

Our Own High School - Dubai Inspection Report

Primary 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.

Our Own High School was inspected in October 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 Warqaa, Our Own High School is a private school providing education for boys from Grades 1 to 12, aged five to 18 years. The school follows an Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 4701 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents who completed the on-line questionnaire stated that their children were making acceptable or better progress in almost all subjects. Almost all were pleased with student behaviour, and thought that their children were safe. Parents felt that they were kept well informed through regular school reports. Most parents thought that the school was well led, that communication to parents was effective and that the school responded appropriately and quickly to parental concerns. A majority felt that the quality of teaching was good and that the school had responded effectively to the recommendations of the last report. A minority of parents were unsure if the school provided good support for children with special educational needs.

How well does the school perform overall?

Our Own High School provided a good quality of education. The drive and commitment of the new Principal had led to significant improvements in delegated leadership at all levels of the school. His vision of inclusive education and equipping of students to be lifelong learners and active citizens was permeating the work of the school. Delegated leadership had improved significantly at all levels of the school. Good progress had been made in meeting the recommendations of the last inspection. A new middle management team had been appointed involving non-promoted as well as promoted staff. Parents and students were given opportunities to contribute to the vision and values of the school and were influencing school priorities. There had been progress made in identifying and planning to meet the varying needs of students. Teaching approaches had been enhanced. Some school initiatives were at too early a stage of development to impact fully on the quality of students' learning or to ensure consistency of teaching approaches.

Students' attainment and progress were good in the primary and secondary stages of the school in most of the subject areas inspected. The exception was Arabic as an additional language where students' attainment and progress was acceptable. Improvements in the attainment and progress made by students in Islamic Education at all stages and English at the primary stage were the result of developments in teaching approaches. Students' attitudes and behaviour had improved and was good across the school. Students showed considerable respect for one another and their teachers. They were now making healthy life choices in response to school improvements in this area. Teaching was stronger as students progressed through the school. It was acceptable overall in the primary stages and good at the secondary stages. The school's arrangements for health and safety had improved significantly. The quality of support for students was good. A range of effective tracking systems had been introduced to monitor student behaviour, attendance and progress in their learning. Leadership was good. Management structures and remits had been enhanced. The dynamic leadership and vision of the new Principal had established a clear direction for the school and has provided a strong basis for further improvements.

Key features of the school

- The excellent start made by the Principal in empowering staff, students and parents to support teaching and undertake areas of responsibility within the school;
- The caring and supportive environment for learning and the exceptional behaviour of students;
- The enthusiasm of students to learn and the willingness of students and parents to help the school;
- The quality of teaching was variable and teachers' assessments did not always effectively support students' learning;
- The limited opportunities for students to develop investigative and problem-solving skills in aspects of mathematics and science, particularly at the early stages;
- The narrowness and limited depth of the course in Arabic.

Recommendations

Continue to improve teachers' assessments of students to better inform learning and teaching and to help students improve and give parents good information to assist their children's learning;

- Build on best practice to ensure greater consistency of teaching quality across the school;
- Review and improve the course in Arabic and practical elements in science and mathematics.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in both the primary and secondary stages. In Grade 3, most students knew and effectively performed the call for prayer. In Grade 4, the majority of students could answer questions about the prophet's childhood. In Grade 8, most students used the rules of recitation for prescribed chapters in the text book to a good or higher level. In Grade 9, almost all students knew the conditions of performing a missed prayer. They could also apply what they knew to new situations. In Grade 11, most students demonstrated a good knowledge about crime and punishment in Islam. A few students in all classes, especially in primary school, needed to correct their recitation in accordance with the rules of Tajweed.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in both the primary and secondary stages. All students were making appropriate progress in acquiring the key skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In Grade 3, the majority of students understood vocabulary to do with their homes. In Grade 5, most students could understand the story about "Aladdin and the sea". In Grade 8, the majority of students could apply their knowledge of grammar to refer to past experiences and future plans by writing and reading. By Grade 10, the majority of students could speak confidently, with good pronunciation and accurate intonation. However, across all classes students were unable to apply their knowledge in a wider context and had difficulty producing extended responses in reading and writing.

