involved all students and many parents. Overall, the curriculum met the learning needs of students well, but there was room for greater challenge to the high-attaining students and additional time for Arabic instruction during the week.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provisions were good across the school. There was a qualified nurse on duty daily and a visiting physician weekly. Students received full medical and dental checks three times per year, following Japanese requirements. Records were kept for all students according to Dubai regulations. Medicines were securely stored, as were hazardous chemicals. Daily exercise was done by all students and they also cleaned their classrooms each morning, resulting in a hygienic environment. Students brought healthy lunches from their homes. Students and parents reported that the school was a safe place at all times. There was a full-time security guard and a 24-hour closed circuit television monitoring network. Fire drills were held regularly by the Civil Defence authorities. Bus arrivals and departures were well supervised, but the large playing area behind the school was not supervised by adults before classes began each morning. A child protection policy was in place and was understood by all

staff members. An emergency procedures manual was provided to all staff, students and parents to ensure safety under extraordinary circumstances.

The quality of support for students was outstanding across the school, as all members of the school community showed commitment to one another's well being. Teacher-student relations were very respectful at all times. Each student had a home room teacher who took responsibility for their overall well-being, including counselling needs. Attendance and punctuality were very effectively managed. The school nurse followed up on any student absences every morning. Students' academic progress was tracked effectively and in great detail; all teachers, students and parents had tabular and graphic records of results in the core subjects over the past three years. Remedial teaching and counselling was available to students each day after school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership at the school was of outstanding quality because the teachers were leaders and the senior leaders were teachers. The school had a strong ethic of responsibility for outcomes that was shared by all. There was a clear strategy for the future of the school and effective teams were established which were linked to it. The school had a formal peer-evaluation system that allowed teachers to coach one another to improve their skills.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable, as clear progress had not been made on all recommendations from the previous inspection reports. A cycle of review took place twice each year, which included a detailed survey of parents with questions linked to the school's mission. The results were analysed and the conclusions formed part of the planning in the next cycle. There had been significant progress on three of the recommendations from last year, including better teaching and learning in English, improved resources for language learning and better use of the space in the building. The school's action plan involved all members of staff and had clear lines of accountability.

Links with parents and the community were outstanding. The school benefitted from highly involved parents who met formally once a month and who visited the school daily to help with after-school activities. Parents contributed to special events and participated in field trips and after-school clubs. The quality of reporting to parents was high and they were advised of their children's progress in core subjects five times a year. The school had forged links with the Japanese expatriate community and the local Arab community, including exchanges with Emirati students and students from a nearby school for students with special educational needs.

Governance was of good quality. The two senior leaders were joined by ten others on the Board of Trustees. Trustees included industrialists, parents and members of the Japanese Association of Dubai. These governors met monthly to monitor the school's performance and ensure that it met the requirements of the Japanese Foreign Ministry and the Japanese Ministry of Education. The Principal reported to the Board regularly.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. The staffing of teachers at the school was carried out by the Ministry of Education in Japan and teachers were all qualified in their subject areas. Teaching assistants in the lower grades had been removed by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The school facility was in its thirty-first year and was showing signs of age, but it was clean and well maintained. The science facilities remained insufficient for larger classes and the limited science resources lessened learning opportunities for students. The library collection was also limited in size and scope.

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: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language. | | | |
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| 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 Japanese? | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Outstanding | Good |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Outstanding | Good |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in English? | | | |
|--|----------------|---------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics? | | | |
|--|----------------|---------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in science? | | | |
|--|----------------|---------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How good is the students' personal and social development? | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Attitudes and behaviour | Not Applicable | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Islamic, cultural and civic understanding | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Economic and environmental understanding | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How good are teaching and learning? | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Teaching for effective learning | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Quality of students' learning | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Assessment | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students? | | | |
|--|----------------|---------|------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Curriculum quality | Not Applicable | Good | Good |

| How well does the school protect and support students? | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age group: | KG | Primary | High |
| Health and safety | Not Applicable | Good | Good |
| Quality of support | Not Applicable | Outstanding | Outstanding |

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

| 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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