

Greenfield Community School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Secondary

Report Published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Greenfield Community School was inspected in February 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 the Green Community, Greenfield Community School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to secondary, aged four to 16 years. The school follows an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 688 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents were satisfied with the education available at the school. There was a high level of satisfaction with the teaching and students' positive attitudes and behaviour. Most parents were happy with the way the school kept them informed through regular communications. Both senior staff and teachers were accessible and resolved difficulties in a timely manner, although a minority of parents felt that they were not sufficiently involved in decision-making.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school continued to provide a good quality of education and performed effectively in almost all aspects of its work. There had been good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection.

Children's attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in the Kindergarten were good. Attainment and progress in the primary years in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language, English and science were also good. In mathematics, students were making good progress and reaching acceptable levels of attainment in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP). In Arabic as an additional language, attainment and progress were acceptable in primary but were unsatisfactory in the middle years. Students' personal development was good across the school. The quality of teaching for effective learning and school leadership were good. The school demonstrated a strong capacity for continued improvement.

Key features of the school

- The Principal had managed change very effectively;
- A cohesive and purposeful community and a strong team spirit were in place;
- Although attainment was broadly good in the primary years, levels of attainment in key subjects in the MYP grades and in mathematics and Arabic as an additional language in primary grades were acceptable;
- The inclusive environment welcomed students from a wide range of different backgrounds and abilities;
- Assessment information was not used consistently well to plan lessons and track students' performance;
- Care and welfare of all students were well managed;
- Parents held the school in high regard;
- There were inconsistencies in the implementation of curriculum plans.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in the MYP in all key subjects and in mathematics and Arabic as an additional language in the PYP;
- Improve the use of assessment to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all students;
- Improve the tracking of students' performance to inform self-evaluation and improvement planning;
- Ensure the planned curriculum is implemented consistently.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment and progress were good in PYP and acceptable in MYP. The quality of recitation skills of most students in PYP was acceptable; but only a few students could use recitation rules appropriately. Most students had acceptable knowledge of Islam and they could provide relevant examples from their daily lives. A majority of Grade 1 students correctly recited the prescribed chapters of The Holy Qur'an. They could also name the five daily prayers and the number of Rak'aas in each of them. By Grade 5, most students had a better understanding of age-appropriate Islamic concepts. In the MYP grades critical thinking and recitation skills were underdeveloped for most students.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language was good in PYP and acceptable in MYP. Most Grade 3 students could provide good examples of punctuation rules and were able to identify errors in the use of punctuation marks. By Grade 5, almost all students could distinguish between verbal and nominal sentences. Upper grade students' reading was below international expectations. Across the school, reading skills were less well developed than listening and oral skills. Most students' writing skills needed further development. In general, students in all grades did not practise reading at length or writing extensively or imaginatively.

In Arabic as an additional language, attainment and progress were acceptable in PYP and unsatisfactory in MYP. Most Grade 5 students could say a few sentences to express themselves. Students in Grades 7 and 8 and 10 could only use one or two words in response to questions. Knowledge of grammar was good for most students but their application of rules was inconsistent. Across the school, both reading and writing skills were underdeveloped. PYP students made steady progress in developing their listening skills while progress in these skills in MYP, was very limited. Students' oral skills across most grades did not enable them to use it as a living language.

Attainment and progress in English in Kindergarten, PYP and MYP were good. Kindergarten children learned collaboratively and participated in activities enthusiastically. They identified letters and familiar words. Most could form letters correctly and record ideas using a combination of sight words and invented spelling. A few were confident beginning readers. By Grade 5, the majority engaged in discussion, often using a broad range of vocabulary. They could write a persuasive essay using their own research, and apply inference skills in their reading. In the MYP, a significant minority of students were early learners of English. The speaking skills of most students exceeded their writing skills and most students were developing enthusiasm for reading with gains in vocabulary and expression.