Attainment and progress in English were good across all stages. Almost all students in Grades 10 and 12 performed above expected levels for their stage in external examinations and were making good progress in line with international standards. Overall, students' listening, talking, reading and writing skills were well developed. At all stages students could understand and interpret a suitable variety of texts. By Grade 12, students could debate views and contribute ideas skilfully. In Grades 1 and 2 almost all students could create stories from pictures and a few understood the moral conveyed by the story. By Grade 5, most students could read and understand an unseen passage independently. They could construct meaningful sentences and communicate their ideas effectively. From Grades 6 onward students' written work showed creative use of language.

Attainment and progress in mathematics in both the primary and secondary phases were good. Students consistently achieved or exceeded age-appropriate levels in relation to international standards. At Grades 10 and 12 students attained above expected levels for their stage in external examinations. Students at all stages had an appropriate understanding of number, measurement and shape. They were particularly effective in understanding concepts and using number operations whilst solving problems of increasing complexity. Grade 1 to 8 students were skilled in counting, sequencing and measuring. They accurately identified geometric shapes. Students in Grades 9 to 12 were also able to understand and solve increasingly complex problems. Many students had a well developed understanding of how mathematical skills could be applied in practical contexts.

Attainment and progress in science were good across the school. Over time most students acquired scientific knowledge and concepts at levels above their age. Students at Grades 10 and 12 met or exceeded international standards. By Grade 2, students were able to recognise, sort and name a range of building materials and their properties. In Grade 7, students showed a good understanding of how food grows and changes. By Grade 12, students could identify and name aliphatic amines and write their structural formulae. Students at the primary grades were less skilled in using observations and practical experiments to support their learning. Secondary students were able to use practical equipment confidently and accurately. At all stages, students were able to conduct individual investigational work but their skills in this area were not as well developed.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. There was a positive climate of mutual respect between students and staff. The increased responsibility for senior students as prefects, corridor monitors or as peer support to younger students had made a positive impact. Students demonstrated informed attitudes towards healthy living particularly in their food choices during school breaks. Attendance had increased significantly since the last inspection and was good this term. Almost all students were punctual to their classes.

Students were actively involved in taking responsibility for the election of the student council through an electronic voting system, in part designed by them. They took a lead at assemblies, were now responsible for all aspects of the school's newsletter and over 100 students were participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Students assisted staff enthusiastically in ensuring a neat and tidy school environment. They understood the importance of Islam to their lives. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and put into practice what they learnt from studying Islam.

Almost all students know how Dubai had developed and most had a good understanding of the reasons for these changes. They were aware of the contributions they could make to its growth and economy. Their growing awareness of their community and environmental responsibilities was evident from their recent charity work and environmental and enterprise related activities.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable in primary and good in secondary. Teachers at all stages demonstrated good subject knowledge. Most made good use of the school's lesson planning structure to ensure a consistent approach and were clear about what students should learn. This ensured a good pace of learning in most lessons, maintaining students' interests and attention. Teachers consistently shared learning objectives with students at the start of lessons resulting in students being clear about what they should know. They made particularly good use of information and communications technology (ICT) in Islamic Education. Some teachers made use of real objects, materials and visual aids to enhance students' understanding. Where this was in use teachers were effective in supporting students' varying learning styles. At the senior stages some teachers were particularly skilled in encouraging students to lead lessons and to engage in discussions about the subjects being studied. Role play was well used to enhance students' learning in a number of subjects. A few teachers were particularly skilled in using plenary sessions to review and summarise learning.

Learning across the school was good. Students were very committed, collaborated well and engaged strongly in their learning. In a Grade 8 lesson the students worked extremely well together deriving and applying formulae to find the area of different geometric shapes. In the primary grades, students showed a willingness to support less able members of their group. The school buddy system, where a higher attaining student helped another student of lower ability, worked well. Many students made appropriate use of ICT to complete homework and

project work. They were very good at researching information beyond the confines of the school. Good examples of project work were seen in many curriculum areas. Grade 8 biology students had made impressive models of the way different organs of the body work. Overall, however, students' enquiry skills were not sufficiently developed.

Assessment was acceptable at both stages. The school had very thorough record-keeping systems and extensive data was gathered on students' achievement. This gave teachers clear information about students' progress. The information gathered was used to group students but was seldom used to ensure that planning fully met the needs of all students. Students' evaluation of their own and others' work was not a regular feature of the school's assessment procedures. Teachers regularly corrected students' work but did not give sufficient information on how they might improve to help students and their parents to assist learning.

