

INSPECTION REPORT

Japanese School in Dubai

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Japanese School in Dubai

Location	Al Safa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.japanese.sch.ae
Telephone	04-3449119
Address	PO Box 7149, Dubai
Principal	Masanori Nagamine
Curriculum	Japanese
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	6-15 / Grade 1 to Grade 9
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	147
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 11th and Monday 12th March 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	6
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	10
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	12
What happens next?	13
How to contact us	13
Our work with schools	14

The context of the school

The Japanese School in Dubai, situated in Al Wasl, provides a private education for boys and girls from Primary to Junior High, aged six to 15 years. The school follows the prescribed Japanese Ministry of Education curriculum. The Primary phase from Grade 1 to 6 is followed by the Junior High phase, from Grade 7 to 9. Almost all students return to Japan to complete high school. Japanese, mathematics, social studies and science are taught in Japanese. English and Arabic are taught as additional languages. At the time of inspection there were 147 students on the roll. The school had no Emirati students and had not identified any students who had special educational needs (SEN). Attendance for the last academic session was outstanding and was 100 per cent during the inspection.

The school used a variety of externally generated tests to monitor students' progress. In the primary school students took standardized tests three times per year as well as school-based tests at the end of each term. In the Junior High School students sat the Japanese Nationwide Standard examination four times per year.

Most of the school's 16 teachers were expatriates selected by the Ministry of Education in Japan. They were well qualified in their teaching areas and had an appropriate teaching qualification. They were supported by two teaching assistants. Two of the teaching staff were new to the school this year. At the time of the inspection, the Principal was completing his first year in the post.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The school provided a good quality of education to its students. A key feature was the outstanding progress and attainment in Japanese by students in both phases. Students in the Junior High had above average attainment in the Japanese external examinations in Japanese, English, mathematics and science. While attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in both phases, students had made good progress in the primary phase. Students were extremely well behaved. They were self disciplined

and committed to their learning. They exhibited a real pride in their school and community. The school had made some attempt to respond to the recommendations of the previous inspection report; however it was still did not meet Ministry of Education statutory requirements for teaching Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. While the school had attempted a self-review process, its documents lacked detail. There was also a lack of cohesiveness between review documents and the school's annual action plan. Outstanding care and support of students, leadership and relationships with parents and the community were further highlights; however the school's facilities required upgrading.

Key strengths

- Students' improved progress learning Arabic as an additional language;
- Students' good attainment in external examinations in Japanese, English, mathematics and science;
- The extremely well behaved, enthusiastic students committed to learning, who took pride in their school and community;
- The continued outstanding care and support of students provided by the school;
- The continued outstanding school leadership and partnership with parents.

Recommendations

- Provide Islamic Education for Muslim students;
- Improve attainment in Arabic across both phases by ensuring that it is provided frequently enough to meet UAE Ministry of Education requirements;
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and have their learning needs met;
- Improve the quality of school self-review so that initiatives are well planned and embedded consistently.

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

	Primary	High
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a first language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language		
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable
Japanese		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding
English		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good
Mathematics		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good
Science		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good

Students' attainment was good in English, mathematics and science in both phases. In Arabic as additional language, it was acceptable, while Japanese was outstanding. In Arabic, students' speaking and listening skills were better than their reading and writing skills across the school. Most students developed their speaking and listening skills at rates better than expected of beginners. They listened well and answered basic questions. In English, students' speaking and listening skills were well developed, while reading comprehension was improving, despite the limited range of reading resources available. In Japanese, all students had very strong reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. By Grade 9 their writing was accurate and showed a sensitivity, empathy and maturity beyond age expectations. In science by Grade 9, students had a strong understanding of scientific theory that supported their investigative work.

