

Raffles International School
South Campus
Inspection Report
Kindergarten 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.

Raffles International School South Campus 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 Um Suquiem, Raffles International School South Campus is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to secondary, aged three to 16 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. Since the last inspection, the school had gone through a period of change with new owners and a new Principal. The new leaders were having a stabilizing effect upon the school and staff morale had improved. At the time of the inspection there were 484 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. They thought the quality of teaching was its main strength and they were very positive about the school's resources and facilities. Parents valued the opportunities their children had to learn Arabic as an additional language in the Kindergarten, although a few were not happy with the quality of teaching at this and other stages. Almost all thought that the school kept their children safe and that staff promoted healthy lifestyles. Most parents agreed that communication with the school was effective and that parent-teacher meetings were helpful. Most indicated that the school was well led.

How well does the school perform overall?

Raffles International School, South Campus provided a good quality of education, overall. It had improved since the last inspection. Attainment and progress in most subjects were good. In Arabic as an additional language these were acceptable. Throughout the school, students' attitudes and behaviour were good. Students respected Islam and were aware of their responsibilities as citizens. They were ambitious and had good understanding of environmental and economic issues. Overall, the quality of teaching was good, with outstanding practice in the Kindergarten. Students responded positively in lessons. They were motivated and in the early and middle stages they were developing skills as independent learners. The inclusion of information and communications technology (ICT) in primary project work was a strong feature. The curriculum in the Kindergarten was outstanding and mainly consisted of a Montessori approach to early education. The curriculum was good in the primary and acceptable in the secondary stage. The school was safe and staff members ensured that appropriate health and safety measures were in place. Staff-student relationships were warm and teachers supported students well throughout the school.

The new leadership team had made a promising start. Teachers were more involved in making improvements and parents expressed confidence in the new team. Senior leaders knew the school well. They used a suitable range of approaches to evaluate its work. These self-evaluation methods needed more time to become fully embedded into the everyday work of the school. Overall, the school had responded well to the last inspection. Improvements had been made to teaching and learning, especially in the primary department; teachers made much better use of attainment data and improvements had taken place in governance and leadership. The new owners had invested more in ICT and other improvements had been made to the facilities.

Key features of the school

- The excellent relationships between students and staff;
- The exemplary behaviour of students in class and around the school;
- The outstanding quality of learning and teaching in the Kindergarten;
- Improving performance of students in the primary years;
- The very good facilities and resources;
- The positive impact of new leaders upon the school.

Recommendations

- Develop the Arabic curriculum and the teaching of Arabic as an additional language;
- Continue to improve teaching and learning, particularly to develop children's skills as independent learners;
- Provide more opportunities for students to develop leadership skills;
- Use the data provided by a range of self-evaluation procedures to prioritise areas for school improvement.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment and progress were good in both the primary and secondary stages. Most students in Grade 1 could name and had good understanding of the five Pillars of Islam. They could also identify different ways of helping the poor and the needy in their community. They could repeat the Hadeeth of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) correctly. By Grade 8 the quality of students' recitation of the verses they had learnt from The Holy Qur'an was good. A few errors were made, particularly by the non-Arabic speaking students. Grade 9 students showed good ability to read and pronounce unfamiliar verses from The Holy Qur'an. Their application of Tajweed rules was at an acceptable standard. In general, most students had good understanding of the principles of Islam. Students throughout the school could relate Islamic values to their own lives and to their community.

Attainment and progress were good in Arabic as a first language in both the primary and secondary phases. More specifically, the progress in the early years in primary was slightly better than in the secondary school. In the early years, students developed their listening and speaking skills well. By Grade 6, their understanding of grammatical rules was good, but their use of the spoken and written language was less well developed. Students could use dictionaries and they read paragraphs well. Their ability to express themselves was good in the early years but their progress, particularly in developing their oral skills, slowed down in later years. Students' understanding and appreciation of poetry was acceptable. In the secondary school, a minority of students produced good examples of free and extended writing, but for too many students writing skills needed further development.

Both attainment and progress of students who studied Arabic as an additional language were acceptable. In the primary grades, students could match pictures with suitable words. They could copy words and short sentences correctly. By Grade 3 they knew the names of most common fruits, but they could not use them in sentences. In later years, they could fill in

blanks in worksheets. However, their speaking skills were not well developed. In the secondary grades students' ability to express themselves varied widely. Most of them could introduce themselves in three or four sentences but few of them could say up to eight sentences. Their reading ability was acceptable, while their writing skills were limited to a narrow range of words and short, familiar sentences.

