

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Scholars Private School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Scholars Private School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubaischolars.com
Telephone	04 2988892
Address	PO Box 2819, Al Qusais, Dubai
Principal	Aparna Yashpal Verma
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3 - 18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,603
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 31st October 2011 to Thursday 3rd November 2011

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The context of the school

Dubai Scholars Private School is situated in Al Qusais. The school opened in 1976 and is one of the oldest educational institutions in the community. At the time of the inspection there were 1,603 students on roll, aged between three and 18 years. There were 309 newly registered students in the school.

The school followed the English National Curriculum in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 leading to Ordinary level and Advanced level examinations in the upper secondary and Post-16 phases. The Foundation Stage (Kindergarten) had an activities-based curriculum and did not follow a specific curriculum. There were 90 full-time teachers, excluding the school Principal and Headmistress. There were five part-time teachers. 39 teachers had teaching qualifications. 19 teachers had left the school since the beginning of the school year. Teachers were deployed effectively to support learning. There were three teaching and learning assistants for the Kindergarten. There was an efficient administrative team which ensured the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis. The newly appointed Student Welfare Counsellor had identified a few students with special educational needs. This number represented less than one per cent of the student body. The level of provision was quite limited as the newly appointed welfare counsellor had only a formative programme of identification and classroom support. She had recently begun teacher professional development for the identification and classroom learning support of students with special needs.

The nationalities of the students were mixed, with 11 different countries represented. The majority of these were Indian, Pakistani and other Asian nationalities. All students had English as an additional language. The majority of students spoke Hindi or Urdu as their first language. There were 678 Muslim students.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The school provided a good quality of education and an ethos of on-going improvement. School leadership was dynamic in its determination for school development. Strengths of the school included high levels of student attainment in external examinations and outstanding attainment and progress in secondary English, mathematics and science. Management initiatives included the development of a system for

accessing students' progress data across phases and subjects. Student leadership in Grades 12 and 13 was evident with older students providing learning support opportunities to younger learners. All students had English as an additional language and showed varied progress in English acquisition and usage. Parents valued the open-door policy of the school, its effective two-way communication and their easy access to school leadership and staff.

The school had made acceptable progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection. It had improved writing and speaking in Arabic as an additional language. However, teaching, learning and assessment were still uneven and required improvements across all phases and subjects. The Kindergarten still required development in teaching and learning and with its curriculum provision. Special Educational Needs provision had only recently expanded with the appointment of a new student counsellor. There was a developing programme of teacher peer observation for improved teaching practice but this needed more specific targeting of teaching skills.

Key strengths

- The students' outstanding progress in key subjects at different phases of the school;
- The students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour across all phases of the school;
- The students' outstanding understanding of Islam and appreciation local culture and traditions, as well as civic, economic and environment understanding, in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- The good teaching and learning in most phases of the school;
- The good leadership, self-evaluation and partnerships with parents and the community.

Recommendations

- Enhance the curriculum and improve teaching to raise attainment in the Kindergarten in the key subjects;
- Use assessment information to fully inform curriculum planning and teaching to meet the needs of all students;
- Continue to identify and support students with special educational needs with greater rigour to accelerate progress;
- Use external benchmarking as a point of reference for standards.

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

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

Attainment was acceptable in key subjects in Kindergarten and good or outstanding in other phases. In Islamic Education, students displayed good knowledge and understanding including the values of tolerance and respect for others. Recitation was good and discussion showed confidence, but few students used higher order thinking skills. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was good in listening, speaking, and reading with writing improving. Students' attainment in English and science was good in the

primary phase and outstanding in secondary. In English, in primary grades, students demonstrated good standards in reading with well-developed writing in sentences and paragraphs. In the secondary phase, students could discuss and evaluate a range of texts to a very high level. In science, students had better theoretical knowledge but less well developed practical skills. By the secondary and Post-16 phases, students had detailed knowledge of scientific concepts and showed high performance in external examinations. Attainment in mathematics was outstanding in primary, secondary and post-16. The skills of applying mathematics were developed in most but not all lessons. Attainment in non-key subjects was acceptable.

