

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Gem Private School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Gem Private School

Location	Oud Metha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaigemschool.org
Telephone	04-3376661
Address	PO Box 989, Oud Metha Road, Dubai.
Principal	Keith Sedgwick
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,347
Number of Emirati students	3 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 12th to Thursday 15th March 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Oud Metha, Dubai Gem Private School provided education for boys and girls from ages three to 18 years, from Foundation Stage to Grade 12. The school opened in 1973. It follows the UK Curriculum and students sat IGCSE examinations in Year 11 and A- levels in Years 12 and 13.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,347 students on roll. Most students were of Indian nationality. There were a number of other nationalities, mostly Pakistani and other Asians. There were 27 Arabic students, 3 of whom were Emirati. Forty eight per cent of students were Muslim.

There were 111 teachers. The school principal had been in post since 2010. The school leadership team included the principal and three heads of school, one of whom was also assistant principal. Most teachers had teaching qualifications. Most teaching staff at the school were deployed effectively to support learning. There were teaching assistants in each kindergarten class. There were specialist teachers in other subjects including additional languages. However, the school did not have staff skilled in supporting students with additional needs. There were not sufficient numbers of teachers to provide the appropriate curriculum in Islamic Education and the Arabic language.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai Gem Private School provided a good quality of education, with outstanding attainment in a number of key subjects. There had been a few improvements since the last inspection. Key features of the school were the strong sense of community and civic responsibility of the students and their desire for learning. The school was effectively led by the Principal who had a clear vision for the school. In lessons, the curriculum and teaching and learning, needed increased challenge and development of critical thinking and inquiry skills for higher attainment and improved progress to be sustained.

The school had been responsive to most of the recommendations from the previous inspection and had made improvements in extending teaching and learning strategies in the Foundation and primary stages. This had led to some improvements in attainment and progress in a few subjects. However, greater

development of students' conceptual understanding and skills development was needed to improve the rate of progress. Despite more consistency in teaching and learning across the school since the last inspection, teaching, learning and the application of assessment information in lessons, remained the key areas for further teacher development.

Self-evaluation processes included all members of the learning community but this had not been followed by wide-ranging analysis to determine the accuracy of teachers and leaders' view of standards. Initiatives had been planned, and teaching had been monitored, but this did not always lead to improvement in learning contexts and student outcomes. There had been improvement in students' progress in Islamic Education and attainment in English in the post-16 phase.

Key strengths

- Outstanding attainment in English, mathematics and science in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- The outstanding civic responsibility and sense of community of the students;
- Strong desire for learning by students;
- Strong leadership qualities within the student body;
- Highly effective leadership by the school Principal.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the school is fully compliant with Ministry of Education requirements in relation to Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that tasks are provided which meet the needs of different learners and offer greater challenge and opportunities for critical thinking;
- Ensure that assessment information is used more effectively to plan activities;
- Further develop the curriculum so that it provides sufficient challenge for all groups of learners;
- Accurately identify and support students with special educational needs;
- Establish systematic self-evaluation processes to evaluate performance with measurable success criteria.

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

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

Students' attainment in key subjects varied across the different phases of the school. In Islamic Education the majority of students had a good understanding of Islamic concepts and could illustrate these well. In Arabic as a first language, students' attainment was in line with curriculum expectations although students' skills in writing requiring further improvement. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was as expected in primary and good in secondary, particularly in listening and speaking. Skills in English were above expectations. Students demonstrated high levels of proficiency in speaking, listening and reading but writing was under developed in Grades 7 to 9. In mathematics, students' skills were good in sequencing, sorting, and counting but in primary they lacked the skills of problem solving and critical thinking. In secondary and post-16, attainment was outstanding. Students' attainment in science in primary was improving and was demonstrated by students' capacity to classify and relate science to everyday examples. In lower secondary, students lacked practical skills and independent learning skills. However, science attainment overall in secondary and post-16 was outstanding.

