

Islamic School for Education and Training Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Cycle 3

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.

Islamic School for Education and Training was inspected in November 2010 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 Mohaisinah, The Islamic School for Education and Training is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Cycle 3, aged three to 17 years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 971 students on roll. The student 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. The parents were very positive and supportive in their comments about the work of the school and the quality of the education their children received. They believed the school was very committed to its vision and delivered well to the parents. They were pleased with the strong Islamic and Arabic culture evident in the school. They greatly appreciated the fact that they were made to feel welcome and a part of school life. However, a significant number of the parents indicated that their children needed a lot of help with their work at home after a long school day. A few parents believed the school would improve further if it provided more opportunities for physical education and extra-curricular activities such as school clubs. They also wanted to see their children being more fully engaged with the wider community in Dubai and the UAE in areas such as environmental initiatives and community work.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Islamic School for Education and Training provided an acceptable quality of education. The school's work was firmly guided by the owner's vision. The school placed strong focus on Islamic Education, Arabic and vocational education. It provided comprehensive support, including accommodation and school fees, to many orphans from various countries. The school had developed a detailed action plan to respond to the recommendations from last year's inspection and made acceptable progress in responding to most of them. However, plans for improvements were not refined enough to include realistic and measurable outcomes shared clearly with all the school community, including students, so that all would be working to achieve the same goals. The school was dealing seriously with the allegations of corporal punishment, yet constructive training was required to provide teachers with positive strategies to deal with behavioural issues. The school demonstrated the capacity to make further improvements in its work.

Almost all students were attaining levels above Ministry of Education expectations in both Islamic Education and Arabic. However, in most other key subjects, their attainment was in line with expectations. Students' attainment and progress were better in Cycle 3 in Islamic Education, Arabic and English. Students also made good progress in science in Cycles 2 and 3. Almost all students demonstrated good attitudes and behaviour. Understanding and appreciation of Islam and the UAE were outstanding in Cycles 1 to 3. Students demonstrated a strong capacity to be positive and effective members in their community. Although they developed good economic understanding, their contributions to look after the environment were limited. Teaching was acceptable across all stages of the school. Teachers had good subject knowledge and used this effectively in their explanations and questioning. The majority of lessons were acceptable with very few outstanding and unsatisfactory lessons. Most of the good lessons were in Islamic Education and Arabic. Learning was acceptable overall. Most students enjoyed lessons and interacted well with their teachers yet their role remained limited in most lessons because teachers tended to dominate. Assessment was acceptable; teachers knew their students well but assessment was not used sufficiently to respond to the varying needs of the students. The curriculum was acceptable in all cycles except Cycle 3 where it was good. The quality of health, safety and support was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 2 and good in Cycle 3; however, it was unsatisfactory in Cycle 1. Most relationships between staff and students were positive and almost all teachers looked after the students well. The school leadership demonstrated an acceptable capacity to lead the school. The school was developing better procedures to self-evaluate. Relationships with parents were good and strong links with the community were exemplified in its support for orphans. Governance was acceptable with a strong sense of accountability from the owner, yet with limited representation of stakeholders. Staffing and facilities were adequate but there were too few teachers' assistants, especially in Kindergarten and for non-Arab students.

Key features of the school

- The strong commitment to the school's ethos and vision by the school community;
- The successful approach to teaching Arabic as a second language, which helped the non-Arab students to make swift gains in the acquisition of the language;
- The philanthropic nature of the school in providing full support and education for orphans from around the world, making up almost a fifth of the school's population;
- The good attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic, which becomes outstanding in Cycle 3;
- The outstanding understanding and appreciation of Islam and the UAE culture;
- The strong attitudes towards learning in Cycles 2 and 3 in the girls' section;
- The inconsistency of the quality of teaching and learning across the school;
- Continued incidents of inappropriate behaviour management.