Students' progress was good in primary Arabic and in English, mathematics and science in both phases. In Japanese it was outstanding in both phases; however, progress in Arabic in the Junior high school was just acceptable. Over time most students consistently improved their knowledge, skills and understanding at levels above Japanese national public school averages. In Arabic, students made good progress in speaking and listening because of challenging questions and a focus on dialogue in primary classes. However, when writing students were limited to a few single words. Junior High school students' progress in Arabic was restricted due to their reliance on a textbook.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Primary	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school as they were highly motivated, approachable and friendly. Their work ethic was a strong feature of the school. They could work independently or in groups and were focused on tasks. From the cleaning of their school at the beginning of the day to when they left for home, they were self-disciplined, polite and demonstrated a strong sense of pride in themselves and their school. They were socially mature and responsive and had a strong sense of personal responsibility. All students made healthy lifestyle choices. Attendance during the last semester was outstanding, as was students' punctuality. The students' singing in choirs and as a whole school was very strong.

Almost all students demonstrated good understanding of Islam and its characteristics. They understood the significance of Islamic culture to the UAE and Dubai. They showed high levels of respect for Dubai's multicultural society and recognised the benefits of living in such a society. They had strong understanding of the culture and heritage of the UAE. Through many school visits and exchanges they had developed broad understanding of Emirati traditions, in particular the traditional dress and foods. Non-Muslim students demonstrated an understanding of the role of The Holy Qur'an and daily prayer in the lives of Muslims.

Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was good. They were aware of their role as a member of the school and wider community. This was enhanced through the schools programme of exchange visits with other schools. Students showed age-appropriate understanding of the economy of Dubai. They were all environmentally aware. All students participated in the daily cleaning of the school, watering of the plants and feeding of the school's menagerie of animals. Recycling was a priority, with many strategically placed recycling bins used well by the students. The students kept the school meticulously clean. Strong science and social studies curricula had resulted in all students having a keen understanding of Japanese and worldwide environmental initiatives, such as wind and solar-generated electricity, effluent treatment and energy conservation.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Primary	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good

Teaching was of good quality throughout the school. All teachers had good subject knowledge and most had a clear understanding of how students learn. Lesson planning was thorough and in the better lessons included objectives and a range of activities that met the learning needs of most students. A greater consistency was required in planning lessons. Teacher-student interactions were very positive. Teachers knew their students well and asked challenging questions that directed thinking and developed problem solving. A few examples of teaching that promoted critical thinking and independent learning were observed, however this was not embedded across all classes. High achievers needed more challenge. Classes observed in music, art and home economics were well taught. Students were actively engaged, challenged and keen to learn.

Students' learning was of good quality. Almost all were engaged and took responsibility for their own learning. They showed independence and were aware of their own progress. They collaborated and shared their understanding with teachers and one another. They were able to apply their learning to the real world and were beginning to make connections between areas of learning. Examples of good enquiry, research and critical thinking in Grade 3 included student projects such as The Amazing Secrets of the Camel, Dubai Fashion, and the Architecture of Dubai. By Grade 6 students were independently researching topics such as the differences in transportation rules between Japan and Dubai, the future of architecture, and the history of the Arabic language. By Grade 9 students investigated Islamic and other forms of prayer from around the world; they compared recreation in Japan and Dubai, and considered the differences between sources of income in Japan and UAE.

The assessment of learning was good. The school regularly used tests and external examinations to determine students' progress. Students were involved in the assessment of their own learning. In school and other tests, high quality data was accurately analysed, and helped teachers understand their student's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers gave effective oral feedback to students and most provided meaningful written comments that helped students to improve. Nevertheless, assessment information was not used effectively enough to influence teaching and the curriculum.

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

	Primary	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good

Based on a modified version of the Japanese Ministry of Education curriculum, the school's curriculum was of good quality in both phases. It was broad and balanced and had been enriched by additional material appropriate to the Dubai context. It had clear aims and rationale. Included were the enhancement of Japanese values, appropriate knowledge acquisition and individual units related to developing physical well-being. From Grade 1 to Grade 9 there was strong progression of concepts. Most students were increasingly challenged as they progressed up the school. The school had reviewed the primary curriculum to align it to recent Japanese Ministry changes. This had resulted in additions to English and Arabic. Provision was made in lesson planning for a variety of different levels of student attainment. However, in a number of lessons high attaining students were not challenged sufficiently. Cross-curricular links were an integral part of the curriculum, for example, the use of numeracy skills in science problem solving. Extra-curricular activities included school partnership visits and exchanges, sporting competitions, and field trips to environmental agencies, zoos, aquaria, and the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding. Additional time was required for Arabic instruction and the provision of Islamic Education for Muslim students did not meet Ministry of Education requirements.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Primary	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