In English, attainment and progress at all stages were good. Students listened with interest to teachers and to one another. Almost all children in the Kindergarten were able to conduct informal conversations in English during paired work and in their collaborative tasks. When given opportunities, primary and secondary students engaged in class discussions, responding with clarity and confidence. Secondary school students evaluated each other's written accounts on significant personal events and discussed setting and characterisation. These characterisations were shared across the class using a social web site. Students read aloud with varied fluency. Students at all levels wrote accurate factual responses to their teachers' and workbook questions. Primary students increasingly wrote creatively, using correct punctuation and grammar.

Attainment and progress in mathematics in the Kindergarten were good; in primary and secondary stages they were acceptable. Almost all children in the Kindergarten counted, made patterns, identified shapes and carried out mathematical enquiry at international standards or above. Primary students were able to count, measure and estimate. By Grade 5 they interpreted data, measured shapes and computed accurately. They solved problems efficiently and understood the language of problem-solving clearly. Secondary students were able to draw conclusions from data and use algebraic expressions and functions accurately. They did not use ICT to extend their understanding of more complex topics such as matrices and proportion. Students made links to prior knowledge and developed confidence in applying their skills in unfamiliar contexts.

In the Kindergarten and the primary school, attainment and progress in science were good. Children in the Kindergarten had a good understanding of the classification of plants and animals and had highly developed investigative skills. Primary students' approach to science had been reviewed since the last inspection and was good. Students in Grade 3 had devised fair tests to see what made plants grow. In the secondary school, attainment and progress were acceptable. Students had a sound knowledge of their topics and many were able to use their mathematics to solve chemical equations. They could carry out experiments accurately and safely with support. They did not extend their own thinking in writing or devise and evaluate their own experiments.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of students throughout the school were good. Students spoke most positively about student-staff relationships and said that their teachers provided the help and guidance they needed. All students felt safe. However, primary and secondary students said they wanted more opportunities to take responsibility within the school. Punctuality of almost all students was good in the last term.

In the Kindergarten, students showed acceptable civic and Islamic understanding. However, in primary and secondary, students showed good understanding. They showed good care for their school and the community. They had appropriate knowledge about life and traditions of Dubai. They appreciated living in a multi-cultural society like Dubai and found it a tolerant and a peaceful place to live. Students in secondary provided good examples of the impact of Islam on Dubai and the world. They also showed high awareness of their civic responsibilities.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Primary students could make comparisons between Dubai and other countries where they had lived. They discussed the Burj Khalifa, the Metro and the desert. Secondary students knew about industries and the economy in Dubai and had high aspirations about their future roles and potential contributions. Kindergarten students demonstrated care for their classroom environment. Primary students spoke with enthusiasm about the ways in which they could help in conservation and identified a recent beach clean-up project as an important event. Secondary students were adamant about the need for coherent strategies for re-cycling to avoid waste and optimise resources.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in the primary and secondary grades. Teachers planned their lessons well, but there were variations in how well the learning needs of all groups and individuals were met. The learning objectives of almost all lessons were made clear for students, but some lessons finished without an effective plenary session to conclude. Throughout the school, teachers' subject knowledge was strong. They created successful working relationships with their students and a few used questioning techniques that invited students to think critically. In the primary and secondary grades a majority of teachers told students what they expected them to learn, but gave the students too few opportunities to learn by finding out for themselves. Teachers made effective use of the considerable resources at their disposal, which included the contributions made by classroom assistants. The use of ICT within the classroom environment was a developing feature.

The quality of students' learning was good in both the Kindergarten and primary, and acceptable in the secondary grades. Almost all students enjoyed their lessons, showed good motivation and high levels of concentration and were keen to succeed. In paired and group work, students supported one another effectively. In most lessons students gained new skills and knowledge. When given opportunities to do so, students willingly contributed to lessons

through demonstrations and discussions and asked interesting questions that enhanced their learning. In a majority of lessons clear links were made to previous learning.

The quality of assessment was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in the primary and secondary grades. Teachers' record-keeping was appropriate and monitored by senior staff members. Assessment during lessons was of variable quality. Many teachers gave constructive feedback in lessons and wrote comments in exercise books. A few teachers summarised learning well at the end of their lessons. Teachers used a range of assessment methods to check students' progress. However, they did not always use this at the next stage of planning to sufficiently challenge higher achieving students. Marking of students' written work occasionally included guidance about how to improve. The school had suitable policies and procedures to assess learning and communicate the results to students and parents.