Recommendations

- Ensure that learning activities better meet the needs of children in the Kindergarten in order to develop their physical, social, investigative and communication skills, through active engagement;
- Extend the curriculum beyond the textbooks to provide a wider range of activities that promote students' physical and creative skills;
- Establish rigorous monitoring procedures to prevent the use of corporal punishment in the school, particularly in Cycle 1, and provide training for teachers with regard to positive and effective behaviour management;
- Improve the quality of teaching for effective learning through better planning of lessons, clearer sharing of learning objectives and a greater variety of tasks which meet the different needs of students;
- Improve the liaison between subject and curriculum leaders, ensuring the development of better links between the girls' and boys' sections of the school in order to guide the development of curriculum, teaching, learning and school self-evaluation.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in Kindergarten, Cycles 1 and 2, and outstanding in Cycle 3. Almost all students displayed advanced skills in Qur'an recitation across the school. The older students were confident in quoting The Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth to support their discussions, but rarely used reference books in classrooms to extend further. Students around the school developed a strong knowledge of Islam and how it relates to their lives. They demonstrated great confidence in speaking publicly about various Islamic topics. Almost all students had good knowledge and understanding of the sayings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), his life and the lives of his companions. Most students were still developing an understanding of how to use their Islamic knowledge to benefit their community.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were acceptable in Kindergarten, good in Cycles 1 and 2 and outstanding in Cycle 3. Across the school, students demonstrated good listening skills. In Kindergarten, students were able to identify a few letters, but were not able to read short words. In Cycle 1, students were able to read short texts and write longer sentences. In Cycle 2, students were confident in discussing, explaining and identifying grammar rules; they applied them in their writing correctly. In Cycles 1 and 2, students' extended writing skills still needed improvement to reach expected standards. In Cycle 3, students researched, discussed and debated complex topics. They also wrote well about those topics. Most students demonstrated advanced skills in public speaking. They were very eloquent and used language skilfully to express their ideas.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable in Kindergarten, good in Cycles 1 and 2 and outstanding in Cycle 3. Although approximately one quarter of the student population was non-Arabic speaking, all students took Arabic as a first language. This total immersion approach helped non-Arabic speaking students to make good gains in the long term in learning Arabic. Most of those students had near native fluency in all language skills after being at the school for a few years. Some struggled in the beginning and would have benefited from specialised teachers, although they made good progress in the long term.

Attainment and progress in English in Kindergarten were unsatisfactory, despite recent improvements. In Cycles 1 and 2, students' attainment and progress were acceptable while they were good in Cycle 3. Most children in Kindergarten knew the names of colours and read letters of the alphabet. A significant minority could not, because their understanding was not being routinely checked. Elsewhere, students enjoyed English but the most able did not progress as much as they could. They tended to write only the simple phrases required by text books. Girls generally wrote at greater length. In Cycle 3, girls' attainment was well above expectations for their age. They could sustain high level discussion and showed good research and presentational skills. Boys' attainment, while not as high, showed an improving trend. Their speaking was accurate but lacked detail.

Students' attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable across the school. In Kindergarten, children could count objects in the classroom up to the number nine. They used vocabulary about size such as big and small, and completed simple patterns accurately. In Grades 1 to 5, students could calculate number facts to twenty and could tell the time, including hours and minutes. In Grades 6 to 9, students showed confidence in the four rules of number and fractions, though their mental skills required improvement. In Grade 10, girls' attainment was good and students could correctly solve simultaneous equations and indefinite integrals. Across all phases of the school, students' problem-solving skills were underdeveloped.