Progress in Islamic Education was above expectations but students' skills linking concepts to real-life application was undeveloped in secondary. In Arabic as a first language, progress was acceptable, with students new to the school having a strong foundation of knowledge. In Arabic as an additional language, students in the secondary phase made good improvements in listening, responding and writing. In English, there was most development in speaking. Children in Foundation Stage, in mathematics had a well-developed understanding of number. In primary there was less progress with the application of problem solving skills. Students in the Foundation Stage demonstrated limited development of practical skills in science though in primary and secondary stages there was greater development in investigation and analysis. However, there were notable skills' deficiencies in lower secondary science and subsequently slower progress. Progress was strongest by the post-16 stage. Progress for students with special educational needs was acceptable in all key subjects.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Attitudes, behaviour and relationships were excellent across the school. Students could resolve issues effectively. There was a sense of self-reliance, self-discipline and a strong work ethic amongst students. There was an effective student council and a strong student voice in the school. Almost all students were aware of healthy lifestyles, but this was not always consistently applied within the school environment. Attendance was acceptable. Most students had a good understanding of Islam. They could describe the impact of Islam in Dubai. Most students appreciated local traditions and heritage and the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. They were proud of their own culture. Students in the primary phase could describe well the harmony between diverse groups of people. Students understood how Dubai's economy had developed and the varied elements that prompted such change. Students were highly proactive in their school and actively engaged in the protection of their environment. With effective ideas and application they initiated the required action and change. A number of students participated in the Emirates Environment Group, Clean-up Dubai Campaign, and recycling initiatives, in support of local and wider environmental concerns.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

Teaching for effective learning in the Foundation Stage and the primary was acceptable. In secondary and post-16, it was good. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge but understanding of how children learn was less secure. Careful questioning by teachers in the secondary and post-16 phases stimulated good levels of dialogue and encouraged critical thinking and active learning. However, this was not always matched with activities that further interested and challenged learners. Throughout the school, when there was provision of active learning, students made better progress. There were a variety of resources in the Foundation Stage used by a few, but not all teachers. The over-use of textbooks in a number of lessons resulted in passive learning. Across all phases, when the range of teaching strategies was restricted and there was little differentiation and limited challenge, the needs of learners were not met effectively.

The quality of students' learning in the Foundation Stage and primary was acceptable; in secondary and post-16, it was good. Across the school, almost all students had positive attitudes toward learning and could present their findings collaboratively and with confidence. In the secondary and post-16 phases, most students could research independently, explain their learning as well as make connections with other learning and the real world. In the Foundation Stage and primary, the majority of students did what teachers asked of them but they were often passive in their learning. Students in all phases frequently relied on the teacher to mediate their learning and affirm their understanding before they proceeded. There were limited opportunities for learners to think for themselves especially in Foundation Stage and primary. Enquiry, effective use of information and communications technology (ICT), research and critical thinking were not routinely part of learning.

Assessment was acceptable at the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and good elsewhere in the school. Questioning of students during lessons to assess understanding was effective across the school and useful oral feedback in lessons furthered students' progress. However, this was not used as well in the Foundation Stage and primary phases of the school. The progress of students was monitored and assessment data was gathered in all phases. Teachers, particularly in secondary and post-16, were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their students. However, across the school, there was limited analysis and use of assessment information to inform planning to meet the needs of all students. Students were not always clear about what they needed to do to improve. Self-assessment was a developing feature in secondary and post-16 phases, with students evaluating their progress and setting targets for themselves.

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

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

The curriculum was good at post-16 and acceptable in other phases. The school followed the English National Curriculum. It was generally broad and balanced and provided for the academic and personal development needs of the students. It was reviewed regularly ensuring continuity and progression. Programmes of study were well-planned to provide a smooth transition across the grades and phases. Students enjoyed several choices in extra-curricular activities which had a positive impact on learning. Cross-curricular planning was not a fully-developed feature of the curriculum. Independent learning, research and critical thinking opportunities were more apparent in post-16 than in the other stages. Furthermore, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary did not consistently produce appropriate levels of stimulus and challenge for all learners. The number of Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language lessons each week did not meet the Ministry of Education requirements. Students of Arabic as a first language did not follow an appropriate Ministry of Education curriculum programme.

