

INSPECTION REPORT

The Oxford School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Oxford School

Location	Al Muhaisinah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.oxford.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2543666
Address	P.O Box, 50091, Muhaisinah, Dubai
Principal	Nikhat Rehman
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to post-16
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,828
Number of Emirati students	28 (2%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 5 th December 2011 to Thursday 8 th December 2011

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The context of the school

Located in Al Muhaisnah, The Oxford School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage (FS) to Post-16, aged three to 18 years. At the time of the inspection the number of students on roll was 1,828. This was a substantial increase from the previous inspection when there were 1,483 students. The school follows the English National Curriculum. Students were entered for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations at the end of the secondary phase and Advanced Level examinations at the end of the Post-16 phase. There were a few students identified as needing learning support. Twenty-four different nationalities were represented among the student population, of whom about two per cent were Emirati.

At the time of the inspection there were 100 teachers, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. The Principal was in her fourth year in office. Seven teaching assistants gave support to children in the Foundation Stage (FS). A new counselor had been appointed to co-ordinate the provision for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). All teachers had teaching qualifications and were deployed appropriately across the range of grades and subjects. Several new teachers had taken up posts in the current year, mostly in the FS and primary phases.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance of The Oxford School was acceptable. It had several good features. Most students displayed good attitudes towards learning and showed positive behaviour, particularly in the higher grades. A highly committed and hard-working senior leadership team had ensured that teachers understood the need for improved teaching strategies. Progress was seen in the number of teachers implementing better strategies, particularly in the secondary and post-16 phases. The governors' decision to increase the size of the school within a short time had a negative impact on the quality of provision in the younger grades, particularly in the FS.

The school had made acceptable progress towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The increased numbers of students and teachers had greatly slowed the progress of younger students learning English. Assessment procedures were being used more consistently in the secondary and post-16 phases. However, even though the school gathered a large amount of data, it was used inconsistently to identify students' needs and implement appropriate teaching strategies. Although the school had developed detailed action plans and a comprehensive self-evaluation document, the judgements were not always accurate. The school had the capacity to continue to improve in key aspects of its work.

Key strengths

- The attainment and progress of students in secondary and post-16 English, mathematics and science;
- The positive attitudes and behaviour of all students;
- The good quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- The commitment of the Principal and senior leaders to improving the school.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in the Foundation Stage by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Improve the quality of support for students with Special Educational Needs across the school;
- Improve the school's self-evaluation processes so they accurately reflect the school's performance;
- Ensure that the governors' decisions have positive effects on the quality of education provided.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

Attainment in Islamic Education across the school was acceptable. The majority of students memorised and recited the required verses from the Holy Qur'an to appropriate levels. Attainment in Arabic, both as a first and as an additional language, was acceptable in all three phases. Most lessons were textbook-based and as a result students were not given opportunities to develop their oral skills. Attainment in English was unsatisfactory in the FS but acceptable in the primary and post-16 phases and good in the secondary

phase. Secondary students showed well-developed skills in listening and speaking. They were able to articulate their critical responses to texts and express complex ideas clearly in writing. As in English, attainment in mathematics in the FS was unsatisfactory. In the primary and secondary phases, attainment was acceptable and in the post-16 phase it was good. Attainment in science was acceptable in all phases, except post-16, where it was good. Almost all children in the FS and most students in the primary phase lacked the skills necessary to investigate or to apply their knowledge to first-hand experiences.

In the FS, progress was unsatisfactory in English and mathematics but acceptable in science. In the primary years, progress was acceptable in all key subjects. In the secondary and post-16 phases, progress was acceptable in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and Arabic as a second language. In English, mathematics and science progress was good. In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills, and understanding that were in-line with curriculum standards. Progress in Arabic as a first and additional language varied from grade to grade, except in the secondary years, where students made more even progress as a result of better teaching. Students' progress in the FS when communicating in English was hindered by a lack of structured opportunities to hear and use spoken language. In the secondary and post-16 years, progress in English, mathematics and science had improved as a result of better teaching and learning, but in science it was limited by a lack of knowledge on how to carry out investigations and interpret data.

Overall, the attainment and progress of Emirati students in all phases was generally acceptable and matched the judgements made in the different phases. In the FS, lower levels of ability in English affected the attainment of all students, including Emiratis. In later years, their oral attainment in both English and Arabic was generally good, but written work was weaker. Emirati students' progress in all subjects mostly matched that of others from different backgrounds.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in the lower grades and outstanding in the higher grades. The limited cases of misbehaviour in the early primary years were mainly due to poor classroom management. The relations between students and adults were positive across school. Attendance during the inspection was acceptable. Students' Islamic and cultural understanding was good in all phases of the school. Most students demonstrated clear understanding of Islam and the main practices of Muslims. Students in the secondary and post-16 years linked the values of Islam to their social lives; in the primary years they linked them to good behaviour. Students of all ages appreciated the nature of Dubai's multicultural society and were familiar with the local traditions and heritage of the UAE. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was good in all phases. The Students' Council provided opportunities for them to take responsibility in school affairs. Students understood their civic responsibilities and demonstrated a clear understanding of Dubai's economy. They were able to describe tourism, trade and oil as the main sources of economy in the UAE and were able to explain how Dubai had developed in a short time.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good

Teaching was of unsatisfactory quality in the FS, acceptable in the primary years and good in the secondary and post-16 years. In the FS a number of teachers were insecure in their knowledge of subjects and how to teach them. In the main, students had a secure understanding about how current work built on previous learning. However, lesson objectives did not consistently give students a clear idea about what they were expected to learn. In the best lessons, teachers used a good range of strategies, including discussions to accelerate learning. This often led to students' active participation and good progress. Opportunities were sometimes missed in lower secondary and primary lessons for students to develop independent learning skills. In the weaker lessons, teachers did not take account of students with educational needs and there were missed opportunities to extend learning for the higher achieving students. Evidence of good teaching was seen in other subjects, including art, French, physical education and drama.