Attainment in science was acceptable throughout the school. Progress was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. In Kindergarten, children developed knowledge about healthy living and personal cleanliness through activities about themselves. In Grade 5 most students were able to use scientific names for the major organs and identify their position in the body. Grade 9 students were able to discuss fertilisation, reproduction and genes structure. Very little practical science took place and most science was taught theoretically, even in the laboratories. Students' investigative skills, such as collecting and analysing data and drawing conclusions, were underdeveloped. Nevertheless, Grade 10 students used real objects to model the water molecule and were able to discuss its dipole nature.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were acceptable in Kindergarten and good across the three cycles. In Kindergarten, children were not always well behaved in lessons; for example, they did not understand the need to take turns. Although behaviour management systems were in place, children were not self-disciplined enough and needed teachers' instructions much of the time. In the other cycles, students were well behaved almost all the time; they were respectful to each other, to staff members and teachers. There were some positive elements of a healthy life-style, mostly in Cycles 2 and 3. Across the three cycles, students did not take enough responsibility for their own actions, and quite often needed teachers' guidance. Attendance was good.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture were acceptable in Kindergarten and outstanding across the three other cycles. In Kindergarten, children demonstrated respect during Qur'an lessons; they were attentive, making links with teachers' prompts on other aspects of life. In the three cycles, students were active in school activities through participating in the Student Council and some competitions. Students in Cycle 1 participated in a local Qur'an competition and in school debating activities. In Cycles 2 and 3, students were good at maintaining order in the school and assisting younger students with their studies. They also discussed Islamic concepts and values, their impact on Dubai and were aware of current Islamic issues locally and internationally.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in other stages of the school. Students demonstrated an awareness of Dubai's economic development, and linked this with leadership and history. In Cycles 1, 2 and 3, students discussed the economic development, linked it with Islamic perspectives and demonstrated positive attitudes towards the governmental plans to develop the country further. They helped in keeping the school clean throughout the day. Students discussed environmental practices they do in school, which were limited to some recycling projects in class and very few cleaning activities outside the school. These practices were not embedded across the school; students were not able to critically discuss environmental issues and their implications, or link them with current solutions and projects in Dubai.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable across all stages of the school. Teachers had good subject knowledge and used this effectively in their explanations and questioning. In a few lessons, particularly in the girls section in Cycle 3 and in Islamic Education across the school, teachers used a sufficiently wide variety of different activities which kept students interested, especially when teachers used resources in addition to the text book. However, too many lessons were dominated by teachers talking. In Kindergarten, teachers did not provide learning activities which effectively promoted active learning. Teacher-student relationships were positive and teachers supported students to prevent them from falling behind. Although different worksheets were prepared for different ability groups, these did not always provide sufficient challenge for the more able students.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable overall. Students were enthusiastic about their learning and were motivated to do well. In Cycle 3 girls section in Islamic Education and English lessons, the students collaborated well in groups and could explain their findings to their peers. In Islamic Education and English lessons generally, students related what they learned to their lives in and out of school. However, their research skills and higher order learning skills across all phases, were underdeveloped. Students were keen to succeed, but teachers did not provide them with sufficient information about their strengths and areas for improvement.

Assessment was acceptable. Regular testing throughout the school year took into account students' work in class, at home and in tests and quizzes. Teachers, heads of department and section heads knew their students well and were ready with the support they needed to improve their work. Teachers' ongoing assessment of students' work in class varied across the school. Students rarely took part in evaluating their own and others' work. Marking in books did not diagnose how and where students had made mistakes, or give them the next steps for improvement. Subject departments reviewed the test results, but this information was not used well to make adjustments to teaching or to the curriculum in order to meet students' different needs.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycles 1 and 2, while it was good in Cycle 3. It reflected the school's distinctive vision well, with its focus on vocational subjects and Islam. In most lessons, the curriculum was limited to the content of the Ministry textbooks. Islamic Education and Arabic were strengths of the curriculum in almost all phases. Less emphasis was placed, however, on other parts of the curriculum, such as physical education. In Kindergarten the curriculum promoted active approaches to teaching. The use of song and puppetry, for instance, successfully stimulated most children. There was however, little adjustment of the curriculum to the needs of different groups or individuals. This allowed too many children to opt out of activities for extended periods. In addition, some practical tasks, such as colouring, were interesting but did too little to promote learning. English provision for girls in Cycles 1 and 2 was good and the vocational courses taken by boys in these cycles enriched their experience considerably. Arabic provision was also good, helping students integrate knowledge and ideas from several subjects and develop skills confidently. English and mathematics had introduced additional sessions to challenge the more able students and provide support for those who needed it. Science had strengths, but lacked sufficient investigative work and there was too little breadth in the mathematics curriculum. In Cycle 3, some features were excellent, especially the Islamic and Arabic courses. All aspects of girls' English were good and boys' provision in English and mathematics was improving as a result of recent changes such as the introduction of setting groups by ability.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provision was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 2, good in Cycle 3, and remained unsatisfactory in Cycle 1. There was evidence of inappropriate methods to deal with students' behaviour, including corporal punishment, in Cycle 1. All school buses were well regulated. The flow and speed of private cars risked the safety of students as they moved around the school entrances. Student breaks, outdoor activities and cafeteria were well supervised, but the movement of Kindergarten children to and from the toilet down steep stairs from their classrooms was not. The school nurse brought expert knowledge in supporting students about healthy living and ensured that both medical procedures and record keeping were in order. There was a strong focus on healthy living. Child protection procedures were not clearly in place; there was no assigned staff member with the responsibility of supervising this area. The school had not provided sufficient training for teachers to understand positive practice in behaviour management.

