

Dubai Carmel School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Secondary

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.

Dubai Carmel School 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 Al Nahda, Dubai Carmel School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Secondary, aged 3 to 16 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 817 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most parents reported that they were satisfied with the quality of education and felt that the school was well led. Most felt that their children were treated fairly, were kept safe and were helped to choose a healthy lifestyle. Most parents agreed that their children's progress in Islamic Education and English was good and a majority agreed that progress in Arabic, mathematics and science was also good. Similarly, most respondents felt that the quality of teaching was good. They wrote that the school responded well to parental concerns and that parent-teacher meetings and reports were helpful and regular. The majority of parents felt they were effectively involved in the life of the school. A minority of parents thought that the school had responded positively to the last inspection report.

How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Carmel School provided an acceptable quality of education, overall. The school performed effectively in many aspects of its work. While there were some weaknesses, the senior leadership team understood the challenges faced by the school and had taken appropriate steps to respond to them. Progress had been made in addressing many of the recommendations from the previous report and the school had the capacity to improve further.

Attainment had improved in English in secondary. There was improvement also in Arabic, and English in the primary phase. Attainment and progress in English in the Foundation Stage remained good. Teaching for effective learning was acceptable. Recent additions to the school's senior leadership team had resulted in a better understanding of teaching, particularly in the upper grades. Student protection had improved and was now good across the school. Support for students had improved in the Foundation Stage and was now good. It remained acceptable across primary and secondary. New arrangements for governance had impacted quickly and there was good communication in place between the school and parents.

Key features of the school

- The school community worked together to create a happy and calm learning environment;
- Attainment in Arabic as a first language and English were good;
- Teachers had begun the challenging task of changing their teaching methods to meet the needs of students in a more meaningful manner;
- Assessment arrangements were inconsistent across all phases of the school;
- The school did not use international benchmarks appropriately to measure attainment;
- The school had a positive and inclusive approach to the education of children requiring additional help with their learning.

Recommendations

- Ensure that teachers focus more on students' understanding rather than their acquisition of knowledge;
- Help teachers to provide a range of different questions, activities and independent learning opportunities that match students' needs;
- Use assessment data to plan lesson objectives that help students to work independently, using their prior knowledge to develop more advanced skills;
- Provide students with opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) regularly as part of their learning experiences.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in primary were good and acceptable in secondary. Most primary students memorised and recited chapters of the Holy Qur'an to an age-appropriate level and they had a wide range of Islamic etiquettes. Most understood the biography of the Prophet and some of his companions. The majority of secondary students knew the the status of the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings in Islam. Most could list the evidence of Allah's oneness, but only a minority could discuss this evidence using the Qur'anic verses. In the higher secondary grades, the majority of students had underdeveloped recitation skills and they made limited progress in exploring how to apply Islamic knowledge to their everyday lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic, as a first language was good overall. Almost all primary students had developed outstanding listening skills. They responded properly to long extracts and to teachers' instructions in standard Arabic. Almost all students showed good speaking skills and they expressed themselves confidently. Most students had good reading skills, accurate pronunciation and a good understanding of the texts. Almost all secondary students showed excellent listening skills and good knowledge and understanding of grammatical rules. Most were able to express themselves using a wide vocabulary and most students had good reading skills. They read Arabic texts aloud with accuracy and comprehension. Writing skills across the school were only of an acceptable level. Students did not write on a regular basis using a range of genre.

Attainment in Arabic as additional language in primary was unsatisfactory while progress was acceptable. In secondary, attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable. Most primary students had developed limited listening skills. Their understanding of spoken Arabic was limited to repetition of familiar words in the class. Most made acceptable progress particularly with their reading skills but a few read without understanding. Most required images to be associated with words in order to understand independently. Most secondary students had acceptable listening and speaking skills. They engaged in simple conversation and role play with their teachers and peers but most students had a limited vocabulary. Overall, in writing, students' written work was limited to copying.