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

The curriculum was acceptable. Students had a generally broad learning experience with some good features at the senior stages. Courses and programmes met the requirements of the Indian CBSE and students at Grades 10 and 12 gained certification through CBSE examinations. Students studied a range of subjects including music, computer science, art and physical education. After-school sports activities such as cricket, basketball and chess, gave breadth and balance to the curriculum. However, only a quarter of the students attended extra sports activities. The courses in Islamic Education and Arabic were not sufficiently well developed to fully challenge and support students' learning. Courses for mathematics and science required review to ensure sufficient progression in students' investigative skills. Courses across the school had been revised to support cross-curricular links. They were not sufficiently well developed to ensure consistency in planning, reinforce learning outcomes and to help students make connections about their learning across subjects and in real life contexts. A focus at the secondary stages in robotics resulted in students gaining high quality creative and problem-solving skills. Similarly, project work in science helped students develop their research skills. Despite these examples, learning activities were not sufficiently developed to support students who needed additional help or particularly gifted and talented students. The re-introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the wide range of external and inter-school competitions, and various community-linked environmental and cultural events provided students with good opportunities to develop their leadership and team building skills.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were outstanding. Frequent checks of equipment, facilities and water supply combined with efficiently deployed security personnel ensured a safe, clean and protective environment. High quality fire safety measures and regular evacuation drills were conducted and timed. Very well organised school transport procedures had been significantly enhanced through increased monitoring and supervision arrangements. The number of medical specialists had increased. The medical staff provided a wide range of screening activities to support students' health and welfare. Programmes to encourage healthy lifestyles, personal hygiene, nutrition, and harmful substances were effectively delivered. Parents and students had led initiatives to support health. This had resulted in healthy food in the canteen and in parents leading students' learning in important areas of health promotion.

Overall, arrangements to support students were good. Positive student-staff relationships permeated the school. Students were given helpful advice and guidance to help them decide on their future education. The school's approach to managing behaviour had been revised and improved. Procedures were well-defined and implemented, including an enhanced system for communicating with parents about any issues of concern. These procedures were well understood by the students, staff and parents. Students' academic performance was tracked and monitored through a newly developed electronic database and a web-site assisted the school to communicate a range of information to parents. The school had started to audit students' learning needs. It had linked this to staff training to help support teacher and parent skills identifying and supporting students. The school had increased its focus on attendance and punctuality. As result attendance had increased significantly from last session and was good for the last term.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. The Principal had successfully shared his vision, aimed at maximising the potential of all learners, with his teachers, non-teaching staff and most parents. His focus on supporting delegated leadership had resulted in his senior managers feeling empowered. Each member of the middle management team had a clear remit which had led to an increased breadth of learning experiences for students and support for their learning. Students and their parents had also benefited from the opportunities to take on leadership roles. Senior managers, teachers, students and parents had responded positively to these opportunities and were making good progress in developing their leadership skills.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had made very good progress in meeting the recommendations of the last inspection. Managers formally monitored teaching through planned classroom visits. This was ensuring greater consistency across the school. Teachers' skills in self-evaluation were developing and progress had been made to address weaknesses in teaching and learning. A range of initiatives had impacted positively to improve the consistency in teaching quality and in tracking student progress, although more was needed to fully meet this recommendation.

Partnership with parents and the wider community was good. The school had significantly improved communication and partnership with parents. A representative parents' committee had been appointed and were very active in supporting the school. Parents were helping students learn in a range of areas including leading lessons on health. Students benefited from educational and sporting links with other schools and careers events which helped prepare them for the world of work and from participation in a wide range of competitions and cultural events.

Governance was acceptable. The representative of the governing body held the school accountable through regular visits. He was very supportive in assisting the school in meeting its priorities. The newly formed parent council had successfully raised issues of homework and health with the governing body leading to improvements. The governing body should build on this enhanced communication and involvement of parents in developing the school's priorities through considering how it might ensure greater representation from key stakeholders.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Staff members were well-qualified and were benefiting from annual reviews. Teachers and parents had participated in a wide range of recent training and development events which were increasing their understanding of additional support needs and appropriate learning strategies. Students' opportunities to engage in sports had increased through use of a range of facilities outside the school. Books and ICT had significantly increased in the school library. Despite these improvements there remained shortages in teaching resources particularly at the early primary stages and in aspects of mathematics and science. The size of some classrooms and external spaces restricted learning, particularly in practical subjects.

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	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

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	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

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

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

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Not Applicable	Good	Good
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:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Assessment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Not Applicable	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Not Applicable	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	Acceptable
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: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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

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