

International School of Choueifat - Dubai Inspection Report

Kindergarten to High

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.

International School of Choueifat was inspected in April 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 Sufouh, The International School of Choueifat is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 13, aged from four to 18 years. The school follows a curriculum devised by the Sabis organisation. Students are prepared for the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE), General Certificate of Education (GCE) at Advanced level, and/or Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. At the time of inspection there were 3742 students on roll. Student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. The majority felt that the school was well led. Almost all said that they were satisfied with the quality of education offered. Almost all thought that their children's progress in English and mathematics was good or better and most thought so in science. Most parents expressed satisfaction with teaching. Only a minority was content with the provision of extra-curricular activities. A few parents thought that behaviour was poor and some written comments mentioned their concern with incidents of bullying and use of some inappropriate language. However, most said that their children were safe, and the majority felt that the school dealt adequately with poor behaviour. Almost half of the parental responses expressed concerns about communication between school and home, and almost

one third felt that the school did not respond adequately to parental concerns. The majority did not feel that meetings with school staff were helpful. Two thirds did not think that they were effectively involved in the work of the school. Written comments emphasised the lack of extra-curricular activities, the length of the school day and poor facilities.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school provided an acceptable quality of education, overall. In many aspects of its work, it performed at an acceptable level. However, there were too many areas which were unsatisfactory, particularly in the experiences of children in Kindergarten and of students in the early years in the elementary school. There were few good features. The previous inspection report had identified several areas for improvement. The school had made very little progress in addressing any of them.

Students' attainment was good in some external examinations, but overall it was mixed. In Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language, attainment was unsatisfactory, as it was in all subjects in Kindergarten. Attainment was good in mathematics and science in high school. The quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in the middle and higher stages. Leadership was acceptable. The school's capacity to improve was hindered by the rigidity of the system in which it had to operate.

Key features of the school

- The school's belief that all students can achieve mastery of academic subjects by following a system of highly structured, uniform instruction and regular testing and retesting;
- The focus on preparing students for success in external examinations;
- The developmental needs of younger students were not well met;
- The well-organised, efficient computerised system for tracking and measuring performance;
- Substantial annual turnover of staff;
- Good results in certain external examinations;
- The curriculum, which was centrally prescribed and rigidly followed;
- The school's reluctance to address the recommendations made in the previous report;
- The potential for greater student involvement through the Student Life Organisation.

Recommendations

- The school, with the support of the governing body, should improve the quality of the curriculum in Kindergarten to ensure that it meets the developmental needs of young children and allows for improvement in teaching and learning;

- The school should comply with Ministry of Education regulations with respect to Islamic Education and Arabic so that students receive an appropriate experience in those subjects;
- The quality of teaching and learning should be improved throughout the school, and especially for the youngest elementary students;
- Attainment and progress in key subjects should be improved;
- Procedures should be reviewed to permit the school's arrangements for self-evaluation to include the views of students, parents and teachers, and more accurately reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
- Parents should be involved more fully in the life and work of the school.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were unsatisfactory in all phases. Most students were unable to memorise or recite prescribed verses from The Holy Qur'an correctly. Their recitation had many errors that changed the meaning of the verses. Most students across the school demonstrated poor knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts and the life of the Prophet. For example, few were able to identify specific prerequisites and duties a Muslim should perform before prayers. The recitation skills of almost all students were very poor. Moreover, students' knowledge and understanding of Islamic culture were well below expectations.

In Arabic as a first language, students' attainment in the elementary and middle sections was acceptable and good in high school. Progress was unsatisfactory in elementary and acceptable in the middle and high school. Most students' performance in school examinations was acceptable, and good in the high school. Throughout the school, almost all students spoke using colloquial Arabic. Few could use standard Arabic accurately. In the majority of lessons, students reverted to speaking in English. In the lower grades most students were developing their handwriting and reading appropriately. In the upper grades of elementary, most students needed help to write a simple paragraph. The extended writing of older students lacked correct grammatical rules and creativity. Throughout the school, students' understanding of texts was limited to factual recall.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic, as an additional language, were unsatisfactory. Speaking and listening skills were very limited and mostly below expectations for their age. Students' writing skills were poor as they transliterated all the prescribed text. Very few could write simple words independently. Most students relied on their transliteration script when reading although the more able students could identify a few words of familiar vocabulary. A minority of students could use single word answers or short sentences to answer questions directly related to the reading text. Across the school students demonstrated unsatisfactory progress in all key skills.

Attainment and progress in English were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases of the school. Children in Kindergarten listened carefully and repeated words and sentences with correct pronunciation. The majority could not read easily, finding it difficult to use phonic clues with unfamiliar words. Writing was mostly restricted to copying. In elementary, students acquired a good vocabulary and most could read with accuracy and expression by Grade 6. Speaking skills were limited for a significant minority. Writing was in line with expectations. In the middle and high schools, students developed more technical proficiency in writing. They could analyse texts thoroughly for meaning, but less well for appreciation of language or personal response. The strong focus on the functional mechanics of language hindered students' creativity.