Health and safety provisions were good across the school. There was a full-time, qualified nurse and a physician who visited weekly and monitored students' health. Files on the physical condition of all students including results of health and dental check-ups were secure and helpful. Results of check-ups were communicated to parents. Medicines and hazardous substances were securely stored. The school tracked the weight of all students. Appropriate health advice and guidance were provided where necessary. All students participated enthusiastically in the daily exercise and school cleaning sessions and understood the importance of good hygiene. Students brought healthy lunches from home. The security guard was on duty at all times. Students and parents both felt the school was a very safe place and inspectors agreed. Each school bus was staffed by two people: the driver and a female supervisor which ensured high levels of safety. Students' arrival and departures were well supervised. The child protection policy was well understood by all.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. There was a very strong commitment by the school and its community to the well being of all. Extremely positive relationships between students and their peers, as well their teachers and visitors was a strong feature of the school. A daily greeting of primary students by junior high students included an international greeting of the day. Students were well supervised on the playground at all times, including when the teachers were in daily staff briefings. Daily attendance was efficiently managed. Parents commented that the school fostered a culture where older students supported the well-being of younger students and in turn, the younger students learned to become more considerate and understanding. This was seen as a positive feature by the inspection team.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The school had clearly expressed educational aims and objectives. The Principal had a very positive vision for the future of the school and a clear idea of where he expected the school to be in the medium term. He directed the school very effectively so that all shared the vision. Knowledge, moral education and physical education formed the basis for future development. Senior leaders were beginning to use these three aspects to guide planning. There was a strong sense of purpose at all levels. Senior management, heads of department and leaders of groups had been very successful in maintaining educational outcomes and bringing about notable improvement in specific areas.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had used a range of sources to gather evidence for self-evaluation. Some high quality analysis of data was observed and this provided valuable evidence to support improvement planning. Information from parents surveys and staff review was comprehensive but had yet to be incorporated in the schools self-review document. As a result this document lacked depth. The school's action plan was based upon the DSIB Inspection recommendations. It did not contain sufficient areas for development identified by the school. The school had made progress in addressing only one of the recommendations from the previous report.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents were highly supportive of the school and its senior management and relationships between the school and homes were positive. A parents group met formally once a month and regularly visited the school, helping with after school activities, field trips, the daily reading programme and the library. The school sought parental views through large scale surveys and responded to their opinions. Regular, informative reports on student's progress were issued three times per year. The school had established productive links with local public schools and other private schools in Dubai and was keen to broaden the range of such partnerships. Exchanges with Emirati students and students from nearby schools who had special educational needs had been arranged and they supported learning.

Governance of the school was good. The governing body had a positive influence on the school. It held the school to account and assisted with school improvement; however it had yet to ensure that the statutory requirements were met. Representation on the board of 10 included two staff members. The board regularly sought and responded to the views of all stakeholders of the school, but needed to broaden its representation.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. Strong day-to-day management of the school ensured it efficient running. Daily staff briefings were an important part of school life and ensured that all staff members were well informed. Timetabling was efficient. All teachers had appropriate qualifications. Premises were of an acceptable quality but needed maintenance. The addition, in some outside areas, of trees and shrubs had improved the environment and had been supplemented by students' recent planting of flowering plants. The students acted responsibly and respected property and the school environment. Some classrooms, as well as the science laboratory and library were designed for relatively small classes. The library was not an attractive room for study and was not well stocked with English or Arabic texts.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	58	62%
	Last year	74	70%
Teachers	16		94%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

A majority of parents replied to this year's survey, a lower number than last year, whilst almost all teachers replied. This year, parents were significantly more positive about the quality of Arabic and English offered compared to last year's parents. They also indicated better quality mathematics and science, and were pleased with the overall quality of teaching and school leadership. Parents believed there was improved support for students for their next stages of education and career. Parents were less positive about the range of clubs and activities available, which they believed was too limited. Almost all teachers stated that inspection had led to improvements in the school, and most indicated that inspection had improved their teaching practices.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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