

Dubai Modern Education School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report published May 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school	5
Recommendations.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	7
How good are the teaching and learning?.....	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	9
Summary of inspection judgements.....	11
Next steps	15
How to contact us.....	15

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 Modern Education School was inspected in February 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 Mizhar, Dubai Modern Education School is a private school providing education from Kindergarten to Grade 12, for girls and boys aged five to 17 years. The school has two sections: one follows the Ministry of Education curriculum and the other follows a US curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 2466 students on roll. The attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Only a small minority of parents responded. Of these, most had a positive view of the school and thought that their children made good progress in their work. They thought that teaching was the strongest aspect of the school, but also that it was the aspect that most needed further development. They considered leadership to be good and that the school took good care of their children, although a minority had concerns about behaviour and bullying. Other concerns included the school's interaction with parents and especially the quality of academic reports. Parents also felt that they had to provide too much support for their children's learning at home.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school provided an acceptable education for its students. It had a positive ethos in which students were valued and developed good attitudes to learning. The students felt safe because of the good quality of care. The support for students with special educational needs was particularly good. Behaviour was good and had improved among the older boys, following decisive action by the school in response to the previous inspection report. The school had focused well on the other recommendations, but had not succeeded in addressing them all. For example, despite training, most teachers were not providing enough opportunities for independent learning and research skills. The plans to improve the range of extra-curricular activities had not been put into practice. The leadership of the school had been firm and decisive but had not empowered all staff to fulfil their responsibilities and so improve attainment of the students.

Students' progress and attainment were varied because of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Although much teaching was good, the majority was acceptable and a small minority was unsatisfactory. As a result, in most subject areas, progress and attainment were acceptable with some, notably Arabic, that were good. Too often, lessons were rigid and limiting for students. Teachers tended to follow their course books closely with only a minority enlivened lessons with imaginative resources or unrestrictive activities. More importantly, the teachers often did not expect enough from students, giving the same work regardless of their abilities. The curriculum was very similar for both sections of the school and provided a secure framework. However, it had not been enriched to motivate students and give a greater breadth to their learning. Nevertheless, students did develop good learning skills. Students had a good understanding of their civic responsibilities and their Islamic culture, but only the younger students had grasped the importance of actions to safeguard the environment. The advisory council was increasingly active in the school and had already forged links with the students; its immediate intentions were to strengthen communication with parents and improve their involvement with school. Although it had a clear desire to improve the school, the leadership was not sufficiently sensitive to the needs of staff and students. It did not give enough scope and independence to those senior and middle leaders who were particularly skilled. Staff received mixed messages about how to improve and monitoring of their work was not insightful and rigorous enough. In addition, the school's action plans were too broad and lacked the key detail to ensure swift progress. Even so, the school had maintained many of its strengths, and students and parents were happy with its provision.

Key features of the school

- The relationships between staff and students that promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- The good pastoral care of all students and the level of support for those with particular needs;
- Students' good civic and Islamic understanding and the good attainment in Arabic by non-Arabic speakers;
- The increasingly important voice of students, parents and the advisory council in influencing the development of the school;
- The restricted effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in developing the school;
- The inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment that result in varied attainment and progress;
- The narrow and unenterprising curriculum that focused too much on final tests.

Recommendations

Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:

- leadership is fully delegated at all levels, with all senior and middle leaders having sufficient authority and autonomy to carry out their duties effectively;
- action plans for improvement are sharply focused with realistic and challenging aims based on detailed analyses of the school's work.

In order to raise students' attainment and progress, the school should ensure that:

- teachers routinely use assessment data to set work that is equally challenging for all ability groups;
- students are encouraged to learn more for themselves through enquiry, research and investigation, as well as open-ended tasks;
- the curriculum is more creative, interactive and motivating for students;
- improve the quality, range and use of learning resources in all areas of the school;
- the monitoring of classroom practice by senior leaders is more accurate, more rigorous and linked closely to the quality of students' learning.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in elementary and acceptable in the middle and high schools. In elementary, students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic concepts and principles. They were able to provide examples of Allah's creations and were able to identify the five daily prayers and a could name a few prophets. In the middle school,

