

Repton School Dubai Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

Report published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Repton School Dubai was inspected in March 2011 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 Nad al Sheba, Repton School Dubai is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to post-16, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum, from Foundation Stage to Year 11 and the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme at post-16. At the time of the inspection there were 2,200 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most parents were pleased with the school's quality of education. Most were satisfied with their children's progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first or second language. Almost all thought that their children made at least satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. A similar proportion felt that the quality of teaching and learning was good in the school. Most parents were satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities. The majority did not know about the school's provision of guidance for students' future education or careers and a minority did not know how the school dealt with bullying. Almost all agreed that the school helped their children to make healthy lifestyle choices and kept students safe. The majority agreed that they were partners in learning with the school, that the school responded appropriately to parental concerns and set an appropriate amount of homework. Most felt reports and teacher meetings were helpful and the majority felt involved in the school's work. Most felt that the school was led well, although half did not know of the previous inspection report, the school's response to it, or any

improvements made. Teaching was felt to be the greatest strength and extra activities in most need of improvement.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school continued to provide a good quality of education. Leaders had ensured that the school had made mostly good progress in response to the previous inspection's recommendations and had made improvements in a number of important areas.

In the Foundation Stage, children's attainment and progress in English and science were good. Their attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding. In the primary phase, students' attainment and progress in most subjects were good and in Arabic as an additional language they were acceptable. In the secondary phase, students' attainment and progress were good in most subjects. Their attainment and progress were acceptable in Arabic as an additional language and in science. Their progress in mathematics was outstanding. In the post-16 phase, students' attainment and progress in most subjects were acceptable and in English they were good. Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Teaching was good across the school. Learning was good in all phases except post-16 where it was acceptable. Assessment was good in Foundation Stage and Primary. There was a good quality curriculum and generally good arrangements for health and safety. Student support was good in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Leadership and management were good overall and the school had a good capacity for further improvement.

Key features of the school

- Attainment and progress had improved in most key subjects;
- Teaching was generally good, although there was some variability in its quality;
- Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding;
- The school provided a good curriculum that met most students' needs well;
- The school's health and safety arrangements were good;
- The school's governance had improved and was now effective in holding the school to account;
- The school's partnerships with parents and the community remained outstanding;
- Staffing, facilities and resources had improved to outstanding.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in science in the secondary school and in mathematics and science in post-16;
- Improve student attendance;
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching by setting work to meet students' needs;
- Improve the oversight and support for students with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented;

- Increase the rigour of the monitoring and appraisal of teaching;
- Link the appraisal of teachers to their professional development.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment was good in primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Students' progress was good in primary and secondary, and acceptable in post-16. Across the school most students could recite short chapters of The Holy Qur'an with few errors, although only a few applied recitation rules correctly. Most primary students had a basic knowledge of the Pillars of Islam and of faith. In secondary, most students discussed and explained the difference between Zakat and Sadaqah and between compulsory and optional forms of worship. In the post-16 phase, the majority of students understood how Muslim women should dress and other manners expected of good Muslims. Only a minority had good understanding of how to apply what they learned to real life contexts.

In Arabic as a first language, attainment was good in primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Students' progress was good in primary and secondary, and acceptable in post-16. In all year groups, students' listening skills were good; they understood and followed the teachers' instructions and responded well. In primary, most students used standard Arabic in short sentences to express themselves, but their extended writing skills were acceptable. In secondary, the majority of students could read familiar and unfamiliar texts confidently, recognise points of view and give summaries. In post-16, most students showed extended writing skills on different topics with clear handwriting. Only a few students had an appropriate level of grammatical skills and could apply them well.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language in both the primary and secondary schools were acceptable. In lower primary, most students made good progress in all key aspects of Arabic and were gaining confidence in their reading and listening skills. Most students in the upper primary school were making the progress expected of them. Most were able to read and write familiar vocabulary and short sentences related to the current 'healthy living' theme. Secondary school students' progress was variable, with new students mostly making better progress than others in relation to their starting points. The more able students could read and write at levels expected by the school, but the less able often required the work to be translated into English.

Attainment and progress in English were good across the school. The majority of students were good oral communicators. Children in Foundation Stage had good listening, speaking and comprehension skills. By Year 6, many students were also using higher order skills of reading and writing in a variety of genres; creative, analytical and functional. Year 11 and post-16 students demonstrated good language and analytical skills when reading challenging texts. In the secondary school, some students with English as an additional language were selected for the Repton English Academy Dubai programme and made at least good progress. The progress

and attainment of other students with English as an additional language were more variable and were better in the primary phase.

