

King's Dubai Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 6

Report published May 2010

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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.

King’s Dubai was inspected in October 2009 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 Um Suqeim, King’s Dubai is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged from three to 11 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 438 students on roll. The student attendance as reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents were extremely satisfied with the quality of the school’s provision and with the standards achieved by their children. All parents reported that their children liked school. They stated that their children’s attainment and progress was good or very good in all the key subjects, with the exception of Islamic Education and Arabic, where parents were less sure of performance. Behaviour was felt to be good; children were expected to work hard and become independent and responsible learners and citizens. All parents agreed that the teaching was excellent, and all but a very few strongly endorsed the exceptional strength and quality of the school’s leadership. Everyone agreed, mostly very strongly, that the curriculum was broad, exciting and stimulating. All reported that the information provided by the school and the regular communications were excellent and that their children were well cared for. All felt that links with parents were exceptionally strong, as were contacts with the local community.

How well does the school perform overall?

King's School Dubai was a school of outstanding quality with high educational standards in all areas of the curriculum. In all of the key subjects students' progress was at least good and in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science it was outstanding. Attainment was outstanding in all subjects except Arabic, where it was variable in the different elements of the learnt language, with several strengths but some weaknesses. Overall, in Arabic, attainment was acceptable. Students' behaviour and their attitudes to work were outstanding. Throughout the school, children of all ages were enthusiastic and polite with high levels of self-discipline. Relationships were excellent, with students feeling valued and respected. They demonstrated a high regard for each other and their teachers. They displayed a very strong sense of personal responsibility and understood their duties as members of the school and, increasingly, as they got older, the wider community.

The quality of teaching and learning was of a very high standard, with the teaching in three out of every four lessons judged to be outstanding or good. The older students and even the youngest children were excellent learners: they were curious about the world around them; they asked penetrating and well-framed questions and worked effectively either in groups or quietly on their own. Assessment arrangements were excellent, with students receiving high quality feedback on their work and detailed analysis of performance leading to modification in curriculum development. The curriculum provided an excellent framework within which the students could succeed to the best of their abilities. A great deal of development work had recently been completed on the curriculum to provide a more skills-based and thematic approach. This curriculum review had resulted in a rich and varied learning journey for all the young people. It was regularly supplemented by a rich array of extra-curricular activities and educational excursions. The school ensured that all members of the school community were safe and secure. The premises were well maintained and healthy lifestyles were actively promoted. The support and care for the students' needs were excellent; all young learners were treated with care and respect and this fostered an atmosphere where the needs of every individual were met and their many successes were cherished and celebrated.

The school was led with vision and purpose with a strong commitment to world class standards whilst successfully retaining the strong core ethos of 'the best by every child'. The experienced senior management team ensured that the school was a fully reflective organisation with effective systems for self-evaluation and development planning. Governance arrangements were clear and held the school leaders to full account. The staffing facilities and resources for learning were of the highest order. The school delivered well on an ambitious set of promises to parents.

Key features of the school

- The outstanding progress and excellent teaching in Islamic Education;
- The outstanding attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science;
- The commitment, vision and strong sense of purpose of the senior management team;
- The excellent attitudes to learning, the courtesy and harmony evident amongst all the students;
- The high quality teaching, the rich curriculum and effective assessment procedures;
- The excellent links with parents together with the high quality of care and support which the school provided.

Recommendations

- Raise the levels of attainment and progress made by the older students in Arabic as an additional language to achieve a stronger focus upon communicative skills by:
 - Improving the quality of teaching and learning;
 - Modifying and strengthening the curriculum and the assessment arrangements so that there is a clear pathway of purpose and progression.

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

In Islamic Education, the current levels of attainment for most students were good overall whilst almost all students made outstanding progress. In all grades in the primary phase, all students made excellent progress in their understanding of the Pillars of Islam and of Islamic practices. The level of detail and accuracy which the students demonstrated in their written and oral responses to challenging questions was exceptional and very often above the expected levels for their age. Another outstanding feature was the excellent links students made between what they were learning and their everyday lives as children and future citizens of an Islamic nation. Students' recitation of The Holy Qur'an was variable in quality but, overall, the attainment in this aspect was good for the majority of students. Those students who needed more support with recitation of The Holy Qur'an were observed to be making good progress in the additional class outside of school hours.