In the Kindergarten, attainment and progress in mathematics were good. Attainment in PYP and MYP grades was acceptable and progress was good. Kindergarten children made gains in their knowledge and had a secure understanding of numbers up to 20. Primary students had developed their research skills well and in Grade 5 most were able to use different measuring tools in a variety of contexts. Most MYP students demonstrated an ability to use appropriate mathematics both in and out of the classroom. While they were able to think independently

about alternative solutions to problems, their mental agility with number was underdeveloped. Higher attainers in Grade 9 worked confidently with algebraic expressions and mathematical formulae.

Attainment in science in Kindergarten and the PYP was good and in the MYP it was acceptable. Progress in all phases was good. Kindergarten children had a good understanding of living things and enjoyed caring for the flowers they had planted. PYP students had a detailed knowledge of the human body and the link to a healthy lifestyle. They understood the differences between solids, liquids and gases and knew that machines made life easier for humans. They had some understanding of scientific inquiry. The majority of MYP students were making good, and in a few cases, outstanding progress. They were developing a deeper understanding of scientific concepts, processes and laboratory protocols and their application to the real world. They knew that hydrocarbons occurred in crude oil and that they could form limitless chains.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Students were self-disciplined and respectful. The school was a safe, orderly environment. It was inclusive, with students from many different nationalities and with a wide range of abilities. Everyone accepted one another's differences. Students understood the need for healthy lifestyles and they organised projects to make others aware of health issues. Almost all students arrived at lessons on time. Attendance was acceptable.

Civic and Islamic understanding throughout school was good. Most students in all grades showed a good understanding about Dubai and Islam. Grade 4 students knew about the early history of Dubai and other emirates. They could explain about early pearl diving activities. Students' representatives played a good role as 'peace talkers' who solved minor disputes between peers. They participated in community projects such as raising funds for charities and cleaning beaches. Students believed that Dubai was a safe place and its people were tolerant as a result of the positive influence of Islam.

Economic and environmental understanding was good. Students knew about Dubai's development as an important centre for business. They talked about the importance of succeeding in school in preparation for college and university. Many had career aspirations and knew how they could contribute to Dubai's continuing progress. A minority of students participated in enterprise projects and learned key skills in creating products, budgeting, marketing and selling. All students cared for the school environment which was tidy and litter free. They were not proactive in finding ways themselves to improve their school environment. An entrance had been improved with tiles decorated by students in art lessons. Older students participated in environmental projects such as cleaning Dubai's beaches, and they talked about water conservation after visiting a desalination plant.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was good across the school. In the best lessons, teachers' strong subject knowledge was used effectively to inspire and motivate students. They knew their students well, created a supportive climate for learning and used a wide range of resources and strategies to enhance students' understanding of abstract concepts. They planned exciting activities for the range of abilities. They started lessons with a recap on what had already been learnt and helped students to make connections with the real world. Effective questioning was used to facilitate thinking on a higher level. In a minority of lessons, teachers did not use the information about students' abilities to ensure that they built on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding.

Learning was good across the school. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners when activities were well matched to their needs. They could work independently and in groups to follow a line of inquiry and enjoyed research and practical activities. They were competent when using technology to research topics and practise what they had learnt. Grade 7 students were able to extend their skills in mathematics and compare their progress with students across the world. They welcomed opportunities to develop their communication skills when making presentations to their peers. In most grades, students were not sufficiently aware of their strengths and what they needed to do to improve their work.

Assessment of students' learning was acceptable across the school. In the best lessons teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses very well. They observed students at work, analysed outcomes and listened carefully to responses to assess understanding and correct misconceptions. They were sufficiently confident to adapt their plans and change direction to consolidate learning before moving on. In science the teacher allocated extra time when understanding of fair testing was recognised as underdeveloped. Although the school had information about attainment and progress, teachers did not always make good use of this in their planning. Expectations for students were not always matched to the range of needs and abilities. As a result, the levels of challenge were inappropriate. Work was not sufficiently well marked to provide students with guidance on how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve.