In the Foundation Stage, attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding and in the primary school they were good. Attainment in the secondary school was good and progress was outstanding. In the post-16 phase, attainment and progress were acceptable. In the Foundation Stage, children's knowledge of number, calculation and shape, space and measures was strong. Year 2 students could identify odd and even numbers beyond 150. By Year 6, students' secure knowledge of number operations and the properties of circles were used to discover Pi. In most Year 4 to 6 lessons, students made slow progress in problem-solving skills. Secondary students made good progress in using thinking skills to find their own solutions to problems. Post-16 students had good knowledge of mathematics, but made slower progress in applying it and in thinking independently.

Science attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase were good. In the secondary and post-16 phases they were acceptable. In Foundation Stage, children had good knowledge of the human body and life cycles and were making good progress in understanding physical processes, such as floating and sinking. Investigative skills were less well developed. By Year 6, most students could build circuits to investigate simple questions, and relate their observations to current and voltage. By the last year of secondary school, the majority of students could evaluate the benefits of using alternative energy sources. Most students had acceptable investigative skills. The attainment of more able students was acceptable. At post-16, the majority of students could perform calculations based on chemical equations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' behaviour and attitudes were outstanding in all phases of the school. They were particularly good in the great majority of lessons and in students' conduct around school. Children in the Foundation Stage and older students were extremely polite and well mannered with visitors. The great majority of students made wise choices about health and fitness, exploiting the school's excellent range of sporting opportunities. In a few secondary lessons, students behaved less well. Attendance was acceptable, but improving.

In the Foundation Stage and primary phase, students showed an outstanding awareness of Islam, the local culture and the traditions of the UAE. They were well aware of the diversity in modern Dubai society. In secondary and post-16 phases, students valued highly their interaction with others from different faiths and backgrounds. They also had good knowledge of the character of different emirates within the UAE. However, they were not significantly involved in daily responsibilities around the school in roles such as mentors, monitors or sports coaches.

Economic and environmental understanding was good across the school. In each phase there was a very clear awareness that Dubai offered employment to people from all parts of the globe and how the recent recession had affected world economics. Students had less

engagement with environmental issues. While Foundation Stage children had very good understanding of why recycling mattered and how trees needed to be preserved to sustain oxygen production, the practice of recycling was not prominent in the school. Students in secondary and post-16 classes had limited involvement in local or international environmental projects for sustainable development.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good overall, although it was variable in some phases and in some subjects, especially in the post-16 phase. In the Foundation Stage there was a good balance between teacher and child-led sessions. In the best lessons throughout the school, teachers used their strong subject knowledge and their understanding of the learning process to inspire and motivate students. They planned for a range of abilities and created a climate in which learning was exciting. Students were encouraged to share their ideas and sometimes to explain their thinking. Efficient use was made of time and a range of resources and strategies enriched learning. For example, technology was effectively used to engage students. In such lessons, all students were challenged, saw the purpose of their learning and made good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. In a minority of lessons, when the expectation was the same for all students regardless of ability, or when expectations were not clearly understood, progress was slower.

Students' learning was good in the Foundation Stage and in the primary and secondary phases and was acceptable at post-16. Most students were motivated and enthusiastic about learning. They worked well in groups and enjoyed practical activities, especially when they could make connections with learning in other subjects and could apply their learning to the real world. For example, children in Foundation Stage could identify and describe the properties of an archway in a building. Secondary students were able to think of new ways to solve problems in mathematics. They used technology and, to a lesser extent, the library to research topics such as Islamic history. In some subjects at post-16, students were less confident in taking responsibility for their learning. A few were passive in lessons and were not sufficiently aware of their strengths and areas for development.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and the primary school and acceptable in secondary and in post-16. Most teachers knew their students well and made good use of questions to assess understanding and correct misconceptions before moving on. They facilitated students' self and peer-assessment. Work was usually marked and often provided students with guidance on how to improve. Records of students' attainment were used well by some departments to extend learning for all abilities and to track progress over time. However, this was not the case in all subjects and in all parts of the school.