In Arabic as a first language, attainment was good overall and all students made at least good progress in most of the aspects of the language. In relation to their starting points, students made outstanding progress, particularly with their listening, reading and writing skills. In speaking, almost all of them were making significant progress with the range of vocabulary they were using and were developing their confidence and accuracy. In Arabic as an additional language, students' attainment was acceptable overall. Students made good progress in the lower grades of the primary phase and almost all of them knew a good range of vocabulary for their age and could use a good number of greetings and a few basic sentences which they pronounced with reasonable accuracy. They could also identify some of the letters of Arabic, could pronounce their letter sounds accurately and were learning to write them in initial, medial and final positions. In the higher years of primary, students continued to make good progress with the writing of Arabic cursive script; however, the majority of students made only acceptable progress with their reading, listening and speaking skills and only a few of them demonstrated the ability to read effectively, write and communicate using a wide range of words and phrases.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding throughout the school. By the end of the Foundation Stage children listened attentively to instructions, understood and responded with ease to questions about their work. They also expressed their ideas and opinions clearly. Many children could read, and accurately write letters and familiar words. By the end of the primary phase most students achieved very high levels in the English National Curriculum tests. Many students produced a wide variety of high quality writing, including reports of experiments, curriculum vitae, creative descriptions and extracts from biographies and autobiographies. Many students had rich vocabularies, a good awareness of grammar and outstanding listening skills; they could take part in complex discussions to reach logical conclusions. All students were aware of different genres of literature and enjoyed reading widely.

Attainment and progress in mathematics in Foundation Stage and primary phase were outstanding. In National Curriculum tests attainment had been consistently well above UK national averages. In the Foundation Stage, most children could recognise numbers and order and count to ten, with many able to count beyond ten. They could recognise simple shapes and were developing their understanding of capacity through play and practical activities. By the end of the primary phase, students' mental agility in calculating was excellent and they could solve complex problems and some algebraic equations. They could handle and interpret data and had an excellent understanding of shape, space and measures. Students thoroughly enjoyed developing increasingly challenging mathematical concepts and applying their learning in new situations.

Attainment and progress in science at both the Foundation Stage and primary phase were outstanding. Attainment in the English National Curriculum tests was well above average at the end of Year 6, with a high proportion of students significantly exceeding UK national expectations. Students' scientific enquiry skills were well-developed: they could form hypotheses which were then tested by investigations. These procedures were then carried out with precision and accurate observation. These outstanding enquiry skills had been well embedded during the Foundation Stage where the children had been encouraged to ask questions. The integration of science within the themed curriculum approach meant that the application and relevance of scientific principles to everyday life were well established in the learners' minds.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was outstanding overall, as was their attitudes and behaviour. Students wore school uniform with pride and had positive relationships with adults and with each other. They were charming, courteous and highly-motivated. They thoroughly enjoyed learning and were happy working independently and with others. Students were inspired by their teachers and so grew in confidence and had high aspirations. Attendance and punctuality were good.

Older students were excellent role-models and increasingly took responsibility within school. They took turns raising the flag at the start of the day. They were involved in decision-making such as identifying the need for more drinking fountains and deciding which charities to support. Students celebrated the similarities and differences within the school's diverse cultural mix. They learned about traditional homes, costumes and artefacts through topics and displays and they respected the principles of Islam. Muslim students had a well-developed understanding of Islam and what it meant to be a Muslim and they applied this in their everyday lives.

Students were aware that Dubai was part of the United Arab Emirates. They knew about the Ruler's vision for change and that Dubai had changed significantly in recent years and was now mostly dependent for its wealth on the retail trade, tourism, construction and businesses from overseas. They were conscious of the need to conserve energy and water by switching off air-conditioning and not leaving appliances on standby. They were aware that the Metro was helping to reduce pollution caused by traffic and they were enthusiastic about collecting waste paper and plastic for recycling.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was outstanding. Almost all teachers were excellent practitioners: they knew well the learning needs of both the youngest children and the older students and planned accordingly, over the short, medium and long term. Lessons proceeded at a brisk pace with, in most cases, high levels of challenge. A wide range of resources for learning, including information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, was used extensively and expertly. Teachers made excellent use of questioning to elicit full responses from the students; their learning needs were met by teachers' skilful targeting of individuals using questions with the right level of challenge. Teachers planned and worked closely with the teaching assistants in order to maximise their roles. They were highly effective in enabling the teaching assistants, who were well-qualified, to play their roles as facilitators of learning.

The learning was of outstanding quality throughout the school. Children and students of all ages were enthusiastic learners: they clearly enjoyed being at school and were excited by the stimulating environment and secure relationships. They could work equally well on their own, quietly and with high levels of concentration, or in groups – collaborating and challenging one another whilst treating the views of others with great respect. The development of questioning was a high priority at Foundation Stage, and, as a consequence, the quality of students' enquiry and research skills throughout the school was of a very high order. Students were readily able to relate their learning to the real world and make connections with school work and their daily lives.

Assessment had been developed to a high degree of sophistication. Regular and detailed on-going assessment was used to promote the progress of each individual; this took the form of detailed marking and annotation of students' projects and their written work. The feedback was accurately recorded in the learning journal, where clear guidance was given on areas for development and improvement. Teachers, parents and the students themselves had an opportunity to comment on their progress in these journals. Students' performance in regular tests was analysed to verify progress and students' work was regularly moderated to ensure consistency of standards and expectations between different teachers.