The quality of learning was unsatisfactory in the FS, acceptable in the primary years and good in the secondary and post-16 years. Most of the students were keen to learn and they enjoyed opportunities to discuss things. In the weaker lessons, students had very few opportunities to be independent and actively involved in their learning. The school organised two stimulating multi-subject activity periods and good learning was observed as students explored new concepts, carried out research and solved problems. In normal class work however, they did not have sufficient opportunities to collaborate, to extend their learning using information and communication technology (ICT) or to develop independent research skills. Links between learning in different subjects were limited.

The quality of assessment was unsatisfactory in the FS, acceptable in the primary phase and good in both the secondary and post-16 phases. Although many methods were used to assess attainment and progress in the FS and primary years, teachers did not make enough use of the information to track progress over time. In the higher years, teachers made better use of assessment information to inform their lesson planning in English, mathematics and science. Written work was marked to support and provide feedback for students about how to improve. However, systems and procedures for assessment in Arabic and Islamic Education were weak. Across the school, assessment information was not used consistently enough to plan lessons, the curriculum or support for all groups of students.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable in all phases and provided well for progression. Regular reviews ensured broad and relevant experiences for all students. The new programmes for travel and tourism, art, design and psychology had improved the options for study in the post-16 phase. There was a balance between academic, creative, sporting and environmental activities. Cross-curricular links between English, science and mathematics had been thoughtfully planned. There were opportunities for learning through 'real life' contexts. Students' use of information technology (ICT) was not integrated well across subjects. The curriculum did not consistently meet the needs of students with additional needs, particularly in the FS and primary years. The curriculum was enriched by opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and visits. There were many opportunities during the school year for students to take part in charitable, social and health-promoting activities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The arrangements for securing students' health and safety were good. There were effective procedures to carry out checks on the facility and to ensure that transport arrangements conformed to the regulations. The buildings, outdoor areas and resources were generally suitable for purpose, although classrooms for the youngest student were often too small. Access for students with physical disabilities was limited to the ground floor of the buildings. The provision to ensure the long-term health and fitness of students was good. Arrangements to promote healthy eating and the benefits of exercise were well established. Fire drills were carried out at appropriate intervals. Students' personal and medical records were kept securely. Staff members and pupils were aware of the procedures to follow if they had concerns or worries about themselves or others.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Relations between staff members and almost all students were very positive, reflected in the mutual care, concern and good manners they showed to each other. The school ensured that there were systems in place to enable students to make informed choices about future career paths. Procedures for recording attendance and punctuality were detailed and effective. Arrangements to identify and to provide effective support for all students with SEN were at an early stage of development. The school's leaders were taking steps to address the shortcomings in this area.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good overall. There was a clear sense of direction and a commitment to the ethos, values and vision of the school. The Principal and senior management team provided strong leadership which was clearly focused on raising attainment. All staff members were clear about what had to be accomplished and had committed to their parts in achieving the school's vision. Subject coordinators were involved in the running and development of their subjects, but did not have full oversight of their subjects across all phases.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Senior staff members gathered information from students, teachers and parents to inform school development. They carried out lesson observations to evaluate and help improve teaching, but monitoring procedures were not clearly focused on learning outcomes. Appropriate development priorities had been identified and strategies introduced to move the school forward. Acceptable progress was made in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report, particularly given the many recent challenges faced by the school.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. There was generally positive two-way communication between school and individual parents and the school offered a wide range of information on its work. The parent consultation days provided good opportunities to discuss students' progress. Parents were involved in the life of the school and worked in the classrooms either observing lessons or helping teachers. A number did not know about some aspects of the school's work, including how the school assesses students' attainment and progress.

Governance of the school was acceptable. Statutory requirements had been met. There were opportunities for the school to present progress reports during the academic year and for the board representatives to hold leaders accountable. The governing body included representatives from different groups and took action to seek the views of others through questionnaires. The recent decision to greatly increase the

numbers of students and teachers had had a negative effect on provision across the school, especially in the FS.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The day-to-day operation of the school was efficient. There were sufficient qualified teachers, almost half of whom had been at the school for only a short time. A carefully planned induction programme had met the needs of some, but not all of them. There was too little support for students with additional needs. Some learning spaces were too small and restricted the scope of activities. Informative displays enhanced the learning environment in the majority of classrooms. Resources were adequate for most subjects, with the exception of mathematics and other areas of learning in FS.

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	221	27%
	Last year	192	27%
Teachers	61		61%
Students	133		62%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey, at about the same rate as last year. Majorities of teachers and students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of education available at the school. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. A majority believed progress was good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first or second language, but a few parents believed progress was less than good. A few parents and students indicated that the range of subjects, clubs and activities was limited. Parents, teachers and students generally held positive views about the different aspects of school provision. A majority of parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school.

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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