students could compare between the people in Paradise and Hell and explain the link between deeds and rewards. In the high school, students were able to discuss evidences of the existence of Allah and understand Fiqh laws of marriage and divorce, but were not able to link them to real life. Across the school, students understood the benefit of The Holy Qur'an, but their recitation skills were underdeveloped.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good in elementary and acceptable elsewhere in the school. In Kindergarten, children were developing their communication skills, but they could only respond using single words or two-word phrases. Students in elementary were able to read short texts with a good level of pronunciation and accuracy. In Grade 5, students summarised short stories and wrote paragraphs on different topics. In middle and high schools, students developed their reading skills, but were not able to apply their grammar skills in different contexts, particularly in conversation and writing.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a second language were good in the elementary and middle schools. Students demonstrated strong listening skills; they were able to follow different set of instructions in standard Arabic. In the elementary classes, students could orally describe pictures accurately using verbs and nouns. Across the school, students demonstrated good comprehension skills; they could read short texts and identify the main ideas. For example, students in Grade 7 were able to discuss, in some depth, a text about Islamic history. Students developed effective writing skills; they used varied vocabulary to enrich their writing. In Grade 9, for example, students could independently write a short and informative essay about their homelands.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable, except in the high school where they were good. In the Kindergarten, children developed basic language skills, but lacked the opportunities to develop them fully. Most students were able to speak clearly in English. Elementary students could answer basic reading comprehension questions and read stories aloud with confidence. The progress of students was better in the American section of the school. Most middle school students could read and speak with confidence. Writing skills were less well developed and few students were able to write at length. Functional and analytical writing were adequate, but creative writing skills were weak. Students' listening skills were good. High school students could engage in a good level of discussion and many had a good range of vocabulary. The quality of writing was more variable, but a minority of students had an outstanding ability to write fluently, with work which was grammatically correct. Students' reading levels were good.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in the Kindergarten and elementary school, but good in middle and high school. Progress was inconsistent across the different grades, but was in line with international standards. Students developed early problem-solving skills, but did not have enough scope to develop them fully. In the middle and high schools, standards were higher than international benchmarks. Internal tests mainly required students to demonstrate mastery of mechanical practices and an ability to calculate accurately. Good progress in the middle and high schools was, in part, a result of teaching to a curriculum directly linked to the text books.

Attainment in science was good in elementary school and acceptable elsewhere. Progress was good in elementary and high school, and acceptable in Kindergarten and middle school. In Kindergarten, children learnt more by teacher direction than through exploration. In elementary school, attainment was good because teachers had high expectations. For example, students' learning about relationships between organisms included not only food chains, but also symbiosis and parasitism. Progress was good because students were actively involved in their lessons and teachers were able to connect different areas of learning, such as structure of the solar system, with the relative motion and key features of planets. Investigation skills such as generating, recording and analysing data, or systematic testing of ideas, were not a strong feature across the school. In the middle and high schools, attainment was limited by the few opportunities to apply learning to real-life contexts.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The behaviour and attitudes of students were good throughout the school. Students said that they felt happy, safe and valued, because their teachers cared for them and made school enjoyable. A minority of older boys lacked some self-discipline and motivation, but generally responded adequately to teachers' expectations. Students were able to balance their own needs with the needs of others and so were considerate to one another. These positive relationships supported learning across the school and helped to build a harmonious community. The majority of students chose healthy lifestyles through exercise, although a minority of students did not choose healthy food. Attendance was good. Punctuality was good for most students, but a minority tended to arrive late.

Students' Islamic and civic understanding was good across the school. Most students understood their roles and responsibilities in the school and community. They actively participated in the school charitable projects and understood the importance of supporting the community through such projects. Students carried out community service with the local Red Crescent group. In Kindergarten, children actively recited The Holy Qur'an and supplications daily. Students explained how Islam had influenced their relationships with people and strengthened their willingness to participate in volunteer work. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and valued the learning experience it brought them.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in middle and high schools. Students were aware of the main businesses in Dubai and the impact of the economic downturn on global economy. However, middle school students did not have sufficient knowledge about the economic resources of Dubai. Older students had sufficient knowledge of Dubai's economic development. They were aware of the environmental impact of traffic in Dubai and could suggest solutions. They understood certain global environmental issues, but their overall awareness of ecological issues was underdeveloped.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable across the school and varied considerably. In most classrooms, positive relationships between students and teachers encouraged students to listen and concentrate well; little time was lost in managing behaviour. Most teachers had good subject knowledge and explained new learning clearly. In the better lessons, teachers challenged students well, mainly through good use of questions and expectations of outcome. Teachers praised students appropriately, but did not always engage them fully. Tasks were often routine and uninspiring and too much teaching was teacher-led. As a result, there was too much passive learning. Lesson planning was not sufficiently based on prior learning in order to ensure that students made good progress. This was particularly the case for the more able students. There were too few opportunities for students to learn for themselves in practical activities. The pace of lessons was not always swift enough; students often had to wait for the least secure students to catch up. Use of resources, especially computers, was underdeveloped.

The quality of learning across the school was acceptable. Most students were eager to learn and responded well to their teachers. Students were generally confident enough to ask questions and clarify their learning. In most lessons, learning was directed by the teacher and so students developed a dependency on step-by-step instruction. When they had the chance to collaborate, particularly in Arabic, English and science, they responded well. Some links were made with previous learning, but too few opportunities were planned for students to apply their learning to real-life situations. The development of enquiry and research skills was hampered by a lack of accessible resources. Opportunities for the development of critical and higher order thinking skills were limited.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. The school had done well to improve its assessment procedures, but it was too early to show the impact of these on students' learning. A minority of teachers had improved their marking of students' work to indicate how their work could be improved. Teachers were marking work accurately and regularly, and most had knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses, but they did not communicate these enough to students. Only a few teachers had used assessment information to modify their lesson planning to ensure that students of all abilities were fully challenged.