Progress was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good and outstanding in other subjects across other phases. In Islamic Education, progress was good but limited in the analysis of topics. In Arabic as an additional language, in the primary phase, children made outstanding progress in spoken language development such as pronunciation. However, writing in the primary and secondary phase was under-developed. Progress in English was good in primary and outstanding in secondary with students showing excellent progress in all the language skills. In mathematics, other than Kindergarten, students showed outstanding progress in most lessons, especially in secondary and post-16. Progress in science in primary and post-16 was good and was outstanding in secondary with more skills development and deeper understanding. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress 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	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

The attitudes and behaviour of students were outstanding across all phases. There were strong, positive relationships between staff and students. Students worked hard, respected and responded to teachers, and appreciated appraisal by their peers. They valued a healthy diet, exercise and sport. Civic and Islamic understanding was good in the Kindergarten and primary phases and outstanding in secondary and post-16. Students linked Islamic culture to values and respect, and appreciated local heritage and traditions. They understood how these impacted both residents and visitors to Dubai. They could explain the importance of expatriates, friendships with people of other cultures and their relevance to life in the UAE. Economic and environmental understanding was good in the Kindergarten and primary and outstanding in secondary and Post-16. Older students showed pride in their school and wanted to contribute to the whole school community. They had excellent understanding of local and global economic issues and how these affected the economy of Dubai. They had an in-depth knowledge of environmental issues and could explain conservation of energy and water within the school. Attendance was acceptable.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

The quality of teaching was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and knew how students learned. Lesson planning was consistently good, meeting the needs of almost all students effectively. Teachers' skills in time management were good, but most lessons ended with a bell rather than a summary of what had been learned. Resources were effectively used, but in science there were too few resources. Teachers' interactions with students were positive, and teachers' skills in questioning students were productive for learners. A majority of teachers were adept at asking questions in ways that promoted thinking rather than the recall of facts. Although a few teachers dominated lessons by talking for too long, more often teachers had a good balance of dialogue with students. Teaching strategies met the needs of the majority of students. Students who were high-attainers were under-challenged and low-attainers were not always appropriately supported. In non-key subjects the quality of teaching varied and included some outstanding teaching. Teaching was observed in environmental studies, Yoga, music, performing arts, accounting, business studies and physical education.

The quality of learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good across the rest of the school. Children in Kindergarten were eager learners but activities often lacked challenge. Too much time was spent preparing activities and cleaning up and not enough time was spent acquiring knowledge and skills and explaining understanding. In the other phases learning was good and in some lessons exceeded the teacher's expectations. Students were enthusiastic and responsible learners, but had few opportunities to learn independently. Their interactions were respectful and appropriate most of the time and they co-operated well. Students' collaboration on tasks was good but rarely interdependent. The application of learning to the real world was a part of learning in most lessons. Connections between areas of learning were observed but were not part of an overall plan for integration. Students' enquiry skills were good but

not called upon frequently enough. Research was mostly done outside school. Critical thinking skills were developed with older students but less well developed in Kindergarten and primary phases.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in all phases. Assessment systems and processes had improved significantly since the previous inspection allowing school leaders to analyse and compare term and year results in all subjects. Every student had comprehensive assessment profiles that were based upon accurate data. Teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses well, especially in mathematics. Formative assessment was done in most lessons. There was better support for students having difficulty as a result of assessment information, but the use of assessment data had limited influence upon curriculum planning and teaching, particularly in the Kindergarten.

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

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

The curriculum was good, except in the Kindergarten where it was acceptable. Continuity and progression were good but not always consistently so. The development of practical skills in science did not adequately prepare primary-age students for secondary science. The transition arrangements for students starting at the school, as well as between the phases, ensured that most students were well prepared for the next stages of their education. The curriculum was regularly reviewed to ensure good provision of all subjects. The planned curriculum met the needs of most students but the least and most able were not always well supported. Cross-curricular links enhanced learning, especially in the lower grades, but there were too few opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking. There was enrichment through school events, visits and visitors. A limited range of extra-curricular activities were offered to students including sports on Saturdays but there were not as many opportunities for inter-school competitive sports events to meet students' needs and interests.