The quality of support was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 2, good in Cycle 3 and remained unsatisfactory in Cycle 1. Student-staff relationships were good in Kindergarten, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 and remained unsatisfactory in Cycle 1 due to inappropriate behaviour management. During almost all lessons and at other times, positive and caring attitudes towards students were evident. Relationships overall were good. The school rules, shared with the parents, were not seen in all classrooms. The school had developed tracking systems for

students' academic and personal progress, but there were insufficient analysis and monitoring to provide subject specific targets to guide students' progress. The school lacked classroom assistants necessary to help support students whose first language is not Arabic. Careers guidance was available for older students and the school's mission to train students for the workforce was being fulfilled. The management of students' attendance and punctuality was good.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The overall quality of leadership was acceptable. The strong commitment and shared Islamic vision were evident across the school among all levels of leadership and teachers. The leadership team focused on building good relationships within the school. Through monitoring of the school's work and ongoing communication, the school leaders demonstrated the capacity to improve the school further. However, roles and responsibilities, especially for co-ordinators and section supervisors, were not defined clearly enough. There was insufficient sharing of clear and effective criteria with all staff to guide curriculum improvement and teaching and learning. The co-ordination between the two sections of the school was not close enough to ensure consistency and dissemination of good practice.

Self-evaluation was acceptable. The school identified specific areas for improvement of its work. The subject co-ordinators and the Principal monitored teaching and learning satisfactorily through class visits. The school reviewed the curriculum for Arabic and Islamic Education, ensuring students were provided with a wide range of opportunities to learn better; this approach was developing in other subjects. The criteria and plans for improvement were not sufficiently defined and shared with all staff, students and parents with realistic targets, especially in setting up specific outcomes for curriculum.

Relationships with the parents and the community were good. The school played a significant role in the wider community extending beyond the borders of the UAE and reaching to orphans around the world to provide full sponsorship to them at the school. The school welcomed parents' suggestions and worked on them; surveys were conducted to find about parents' satisfaction. The parents' council was newly formed, yet it was expected to play a more significant role around the school. The school had several procedures to inform parents about their children's progress, such as regular reports and report days, but the reports were insufficiently informative about strengths and weaknesses in students' learning. Weekly plans were sent home to inform parents about what students would be learning.

The quality of governance was acceptable. The vision of the owner guided the school's work strongly. The school was accountable to its board of trustees which included the educational advisors of the owner. The board also included two teachers representing the staff to share teachers' concerns. However, parents and other interested community members were not represented on the board. Although some of the board members visited the school to review its work, their criteria for monitoring was not clear or shared with the leadership team and the school community.

Overall, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The school was equipped to an acceptable level and was kept clean. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) for the teachers and students was acceptable, but the use of ICT to enhance learning and research was limited. The library was bright and inviting. It was timetabled for use, but there were limited resources in the boys' library. The school lacked classroom assistants necessary for an effective learning environment. A few rooms were too small for the size of the class in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 areas; teachers had difficulty circulating to assess students' work.

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	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
79% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
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	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and safety	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	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	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:
inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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

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