Attainment in English across the school was good. Progress was good in the Foundation and secondary stages and acceptable in primary. Speaking and listening skills were strengths of the school and, by the time students entered primary, they were able to sing songs aloud with confidence and greet visitors formally to the class. Students' written English was good, especially in secondary where students demonstrated the skills of skim reading and scanning in comprehension exercises. In primary, students were developing acceptable proof reading skills with regard to their own written work and, by Grade 10, students were able to vary their style, tone and register for different audiences.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable across the school. Foundation Stage children had a secure knowledge of numbers to 50. The majority could complete simple

addition and could explain 'greater than' and 'less than'. Primary students were competent in calculation, knew basic fractions and identified differences between the numerator and denominator. Most understood perimeter and area well. Older students knew how to adapt indices when dividing and multiplying and most could draw shapes rotated through their axes. In all phases, the application of critical thinking skills to problem-solving in real-life situations was a challenge for most students.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in all phases. Foundation Stage children had a secure understanding the world around them. Across the school, most students demonstrated age-appropriate knowledge and skills of scientific procedures and understood the relevance of science in their world. Most primary and secondary students' factual knowledge was more developed than their capacity to hypothesise, execute and record their own investigations independently. They knew about the effect of friction on movement. The majority of primary students understood scientific language but only a minority used it appropriately. Most secondary students were proficient in their use of scientific language by Grade 11. They used scientific symbols and formulae well when they learned about atoms.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were good. Students showed respect to their teachers and peers at all times. Most were respectful and courteous to guests. Most students listened attentively and were keen and eager to participate in lessons and school activities. Almost all students were aware of making healthy lifestyle choices especially through healthy food and sport. Attendance, overall, was good and punctuality at the start of each lesson was acceptable, with a few students arriving late to school assembly and classes.

Students' civic and Islamic and understanding was good. They demonstrated a good understanding of Islam in Dubai and around the world. They displayed respect for their teachers and they were very caring to their peers, especially those students with special educational needs. The students' council had a very effective role, by taking many responsibilities in the school. Students also participated in responsibilities outside the school, such as charity projects. They respected other cultures and considered the multi-cultural nature of Dubai to be an advantage to the city.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Almost all students knew how Dubai had developed in different aspects such as, architecture, health, education and economy. They knew that Dubai has a strategic location for trading and that tourism is a strong feature of Dubai economy. Most students had a clear perception about their future contribution to Dubai's prosperity. Most students could explain the importance of the national and world resources, as well as the importance of conservation and the importance of alternative energy resources.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable, overall. Most teachers had good subject knowledge but the understanding of how students of all ages acquire key learning skills was inconsistent applied throughout the school. Where teaching was good, teachers empowered students to work independently, question appropriately and explore topics using a variety of resources and technologies. However, it was more usual to see teaching that was based on the textbook and did not recognise the needs of each student. In such lessons, teachers dominated communication, questioned so that students gave one-word replies and did not construct activities that challenged students sufficiently. Teachers used ICT regularly but in a manner that displayed content rather than encouraged skill mastery from students. Space and time were not always used effectively to support independent learning.

Learning was acceptable across the school. Students were keen, positive and followed instructions carefully. When allowed to do so, students worked on projects with more independence, but excessive use of worksheets was a dominant feature of most lessons. Whilst a minority could apply their learning to real-life situations, the opportunity for most students to do so, was restricted to coverage of previously acquired knowledge and not the application of learning skills developed through investigation, hypothesis construction, data analysis and self-evaluation. Students' capacities for higher order thinking were underdeveloped. A few students had developed skills to make effective links in their learning through well-designed cross-curricular opportunities. However, the majority of students remained passive recipients of their education with little knowledge of their strengths and areas for further development.

