Kings' Dubai School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Primary

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 4
Recommendations 5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects? 5
How good is the students' personal and social development? 6
How good are the teaching and learning? 7
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.

Kings' Dubai School 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 Umm Suqueim, Kings' Dubai School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to primary, aged three to 11 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. This session seven new teachers were appointed. At the time of the inspection, there were 439 students on the 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. In the survey there was overwhelming support for almost all aspects of the work of the school. In the key subject areas almost all parents thought their children made good or better progress. A minority of parents felt that progress in Arabic as an additional language was not good. Almost all parents reported very high satisfaction levels with the quality of teaching, learning and the extra-curricular opportunities provided. They were extremely happy with students' behaviour and the resources available for learning. Almost all felt their children were treated fairly and that students with additional learning needs were supported well. They reported satisfaction with the promotion of healthy lifestyles, safety arrangements and communication between home and school. Similarly, they found reports informative and parent-teacher meetings helpful. They felt very involved in the work of the school. Most parents thought leadership in the school was of a very high standard and that the school's response to the previous inspection was positive. Teaching was identified by most parents as the school's greatest strength. They felt the school could further improve the facilities and the range of activities and opportunities outside the classroom.

How well does the school perform overall?

Kings' Dubai continues to provide an outstanding quality of education. The Headteacher and other members of the leadership team were highly committed to the school. They had a clear vision for the school and had well-developed, systematic procedures to maintain its high quality and continue to deliver its promise to parents. The school had taken a well-considered approach to addressing the recommendation of the previous inspection. The Headteacher and Board of Governors had taken steps to improve the teaching and curriculum of Arabic. There were signs that these were already producing improved outcomes for students.

Throughout the school, standards of attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were outstanding. In the primary stages, attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education, attainment in Arabic was acceptable and progress was good. Staff acted as excellent role models and this helped children to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility. The attitude and behavior of all children was outstanding. They were confident, responsible and caring. Older students were developing leadership skills. Students had an understanding and respect for Islam. They had an outstanding understanding of economic and environmental issues. The quality of teaching was outstanding. Teachers were well-qualified and highly committed to the school. They had suitably high expectations of students' behaviour and achievements. They planned lessons meticulously and monitored students' progress very closely. They were quick to intervene when necessary. The quality of learning was good. Most students were keen and developing well as learners. The standard of assessment was outstanding. It assisted teachers in planning and helped all students to learn. Very effective procedures were in place to identify and address students' learning difficulties. The curriculum was excellent and important steps had been taken to help students to integrate students' learning and make connections between subjects. Arrangements for health and safety were outstanding throughout the school. Healthy living was strongly promoted. Children in the Foundation Stage and students in the primary stage enjoyed attending the school. It was a safe and secure environment. Staff were aware of their roles in child protection. The Headteacher and other members of the leadership team were highly committed to the school. They had a clear vision for the school and had well-developed, systematic procedures to maintain its high quality and continue to deliver its promise to parents.

Key features of the school

- Outstanding attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science;
- The outstanding commitment of staff to the welfare and academic growth of the children and students;
- The exemplary monitoring of student's progress;
- The very effective links with parents;
- The vision and drive provided by the Headteacher and other members of the leadership team to continuously improve the quality of education in the school.

Recommendations

- Continue to raise standards of attainment in Arabic;
- Take steps to improve the quality of learning throughout the school by placing a greater emphasis upon developing students' higher order and critical thinking skills;
- Improve the impact of self-evaluation to enhance the quality of learning;
- Ensure broad and meaningful impact from a wider range of stakeholders on the Board.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good. Almost all students developed a good knowledge about Islam. They understood the impact of the five pillars of Islam on their own behaviour. They had a detailed knowledge of pilgrimage and had developed a good understanding of the positive impact of Islam on their lives and the community. Their understanding of the meaning of the Qur'anic text in English and its relevance to their lives was solid. However, Qur'an reading skills were under-developed. Students' knowledge of the appropriate source of Islamic knowledge to support their point of view in discussions was limited. While most students understood the benefits of Islam in their daily lives, they did not have the same awareness of how Islamic knowledge impacts positively on the community.

Attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable, while progress was good. Year 6 students were able to read aloud well. They recognised text genres and identified the main ideas in age-appropriate texts. Most students could use standard Arabic to write brief articles and they demonstrated good speaking skills during class presentations. Year 3 were able to read aloud and understood the overall meaning of the text. They understood their teacher's instructions. Year 1 students could read the alphabet. They identified and wrote a few letters and words. Writing was under-developed across all grades. Similarly, independent reading of a range of texts was limited.

Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable but students' progress was good. They were confident singing in groups which helped to develop their speaking skills. Few were able to build unfamiliar sentences using their limited vocabulary. The upper grades students were able to use verbs in the past and future tenses. In Year 6, students developed a good range of vocabulary when they wrote about their trip to the local beach. However, their sentence construction was often incorrect. Most students used common structures in familiar situations. However, speaking skills were limited to rehearsed sentences. Their writing skills were limited in most classes. Few students were able to write simple sentences without copying. Students listening skills in most classes were under developed because of over reliance on translation. In the lower grades students did not use their new vocabulary in new contexts.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding. Results were well above national figures for England. Students' skills were well developed from the solid base provided by their Foundation Stage experience. Almost all listened attentively to adults. From the Foundation Stage they could follow instructions, including quite complex directions later in the stage. By Year 6 they could understand complicated and lengthy discussions. In the early years, they spoke hesitantly, but by Year 6 they were competent, articulate speakers. In reading, children in Foundation Stage classes were able to recognise their own and others' names and a few had started to read with some independence and fluency. Students in Year 1 could read short sentences on a familiar topic. Older students read aloud with good expression and understanding. They could read accurately for information. Reading for pleasure was well developed. Students in the early years were beginning to write in sentences. In Year 2 they wrote well for a variety of purposes. In the later stages report writing was of high quality. At all stages, a minority did not present their written work well. Spelling was not always accurate.

Attainment and progress in mathematics in the Foundation Stage and at primary level were outstanding. Examination results at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 continued to be well above UK national standards. In the Foundation Stage children could match and name common shapes and could demonstrate an understanding of number and counting above age-related norms. Students were building their mathematical vocabulary as they moved through the school and could express themselves with high levels of clarity and precision. Across the primary stages, students showed a high level of accuracy in both mental and written calculation. By the end of Year 6, students could present and analyse data and showed a sound understanding of angle and shape. When required, students could apply their mathematics in other areas of the curriculum, such as science.

Attainment and progress in science were outstanding in Foundation Stage and Primary. Young children could understand and use age-appropriate scientific terms. They investigated in a range of environments, used resources purposefully and shared the outcomes with their teachers effectively. Primary students collaborated in a range of experimental work. They knew complex elements of the topics well. Year 2 students categorised materials according to their suitability for waterproof effectiveness. Most students understood fair testing, basic hypothesis construction and experimentation protocols. Year 5 students knew the characteristics of craters on planets in the solar system and understood what determined their size and shape. Most engaged in practical science activities competently and recorded outcomes accurately. Independent, enquiry and research focused scientific thinking and skills were less well developed.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They worked well with others and enjoyed being at the school. They displayed very positive attitudes towards learning and school life in general. The pupil council and school buddies provided students with good opportunities to develop leadership skills. Students' relationships with the staff were based on respect and the shared values evident around the school and during lessons. Staff promoted a

healthy lifestyle throughout the school. Attendance was good overall and students were punctual to school and lessons.