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in Kindergarten, good in the primary phase and acceptable in the secondary phase. The Kindergarten had retained last year's strengths in the balance and integration of a broad curriculum. Faithful to its distinctive Montessori nature, it was highly effective in fostering balanced independence, discipline, intellectual development and personal growth. All aspects of curricular provision were kept under review and almost all areas of learning were fully integrated. Transition to primary education was carefully managed by a steady increase of single subject teaching and a gradual decrease of time with class teachers. Handover to teachers in Grade 1 was effectively managed. Continuity in elements of the English and mathematics curricula was not as smooth as it could be. The curriculum in the primary school had been rapidly improved in the light of the inspection report of 2009. Use of computers was widely integrated into the topics, so that data handling was planned to coincide with research activities. Overall, computers were rarely used in classrooms and teachers were not all trained to use them to best effect. Since last year, links between subjects had been enhanced. The independent study skills of students were improving in many subjects. In secondary grades the curriculum was acceptably broad and balanced but lacked an element of choice after Grade 9. The school provided a suitable range of extra-curricular activities, including educational visits and participation in sporting contests. Links with the community were good and helped students to make contributions outside the campus. For example, a 'shoebox collection' for labourers raised their understanding of those less fortunate than themselves.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of health and safety provision was outstanding across all phases of the school. Regular safety checks were carried out and good security arrangements were in place.

Evacuation procedures and fire drills were practised every term. High quality record-keeping was evident and medicines were securely stored. Students' educational and personal well-being was regarded as paramount, with excellent procedures in place to monitor many aspects of health. All members of staff were caring towards students and excellent arrangements were made for their welfare. The school nurse, doctor and teaching staff were readily accessible. The nurse held sessions about health matters, including healthy life choices, gave presentations on healthy eating and liaised with the catering staff on suitable menu options. Transport arrangements were well organised and monitored. A senior manager was responsible for child protection and all staff understood the school's procedures.

The quality of support for students was outstanding in the Kindergarten, good in the secondary and acceptable in the primary school. Staff-student relationships were outstanding across the school. Students had ready access to relevant staff members. The tracking of students' academic progress was not fully in place and the detailed information that teachers had for their classes was not coordinated at a whole-school level. Teachers assessed secondary students' work and gave detailed guidance on what each individual student knew and needed to learn next. The school's expectations for excellent behaviour were well understood. Management of attendance and punctuality was acceptable. Initiatives to further improve provision for students with special educational needs were valued and beginning to improve progress for them.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership in the school was good overall. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer had a clear vision for the school and they showed determination to bring about changes. The Principal had been in his post for three months. In this time he had taken important strides in setting the tone of the school and gaining the confidence of parents and staff. The other senior managers supported the Principal by helping teachers to improve practices at a time when the school was undergoing major changes. The subject co-ordinators and co-ordinator of the Kindergarten were also working hard to maintain high standards and bring about further improvements. The new approaches of the leadership team had been welcomed by staff members. They reported that they felt empowered and had collaborated well on improving the curriculum.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. Leaders had a suitable number of effective procedures to help them to know their school well. Leaders monitored the quality of teaching and learning by visiting classes; they checked teachers' lesson plans and they monitored students' attainment. They also surveyed parents and sought their views informally. Important steps had been taken since the last inspection on analysing attainment data and benchmarking it against external and international standards. Self-evaluation procedures had not become fully embedded into the work of the school.

The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was good. The new leaders had made significant improvements to the tone and quality of relations with parents. Information bulletins were published frequently and email and telephone links had been improved. The school was open to parents and they often attended morning assemblies. The Principal was highly visible and accessible to both parents and staff. There was scope for the school diary system to be improved to help parents become more involved with their children's learning. A number of productive links had been formed with the local community. These included ecological and charitable projects which were motivating for the students and gave them opportunities to serve the community.

School governance had improved and it was good. The Board of Governors had clear aims and they were ambitious for the school. They were also clear on how they would support the school and measure its progress. The Chief Executive Officer was regularly in the school and worked closely with the Principal. She provided valuable support to the leadership team. An advisory council had been established to enable parents and other stakeholders have a say in the running of the school. Although it had only met once, it was clear that it wanted teaching to improve in specific subjects.

Overall, the quality of staffing, facilities and resources was good with some outstanding features. The quality of classrooms and specialist accommodation, together with the grounds, were outstanding. The spaciousness and functionality of the premises provided an excellent educational environment. The ICT infrastructure and other facilities had been recently improved and a number of pilot studies were taking place to evaluate additional ICT resources.

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:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
39% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Kindergarten	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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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

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