Assessment was acceptable, overall. The school gathered a large amount of data at all levels from a well-developed testing system which evaluated topic knowledge, vocabulary and numeracy awareness. This assisted teachers in their understanding of progress although teachers did not use the data to plan for the different learning needs of all the students. Most teachers gave oral feedback to students based on how to correct a mistake or where to insert a relevant element of a topic in a textbook assignment. However, they rarely gave students meaningful written feedback that described the next step in their learning. They did not challenge students to promote independent investigations that would lead to enhanced understanding or skills.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable across the school. The Foundation Stage curriculum was planned to meet the needs of young children and help them to develop confidence and self-esteem. It successfully extended children's ability to use and understand English. However, there was an imbalance between adult-focussed and child-initiated learning opportunities. Across the school the curriculum was broad and balanced. The provision for students with special educational needs was acceptable and supported by the use of individual

education plans. Regular curricular review and enrichment had contributed well to improving the delivery in Islamic Education. However, curriculum review did not always accommodate the needs of students with differing levels of ability or provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their independent learning and critical thinking skills. The curriculum supported students' understanding of healthy living well as well as their environmental awareness. A range of visits and visitors made appropriate use of the local environment to enrich students' learning experiences. The curriculum was enhanced by quizzes, competitions and a range of extra-curricular student activities which developed new skills such as karate, gymnastics, crochet, and art and design. Some interesting links were made between subjects, for example, between science and The Holy Qu'ran, and Islamic Education and mathematics.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements in the school were good. Comprehensive records existed regarding fire drills, the maintenance of equipment and student medical records. There were, however, no seat belts on the front seats of the buses where students were allowed to sit. The school's promotion of healthy living was constructively enhanced through cross-curricula units of work and the new activities programme. The school doctor provided counselling for obese students and these students participated in additional morning aerobics exercises.

The quality of support was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the rest of the school. Staff-student relationships were caring and respectful, encouraging good student behaviour. A limited amount of careers and university guidance was provided by the school. Numerous presentations were scheduled with the 'personal education' service of the Dubai police to help students with developmental issues. The assessment and tracking of students' performance was well established, although the use of this information to modify provision for learning was still in the early stages of development. The special needs resource centre was well equipped and provided nurturing support for children with significant needs. The special needs supervisor assessed students and provided an individual education plan for each student. In the withdrawal classes these plans ensured that students made good progress. However, these plans did not have the same positive impact on teachers' practice in class.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership in the school was acceptable. Senior leadership was effective and gave a clear sense of direction for the school. There was a commitment to school improvement and in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection report by arranging for advice and consultation to support and help to improve teaching and learning. However, school managers did not provide sufficient leadership of teaching and learning at all levels in the school. Distributed leadership was underdeveloped. Subject leaders had not yet developed the key skills to support their staff in changing their approaches to teaching and learning.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal and Vice- Principal had introduced a range of appropriate systems, such as attainment tracking, to increase the school's ability to review its own work. This had created a wide range of evaluative information. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators had undertaken observation of teaching across classes but had yet to collate and analyse the data. Action plans lacked success criteria which made it difficult to identify the extent and nature of improvement in classrooms over time.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Most parents were very supportive of the school's direction and commitments. There was a Parents' Committee which met frequently to discuss key issues suggested by the school and also their own issues. The Chair of the Parents' Committee met the Principal after every meeting to discuss the outcomes of each meeting. Regular whole school meetings for parents were held and were considered productive. There was good communication about what students were doing in classes, through diaries, homework and information on the school website.

Governance was acceptable, although a number of developments had taken place since the last inspection. The Board had parent and community representation as well as family members representing the owners. Appropriate minutes were kept and meetings were run professionally. There were sub-committees concerned various aspects of the work of the school. The school was not yet fully accountable to the Board of Governors.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school had sufficient appropriately qualified staff. Installation of air-conditioning in the games hall since the last inspection was a positive development as was the use of data projectors and whiteboards in classrooms. However, classrooms were generally small and limited the potential for flexible use by teachers, especially with older students. In some rooms the lack of space meant that students could not be reached by their teachers to monitor their learning. There was little use made of the ICT laboratory by students.

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
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
67% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

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

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