Students' civic, Islamic and cultural understanding was outstanding. Students took a variety of leadership roles in classrooms and around the school. They developed a good understanding of Islam through a number of visits to local mosques and by learning about Islamic celebrations. Students were able to explain in detail about important aspects of Islam. They had developed a good understanding of the culture of the UAE through a number of events in the school and through local visits to various areas in Dubai. Although there were opportunities for students to develop an understanding of life in Dubai, these themes were less prominent in the curriculum.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. Students knew the main industries in Dubai and the UAE and were familiar with the main figures and personalities. They were aware of the progress made by Dubai and the UAE and they understood the background of the federation of the seven emirates. They knew how they could contribute to improving the quality of life in Dubai and the UAE. They had a good understanding of global environmental issues and participated in a number of initiatives to care for the environment.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was outstanding throughout the school. All teaching was characterised by teachers' familiarity with children's developmental needs and by their strong subject expertise. Teachers were committed to extending and developing students' knowledge and understanding. They planned lessons very carefully. They organised a stimulating variety of activities to motivate and engage the students. In some English lessons, for example, teachers set the scene for writing activities very imaginatively. Throughout the school, teachers were enthusiastic. They taught with a good brisk pace and caught students' interest. A few lessons were formulaic with rigid adherence to a plan and did not fully engage students. Teachers questioned students skilfully and made them think about their responses. Group work was effectively organised and generally well judged. Most teachers made very good, and sometimes innovative, use of information and communications technology (ICT). In a few lessons, teachers' presentations, though of high quality, lasted too long, thus delaying student involvement and dialogue. Students with learning difficulties were very well supported.

Overall, the quality of learning was good. Students' attitudes were positive. They were keen and well disposed to learning, and set about their learning tasks confidently and efficiently. They could work independently for long periods, but in most cases were carrying out teacher-directed activities, rather than pursuing their own individual learning path. They were not yet taking full responsibility for their learning. They were aware of their strengths and weaknesses through discussion and dialogue, and through good exchanges in their learning journals. Most students could use ICT effectively and a few imaginatively. When given the opportunity, they could collaborate well with their peers. A minority made appropriate connections with their learning in other areas. Inquiry and research skills were developing well in mathematics, but,

overall, students did not have enough opportunities for research or for experimental work in science. The development and use of higher order thinking skills were not yet embedded in learning.

The quality of assessment was outstanding. Systematic, rigorous procedures provided detailed information on students' progress. Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic had still to be incorporated into this excellent system. Managers met regularly with teachers to review every student's progress. Thereafter, teachers were quick to act on the results of the review. Careful and sensitive early assessment featured in the Foundation Stage classes. Teachers used assessment information well to plan learning. A few did not share learning intentions with students at the beginning of lessons or when summarising at the end of lessons. In some cases, teachers' comments on written work were congratulatory and did not indicate clearly what students needed to do to improve. At the later stages, students evaluated one another's work and gave thoughtful feedback. During these activities, students had clear guidelines to assist them. The school used assessment information very well each session when children and students progressed from one class to the next. Teachers reported assessment outcomes in detail to students and parents.

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

The curriculum was outstanding. Based on the English National Curriculum, a framework was provided to ensure cohesion, progression and challenge. A thematic structure, which integrated the teaching of science, humanities and visual arts, was a key feature of the school curriculum. The curriculum was rigorously reviewed and care was taken to ensure that all relevant programmes of study were fully delivered within the integrated themes. Exceptionally detailed planning was in place to promote the teaching of literacy and numeracy across all stages. The high level of structure and support provided by the active development teams in these two key curriculum areas contributed to the outstanding attainment in numeracy and literacy across all age groups in the school. A curriculum development team also explored and planned the optimum use of ICT across subjects. Another team provided broad support for the teaching of Arabic. Progress had been made since the last inspection improving the Arabic curriculum. This task is on-going. Music was taught by a specialist teacher and enhanced students' understanding and enjoyment of this area of the curriculum. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education was in place, covering essential issues such as care of the environment, citizenship and health. Healthy living was widely supported across the school. It was promoted by the work of the school nurse, through wall posters and by presentations at school assemblies. Teachers planned specialist programmes to meet the needs of the most able and also those who required additional support. The local community was regularly used as a learning resource by the school and during the inspection visit an early years lesson was based around a visit to the local mosque. There was an extensive extra-curricular programme available to students at the end of the school day, offering a choice of sport and art activities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for the health and safety of the students were outstanding throughout the school. Arrival and departure procedures were very well organised and implemented. The school provided a clean, safe and secure environment. It was maintained to the highest standard. The design of the building supported efficient student and teacher movement and the entire facility was used effectively as a space for teaching and learning. All record-keeping routines of a medical, attendance or communicative nature were meticulously maintained. The clinical personnel played a central role in the promotion of healthy living. They engaged with the students very effectively to ensure that this aspect of their learning was thoroughly embedded. All staff understood the importance of child protection procedures and implemented these to a consistently high standard.