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	Good	Good	Good	Good

The school's arrangements for health and safety were good. There were clear policies and guidelines. There was a strong staff presence and appropriate car and bus transport procedures at the beginning and end of the day to help ensure students' safety. The health and safety committee undertook regular inspections and made photographic records of areas for improvement. The premises and equipment were hygienic and well-maintained. Fire drills were held regularly but had not been recorded in an appropriate manner. There was effective medical support and record-keeping. The school medical staff had clear procedures within an efficient clinic. Healthy living was promoted throughout the school. There were recent initiatives for healthier food to be provided by the canteens and for students with allergies. The school child protection policy was understood by teachers and was published on the school website. However, students with physical disabilities did not have access to all parts of the school buildings.

The quality of support was good overall. Behaviour was managed mostly through positive reinforcement and praise. Support given to students regarding careers and higher education was beneficial. However, the support given to students with special educational needs was only a recent initiative and approaches required review and development. In particular, the arrangements for identifying students' needs, involving parents, modifying the curriculum and monitoring progress needed improvement. Attendance and punctuality were monitored carefully although this had had minimal impact on improving attendance.

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	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal had built positive relationships with staff, students and parents. With his senior leadership team, the heads of Foundation Stage, primary and secondary, he was developing an ethos of targeted improvement and shared responsibility. Nevertheless, he had the most responsibility for initiating, planning and guiding school improvement. The leadership team worked with teachers to ensure the vision and direction for the school was understood by all. The senior leaders showed productive relationships and effective communication with the other teams and staff. Priority was given to the professional development of staff. The school had capacity for further improvement in raising student outcomes.

Self-evaluation processes were acceptable. The school had identified a number of key priorities for improvement. Teachers, students and parents had been surveyed but a wide-ranging analysis had not been completed. Appraisal systems were not linked directly to professional development. A school action plan had been developed, but did not include measurable success indicators. There had been whole-school teacher professional development workshops. However, there had not been an evaluation of the impact of teacher professional development on lessons and student attainment and progress. Some monitoring of teaching and learning by leaders had taken place but a more rigorous system was needed to ensure ongoing improvement.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and most were satisfied with the quality of education the school provided. Relationships between school and home were productive and impacted on learning in a positive way. However, reports to parents did not provide enough information to ensure that parents fully understood their child's attainment levels, progress and next steps. Parents' views were valued by the school. Strong community links and use of the local environment were linked to class learning.

Governance was good. The advisory board was mostly representative of the school community and sought the views of stakeholders regularly. The board consisted of the owners, the school principal and a parent who worked at the school. Membership needed to be expanded to include broader views from the school community. Governors were supportive of the school's aims and had an understanding of improvements needed such as teacher professional development. However, it had not sufficiently held the school accountable for its performance including, for example, compliance in Islamic Education and Arabic.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There were well-established routines in the management and day-to-day running of the school. There were a number of appropriately qualified teachers and deployment was effective. The site was safe and well-maintained. Learning resources were sufficient to support acceptable learning. However, premises were restricted for students and teachers. There were insufficient places for students to sit during break and outside areas lacked coverage from the sun. Not all learning areas were accessible for those with additional learning needs.

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	383	44%
	Last year	328	22%
Teachers	60		56%
Students	131		95%

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

Approximately half the parents and teachers responded to the survey and almost all of the students responded. Almost all parents and teachers reported a high degree of satisfaction with the leadership of the school. A few teachers were concerned with the lack of respect from sub-section leaders to teachers. There was a very high level of satisfaction by most parents regarding the quality of education their children were receiving. Almost all felt the school kept their children safe and that they enjoyed school. Parents, students, and teachers felt that teaching was good at the school. Students stated that their learning experience had been impacted positively by the support provided by many teachers at the school. Parents felt their children were making good progress across most of the key subjects, but a minority expressed disappointment with the Arabic curriculum. The majority of the parents and almost all of the students expressed disappointment that there were too few extra-curricular activities offered by the school. A minority of teachers expressed concern about the lack of professional development.

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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