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in the Foundation Stage, good in primary and secondary phases and acceptable in post-16. The curriculum was based on a clear rationale to meet most students' needs. It was based broadly on the English National Curriculum with students in Years 5 and 6 following the Independent Schools Examination Board syllabus. Post-16 students followed the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. In addition, most students took Islamic Education and Arabic. This core curriculum was supported by cross-curricular themes in primary, some good cross-phase work and some subject links in secondary. The curriculum was enhanced by trips to local centres of interest and further afield. In the primary and secondary phases, curriculum review had led to improved planning for continuity and progression. The school's leaders understood the need to ensure a smoother transition to post-16 studies by providing more independent learning activities earlier. The introduction of some specialist teaching in the upper primary had led to better quality learning activities. A creative arts element, an intensive course for promoting secondary students' English skills, a programme for debating, and a very wide range of extra-curricular activities all enhanced students' learning. The post-16 curriculum did not include the entire IB curriculum, notably the community links. There were only acceptable arrangements to cater for the needs of most students who were learning English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and those of high ability.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure students' health and safety were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the rest of the school. Effective security helped ensure students' safety. Students' transport arrangements were safe. Healthy living was actively promoted throughout the school. Medical staff worked with teachers to help ensure students' physical and emotional needs were met. Most students made healthy food choices and participated in the extensive sporting activities. The school applied its sun protection policy rigorously. All students and their families could speak in confidence to key staff. Students were beginning to take their learning about healthy living into their lives outside school. The school had a clear child protection policy and all staff members had received recognised training in it.

The quality of support for students was good in the Foundation Stage and primary school. It was acceptable in the secondary school and at post-16. Staff-student relationships were strong and laid good foundations for learning, building a harmonious community. Students and their families were well informed about the school. Advice about careers and further study was acceptable. The monitoring and tracking of students' progress to develop targeted teaching were variable. They were stronger in the primary school than in the secondary school and not connected across the whole school. Coherent support for students with special educational needs was weak and support for all speakers of English as an additional language was not consistent.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Headmaster and heads of school had focused on the most important improvement areas by appointing key staff and creating structures and procedures. This had led to mostly good improvement since the previous report. Not all of these changes had affected students' learning, except in students' progress in mathematics. Responsibilities had been delegated well to a network of teams. Some were effective, such as the Foundation Stage team, but others were less so. After a period of dealing well with immediate issues, senior leaders had begun to address further consolidation and improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Reviews gave the senior team good evidence for decision-making. For instance, Repton School (UK) had given good guidance on how to prepare for inspection. This auditing process enabled the school to decide on the right improvement priorities. New systems had given the school a clearer view of student progress and teaching quality, but they lacked consistency and accuracy. Self-evaluation, although improved, did not yet provide a systematic method of judging overall school performance. The school's improvement plans reflected school needs, but did not link the impact of improvement actions on expected gains in students' learning.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Communication with parents kept them informed of developments in various ways and left scope for more explanations of decisions. Parental surveys had been started to take greater account of their views. There was a good range of meetings and reports concerning students' progress. Parents were involved in school as class representatives in the primary phase. Events such as International Day celebrations brought together parents, school people and members of the local community. The school reached out to the community through inter-school links and charitable work. The Repton School (UK) was beneficially involved with exchanges and support visits. The school made good use of school visitors, local visits and visits further afield.

Governance was good. Governors reflected major stakeholders with a wide range of expertise. Headmaster's reports, school visits and daily telephone contact informed decision making. Guidance from governors was clear and provided strategic advice to the school on improvement planning. Governors had recently improved their efficiency by organising their work within a committee structure.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. There was a good balance of experience and the new appointees encouraged faster student progress in Arabic and mathematics. There was a very wide range of excellent facilities, including those for sport, science in the secondary building and the primary library. All classes had interactive whiteboards. There were generous classroom resources in the Foundation Stage and primary phases and art and ICT specialist resources. The secondary school had excellent specialist resources which contributed well to the curriculum.

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 | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress over time | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Acceptable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| 13% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language. | | | | |
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attainment in Arabic as a first language | Not Applicable | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress in Arabic as a first language | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Acceptable |
| Attainment in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |
| Progress in Arabic as an additional language | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Applicable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in English? | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress over time | Good | Good | Good | Good |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics? | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|-------------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Good | Good | Acceptable |
| Progress over time | Outstanding | Good | Outstanding | Acceptable |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in science? | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attainment | Good | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress over time | Good | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |

| How good is the students' personal and social development? | | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Attitudes and behaviour | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Islamic, cultural and civic understanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Good | Good |
| Economic and environmental understanding | Good | Good | Good | Good |

| How good are teaching and learning? | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Teaching for effective learning | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Quality of students' learning | Good | Good | Good | Acceptable |
| Assessment | Good | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |

| How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students? | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Curriculum quality | Good | Good | Good | Acceptable |

| How well does the school protect and support students? | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Age group: | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary | Post-16 |
| Health and safety | Outstanding | Good | Good | Good |
| Quality of support | Good | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |

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

| How well does the school perform overall? |
|---|
| Good |

Next steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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

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