The quality of support for children and students was outstanding. Staff were positive, caring and supportive. They knew the children and students well and celebrated their achievements. Students' behaviour was exemplary and they were supportive of one another. Older students acted as 'buddies' for younger children and were good role models. Teachers tracked students' progress systematically and intervened effectively to help those who were struggling. The school identified barriers to learning well and used appropriate specialist programmes to help the few who needed extra support. Commendably, parents were involved in the reviews of children with individual education plans. There was scope for a greater involvement of the students in these reviews by making the learning targets easier for them to understand. Attendance was managed very well and unexplained absences were followed up meticulously.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was outstanding. The Headteacher and other members of the leadership team provided a clear, strong and consistent approach to maintaining the very high standards the school had achieved. The school took particular care to ensure that new staff were aware of the vision and ethos of the school. All teachers took part in development teams which were working on enhancing aspects of the school. This approach of distributing leadership and responsibility to staff was very successful. The school had a systematic approach to monitoring the work of staff. The Headteacher and other managers regularly observed lessons. Through these observations and discussions at annual reviews, managers and staff identified targets for further professional development. Common themes for further training, which were in line with the school's ambitions, were covered at corporate staff training events. A programme of peer observation was also in place and this helped teachers to share best practice across stages.

The school's procedures for self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The Headteacher and managers knew the school very well. They systematically evaluated the quality of lessons and teachers' plans. They monitored students' attainment closely and were aware of the views of staff and parents. The current broadly based improvement plan was

based on this evidence and the progress with the preceding plan. The engagement of managers with teachers was supportive and helpful. To achieve higher levels of teacher performance across the school, managers need to improve the precision of their feedback and dialogue with teachers to help them to more consistently enhance students' learning. The school responded positively to the last inspection. It recruited an additional member of the Arabic teaching staff, introduced more training on up-to-date teaching methods, changed the management arrangements and introduced a new Arabic curriculum this academic year. These promising changes had already started to improve the quality of teaching and many parents reported that their children enjoyed learning the language.

The partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. The Headteacher was very effective at forging links with parents and made a point of welcoming students every day into the school. She and other managers were readily accessible to parents. Communication between the school and parents was excellent. In the Foundation Stage classes, daily contact between parents and staff forged strong relationships. Parents of older children could readily contact class teachers. Many met with teachers in their classrooms on Thursdays and e-mail was widely used at other times. Workshops for parents and the introduction of learning journals helped parents to be more involved with their children's learning. The journals contained outlines of current work and both student and teachers' views of achievement. Good links had been formed with the local mosque and nearby businesses. Further afield, the school had productive contacts with other businesses and organisations. The school was serving its local community by providing a range of sporting activities for local families. It also acted as a host for some cultural events such as the Centre for Musical Arts.

School governance was good. The Chief Education Officer representing the Board of Governors was a regular visitor to the school. He acted as a powerful critical friend for the Headteacher, attended many leadership team meetings and kept the Board informed on the school's performance on a regular basis. The composition of the Board was narrow and did not include a parent representative.

The staffing, facilities and resources for learning were of outstanding quality. Teaching and ancillary staff were well qualified, skilful and highly committed to the school. The school provided a very attractive learning environment for children and students. It included a very attractive concourse, a grassed area, swimming pool and well-designed secure outdoor areas. Teaching areas were equipped with up-to-date interactive whiteboards and a range of other ICT was available. Other resources and learning materials were plentiful and of high quality.

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
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? 3% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Outstanding

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.

Copyright 2011

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.