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

The curriculum was outstanding. It was based on the English National Curriculum and offered breadth, balance and challenge. It had a clear rationale based on shared values and had recently been reviewed by all teaching and auxiliary staff. This resulted in an innovative, thematic approach focused on skills development through cross-curricular treatment of whole-school themes. It ensured that students' needs were fully met in terms of creative, physical and practical experiences. The curriculum provided an excellent framework to support teachers' planning and assessment. The thematic approach to the delivery of the science curriculum was of very high quality. Scientific methodology and practical skills were embedded early in the Foundation Stage where children observed, measured and questioned. In the primary phase, science was integrated into the thematic curriculum and was contextualised in real-life situations. There was outstanding progression in literacy and focus on practical and experiential learning using students' first-hand knowledge of the local environment and community, which enabled them to attain high standards in key skills as well as providing opportunities for enjoyment, personalisation and choice. In mathematics, students developed a wide range of mathematical concepts through play and practical activities and had opportunities to solve increasingly challenging problems related to the real world. The syllabi and courses for Islamic Education were challenging and coherent, leading to outstanding progress and empathy. The curriculum in Arabic as a first language also promoted challenge and enjoyment. The curriculum for Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in the early primary years, but lacked challenge in the older years. The time allocation for Arabic was below the Ministry of Education requirement. Information and communication technology was integrated into the themed curriculum which ensured effective deployment of specialist equipment and high quality learning packages. The extra-curricular programme, which included an impressive range of sporting and cultural activities, greatly enhanced provision.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for protecting students were outstanding. Traffic was well-managed by security guards at the start and end of the day. Members of staff were well-rehearsed in evacuation procedures and knew their responsibilities regarding health and safety and risk assessments in school and on school trips. Most staff had been trained in First Aid. Systems for contacting parents in an emergency were effective and efficient. Training was provided to ensure all staff played their part in maintaining a healthy and hygienic environment; buildings and facilities were clean and well-maintained. Teaching areas were attractive and orderly although some, such as the music room, were rather limited in space. Healthy lifestyles were promoted through the curriculum and the wide range of out-of-school activities. Packed lunches generally provided a healthy and balanced diet and the school nurse was proactive in working with staff, students and families, to promote healthy lifestyles. Child protection arrangements were in place. Students and parents were well-informed about safe internet practices.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Staff and older students were excellent role-models. Students' respect and care for each other contributed to the outstanding behaviour. There were excellent systems for tracking progress and providing additional support where necessary. Guidance and provision for students with additional learning needs were well-established and teaching assistants provided excellent support in lessons. Attendance was closely monitored and absences were almost always for valid reasons. Students reported that they enjoyed school and felt safe because teachers provided outstanding support.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management of the school were of outstanding quality. The school was strongly led with a clear vision and an ambitious purpose by the Headteacher and her senior team. Everyone was strongly committed to excellence and high achievement within a caring environment where the needs of each and every child were well catered for. The effective distribution of responsibilities amongst the senior management team resulted in clear lines of accountability at all levels. Joint lesson observations were a regular feature of the management's approach to monitoring and evaluation, and in this way consistency of professional practice was achieved. King's Dubai was a self-reflective establishment where committed professionals were constantly striving to improve the quality of provision and enhance the students' learning. Processes for self-evaluation and improvement were, therefore, an intrinsic part of the life of the school.

Regular audits from external and independent organisations were an essential feature of the life of the school; any findings or issues for action were quickly pursued. Equally, the recommendations from the previous inspection report had been not only met in full, but in some cases exceeded. For example, the effectiveness of initial response to the recommendation relating to the integration of ICT across the curriculum was evaluated quickly and, when it was found not to be achieving the desired outcomes, the plan was revised. The implementation of the revised ICT action plan was highly effective. Equally, the recommendations in the previous report relating to staff induction and development, and to assessment had been addressed to great effect. In both cases internal procedures had been revised and modified to produce new systems which were highly effective.

Partnerships with parents were of an outstanding high quality. Parents were fully involved in their children's learning and the work of the school. They were fully embraced by the school as genuine partners in learning – two way communication between the school and all parents was excellent. Parents were invited every week to look at their children's work in their classrooms, and these informal contacts were supplemented by regular written communications and reports. The school operated an open door policy for parents, who were equally welcomed to address either the Headteacher, senior managers or classroom teachers. The school was well-placed in the centre of its local community and it was strongly supported by local businesses.

The school governance was exemplary. The governing body was fully representative of all relevant stakeholders, including parental representation, and the senior leaders at the school were fully accountable to the governors for the school's performance.

The staffing, facilities and resources for learning were all of outstanding quality. Although the school was situated on a tightly constrained site, the buildings had been planned with an exceptional degree of ingenuity and efficiency to include, as well as a meetings hall and the main teaching areas, a swimming pool, a grassed sports area and extensive secure outdoor play areas for the youngest children. The resources for learning were plentiful and of a very high quality.

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:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Outstanding

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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