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

The curriculum was acceptable across the school. The school's on-line system provided an organised means of documenting the breadth and balance of the curriculum. However, enquiry skills were not widely emphasised. Curricular review and development were acceptable. In response to last year's report, the school invited staff feedback and considered exam results in the review process. Continuity and progression were acceptable, as students moved between the different sections of the school. Cross-curricular opportunities were evident at times, as when senior English students interviewed community members and organised numerical data using behavioural-science approaches. However, genuine cross-curricular links were still too

few, despite the recommendations of the previous inspection report. In addition, the school still lacked regular after-school opportunities, as suggested by the new student council. Local environment links were underdeveloped, as evidenced in part by playground litter and limited recycling. There were some community links, such as the filming of a cooking programme with a well-known chef. Other positive curricular initiatives included the elementary English department's efforts at student-initiated and differentiated curriculum. The curriculum in Kindergarten did not provide sufficient planned opportunities to foster active learning. Overall, the curriculum still planned for an overabundance of worksheets. The curriculum structure was enforced to the extent that teachers were reluctant to deviate from a certain page of a book in order to bring in artistic, multimedia, or other innovative components. There was an over-emphasis on coverage as against allowing time for student enquiry and deeper understanding.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety were good in Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere. The school took reasonable steps to ensure that adults and students were safe on the school site. The school now ensured that the fire exit route maps were displayed in all corridors, but it had yet to ensure that the fire drills were undertaken regularly. Students with complex medical needs were well supported by the dedicated medical team. The school developed close links with agencies, ensuring the appropriate support for the students on physical health and diet to students who struggled with their weight; however, the food in the canteen did not promote healthy eating habits. Child protection procedures were adequate but informal. The school had not introduced comprehensive guidelines and training for staff. The management of the school buses was acceptable. Bus drivers were clear about their roles and responsibilities and there was a supervisor on each bus to oversee students' safety. The school now ensured that seat belts were available and used. The premises were adequately maintained. The school carried out risk assessments on premises and resources regularly.

The quality of support was good in all parts of the school. The school provided a welcoming learning environment, where both students and staff worked together in harmony and this was well appreciated by parents. As a result, students felt safe and were confident to ask for support should a concern arise. The student counsellor provided valued support for students and guidance to members of staff in addressing social and emotional issues. Students were well supervised at all times. Incidents related to bad behaviour were recorded, but these were not monitored to identify trends and patterns. The school was developing more links with universities and colleges in order to prepare the students for the next stage of their education.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was acceptable. Senior leaders shared a good vision for the school, namely to produce well-rounded, capable and knowledgeable young people. They were committed and some had good skills. They had instigated training for staff to improve, for example, aspects of teaching of learning in response to the recommendations of previous

inspection report. In this, they had been only partly successful. Roles and responsibilities were distributed well among senior and middle leaders. Although they did not have enough authority and autonomy to carry out their duties effectively, several of them had improved aspects of their work. The limited improvements to the school and a lack of accuracy in its systems for self-review indicated that the school had only an acceptable capacity to improve.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Action plans had a clear focus on the most pressing needs, but they were not based enough on detailed analyses, nor linked enough to the outcomes for students. The school had a generous view of its provision and was too concerned about the barriers it saw in the way of the school's development, rather than actively and creatively seeking solutions. Senior leaders monitored the school's provision regularly and provided useful professional feedback to teachers. However, monitoring was not centred enough on the impact of developments on students' achievement and was not always accurate enough.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents who were spoken to appreciated the open-door policy of the school's leadership and the improved communication via the website. The school encouraged parents to support their children's learning at home, but some parents felt that the school left them with too much to do at home. The reports about students' progress were not very informative for parents. They provided headline grades, with little additional information, for example about progress or how students could improve. Links with the local and wider world community were adequate but underdeveloped.

Governance was good. The advisory council comprised a range of stakeholders, including parents, and had already established a clear committee structure. Governors were experienced and very capable professionals who had a great deal to offer the school. They were gradually developing their monitoring role, but were already holding the school to account for key decisions. Their growing links with students and parents showed their inclusive approach to leadership and change at the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There was an appropriate number of qualified staff who were deployed well. The school had appointed extra staff to cover additional activities, although their impact had yet to be felt. Staff turnover was a problem, but less than in recent years. There were sufficient specialist rooms and classrooms for the number of students, although most classrooms were rather cramped, especially for the older students. In some areas, colourful displays of students' work enhanced the learning environment. Although there had been some investment in resources, these were not enough to promote high quality learning and give students the opportunities to learn for themselves.

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:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
95% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?

Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?

Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?

Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

environmental understanding				
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

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	Acceptable
Governance	Good
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:
inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.