Does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum was acceptable. It was developed upon principles which embedded cross-curricular learning. A process of ongoing review was in place after each unit was taught. However, further analysis of trends in learning skills and the needs of students was required in order to inform curriculum adaptations more specifically. The school was aware of the need to embed inquiry-based and learner-centred principles more centrally in the school's curriculum. The written curriculum described the importance of challenge for the wide range of abilities and language proficiencies in each student group. However, this was not yet implemented consistently across all classes and grades. The large number of subjects the school elected to

teach in the PYP had a negative impact on the amount of time available to develop key skills in English and mathematics in the most effective manner for all students. MYP mathematics and science teachers supported the development of subject curricula at the upper PYP level to ensure an improved transition between the phases. The curriculum for English and humanities in the MYP required further identification of specific knowledge and skills. Throughout the school, Islamic Education and Arabic needed to be promoted beyond the content of textbooks. A wide variety of extra-curricular options were available to students from Kindergarten onwards. Engagement with the local community and environment was promoted well through trips linked to units of study and students' participation in community service.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for health and safety were outstanding. The school premises were safe and clean. Maintenance logs were completed regularly. Students were well supervised. Detailed risk assessments were made for school trips. All students participated in activities that promoted healthy living. In physical education and health education lessons they were encouraged to develop personal fitness and to take responsibility for decision-making and keeping themselves safe. There were rigorous systems for monitoring and keeping records of students' health; teachers were informed of relevant issues. All staff were aware of the child protection policy, and students knew procedures if they had concerns.

Support for students was good. Teachers knew their students well and students reported strong, supportive relationships and mutual trust. They knew they could discuss personal or academic issues. This was also evident in the encouraging manner of almost all teachers in lessons and in the positive ways they managed behaviour. Teachers collected data using a broad range of assessment methods, but did not use it to set appropriate levels of challenge or to identify trends. There were effective processes and facilities for assisting students with special needs including lifts for wheelchair users, and a high quality counselling and personal support system for all students. Careers guidance events were planned to assist students in making choices for university entrance but students reported they were unsure of academic requirements and the options available to them. Attendance was monitored daily and there were procedures to follow up absences.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were good. The Principal had played a pivotal role in driving improvements and helping the school through a period of change. Since her appointment she had gained the confidence of staff and parents. She had been well supported by other senior staff in sustaining the positive ethos during a period of rapid expansion. The central vision was communicated well to students through posters and mottos setting out the school's core values.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good overall. Staff at all levels had good opportunities to reflect on the school's strengths and weaknesses, although there were no

subject leaders in Kindergarten or PYP to use the outcomes of these discussions in the drive for improvement. The introduction of a systematic appraisal system provided them with a useful overview of classroom practice. The school had yet to develop a methodical approach to monitoring students' attainment and progress, in order to review overall performance, gain insights into emerging strengths, and identify and prioritise key areas for development. This meant that the school improvement plan was prepared on the basis of a limited range of suitable evidence and lacked quantifiable targets.

The quality of governance was good. Board members played a significant role in promoting the school's core principles and ensuring the school met its commitment to parents. They made well-informed and insightful suggestions during meetings with senior staff. As experienced educationalists, a few board members led training sessions for staff. The awareness of the Board regarding students' progress was limited because no overview of student performance was available.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Informative meetings about curricula and school programmes were held for parents. The school maintained a website which provided useful information. Teachers in Kindergarten and PYP communicated daily with parents through home-school booklets and weekly e-mail messages. The advisory board included parents and provided an opportunity for parents to raise issues. There was some frustration within the parent's body, however, about the lack of a parent-teacher organisation. Local business people visited to talk to students about the world of work.

Staffing, facilities and resources in the school were good. There were sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified teachers in each section of the school. Support staff with expertise and experience in teaching students English as an additional language, those who needed additional help or social support were deployed effectively across the school. The buildings were spacious and generally very well designed for learning. The sporting and recreational spaces were excellent. Library facilities were generally good, except there were too few books in Arabic. There was no member of staff with overall responsibility for promoting the development of the library as a centre for 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:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
7% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
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:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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