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

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good. Staff throughout the school took their duty of care very seriously. Clear expectations and well-rehearsed routines throughout the day and on the school buses ensured students were safe. Students were well supervised by teachers and support staff during the school day. There was also a monitoring system whereby older students supervised the movements and care of younger students during breaks and between classes. The premises were clean and tidy, and all equipment was maintained in good condition. The medical staff carefully monitored individual health needs and provided advice on a healthy diet and exercise. An extensive healthy life-style programme was provided for the whole school including a 15-topic curriculum course. Medical records were good and parents informed of any issues with their child with appropriate follow-up contact. Medication was safely locked away. All staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Relationships between staff and students were cordial with students highly respectful of school leaders and teachers. The management of students' behaviour was good as was the pastoral care provided by staff. Behaviour management policies were effectively communicated to students and parents. Guidance on future education options was appropriate for the age of the students. However, Grade 9 students were not provided with sufficient guidance in choosing subjects at Grade 10 and in making appropriate career choices. There were limited opportunities for students to gain specialist knowledge and experience from the local community with only a few links between school curriculum and businesses and the community. Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality were effective with efficient communication to parents for clarification of a child's attendance and any issues of concern. Additional support for students with special educational needs was acceptable; identification and support for students with such needs was at early stage of development. The recently appointed school counsellor had made good progress in supporting students' individual needs as well as working with parents to maintain communication and reporting about their child's progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good. The school leaders had a clear vision for the school. The Principal promoted school improvement and was supported by the headmistress. There was a newly appointed Kindergarten leader who was beginning to have an impact on this phase. School leadership did not effectively use the evident strengths of subject leaders to manage change in the school such as curriculum review and improving teaching. There had been an acceptable response to the previous inspection addressing all recommendations. Students were given limited leadership opportunities. The school had a strong capacity to further improve.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. There was a much wider staff involvement in self-evaluation with all teachers recently completing a self-evaluation process. The school action plan was directed at improving teaching practice including classroom observations by school leaders and teacher peer observations. School priorities in response to the previous school inspection findings were teacher development and improved learning outcomes for students. The school evaluations were accurate in some areas and optimistic in others. They did not consistently identify weaknesses in teaching or the impact of changes of teachers upon students.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There was an active parents group. Communication was through newsletters, student diaries, e-mail and phone contact. Most parents felt positive about almost all aspects of the school, including leadership. The communication between home and school, the open access parents enjoyed to teachers and the school leaders and the effective response to their concerns were highly valued. However, a significant minority of parents were not satisfied with the extra-curricular sports' programme and school cleanliness. There were a few links with the community to support the school's curriculum and the careers guidance programme, but these aspects required greater development. Reports to parents were issued regularly, but did not include targets for the students.

Governance was acceptable. The board of governors had a positive influence on the school and was involved in school decisions. Membership included parent and community representatives. The board took a strategic view and gave advice for future development. Though there were regular reports from the school leaders, the board did not hold senior leaders accountable for the performance of the school. Stakeholders' views were gathered informally. There had not been systematic surveys carried out.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There had been some investment in resources including information and communications technology. The management of the school's procedures and routines was effective and efficient. Teachers were suitably qualified. There had been a twenty per cent turnover in staff, impacting all phases of the school, particularly the Kindergarten. The school did not have a librarian. The school was mostly clean and in a reasonable state of repair. The library had a small range of resources but limited access to reference books and the internet restricted opportunities for research and independent learning.

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	496	41%
	Last year	585	51%
Teachers	23		24%
Students	63		49%

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

A significant minority of parents responded to the survey, down slightly from last year's response. About a quarter of the teachers and half of the senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents and senior students were satisfied with the overall quality of education available at the school. Most parents believed that their children's progress in the key subjects was good, but a few indicated that progress in Arabic as an additional language was not good. Senior students held similar views on progress in the key subjects. More than a few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the range of clubs and activities available, an opinion that was shared by senior students and teachers. About half the parents agreed that there was someone at the school whom their children trusted and could talk to, but about a third did not know and a few thought not. Majorities of parents and students thought that school leaders listened to their opinions, but a few of each group did not think so. Majorities of parents, teachers and students reported that they were involved in improving the school, but again, a few indicated that they were not involved. About half the parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, but almost half indicated that they did not know. Parents, teachers and students were mostly positive in their other views about provision by 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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