Students' attainment and progress in mathematics were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in elementary and good in the middle and high schools. By the end of Kindergarten, most children could recognise, order and write numbers up to 20. They could count in twos and fives to 100. However, their skills in other aspects of mathematics were underdeveloped. By the end of Grade 6, most students could use cross-multiplication to determine missing values. Almost all reduced fractions to their lowest terms accurately. By Grade 9, students had developed good skills in complex geometry and algebra. Problem solving skills were less well developed. Students did not apply their mathematical knowledge well to new situations. Results in AP and IGCSE examinations were outstanding, and good at AS and A-level.

Attainment and progress in science were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in middle school and good in high school. In the elementary phase, attainment was acceptable and progress good. A minority of Grade 4 students could use thermometers to explore their environment. The majority of Grade 6 students knew how to design their investigations in theory but not in practice. Students in Grades 10 and 11 obtained passes in external examinations that were above international standards. There was, however, an inconsistency in performance in the different sciences and in different examinations. Practical skills were underdeveloped with the exception of students taking AS and A-level courses.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were good. They were respectful of each other and almost all students were assiduous in their class work. However, relationships between teachers and students were sometimes strained in the upper school. Corridor supervisors were occasionally over-zealous with their duties; prefects assisted enthusiastically with the maintenance of good order. Although students were aware of healthy living and followed the school's advice, they were offered unhealthy choices in the cafeterias. Attendance was good. Almost all students arrived in class punctually.

Students' Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and elementary, and acceptable in the middle and high schools. In the lower grades, students had very limited understanding of, and appreciation for, their civic roles. Most students' knowledge of Islam in contemporary society, and local traditions and cultures, were also limited. Older

students had a better understanding and they could offer examples of places to visit in order to understand better the culture of the UAE, in addition to tourist attractions.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and elementary, acceptable in the middle school and good in high school. In the lower grades students demonstrated a very limited understanding of the development of Dubai. Few could talk about its features and many had little knowledge of the UAE. They were unaware of the different Emirates or rulers of the UAE. Older students were able to talk about a range of global economic and environmental issues. They had a good awareness of the need to protect local and national resources but had few opportunities for further research and development in these areas.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory overall in Kindergarten and elementary; it was acceptable in the middle and high schools. In Kindergarten, teaching strategies did not meet the developmental needs of young children, with few resources used to support their learning. In better lessons throughout the school, teachers ensured that students were engaged and attentive. They motivated and encouraged them to ask for clarification and to contribute during question and answer sessions. The majority of these lessons were well paced. On occasions, teachers gave students too little time to record one point before moving to the next, nor were the most able challenged sufficiently, as the teacher waited for most students to achieve the same point of learning. The school's approaches to teaching did not allow teachers to cater for different levels of ability. Nonetheless, the more successful lessons featured well-judged questions with levels of challenge to suit all groups. A few teachers made lessons more interesting by supplementing the text books with additional ideas and information. Others however, permitted no discussion and little enjoyment.

Learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and elementary, and acceptable in middle and high schools. Most students were keen to learn and responded well to encouragement. They were less interested in lessons in which learning was more passive and there was little opportunity for active participation. Most students focused on getting good marks in their regular tests. They knew from their results how well they were progressing through their units of learning. Learning experiences were often narrow, with few resources other than set texts and little or no practical or investigative activity. For older students, there were more opportunities to give extended contributions in lessons and to engage in brief discussion. Overall, there were insufficient demands and opportunities for students to think critically.

Assessment was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in all other phases of the school. The assessment system was closely linked to teaching and learning and therefore, students were regularly tested using the academic monitoring system to assess mastery of the required learning points. They received immediate feedback on which questions they still had to master. Tests for younger children were not as appropriate for gauging knowledge and understanding as those with more complex challenges for older students. Tracking of students' overall test performances was rigorous and thorough. However, because of the fixed

nature of the curriculum and limited options for teachers to deliver it, the impact of test results on teaching was modest. The results of assessment were used to identifying gaps and remedying them through re-teaching and repetition.

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

The curriculum was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in the elementary and middle schools, and good in the high school. It had a clear rationale. The Sabis organisation reviewed the curriculum annually, taking account of the views of the school. The review was rigorous and sequential, and involved systematic revisiting of knowledge and understanding. The curriculum in Kindergarten was based on rote learning of letters, words and numbers. It did not include science. It also lacked enquiry and practical learning opportunities and therefore, did not fully meet the needs of young children. There was a lack of choice throughout Kindergarten and elementary. Students who found learning challenging were unable to benefit from the enrichment offered through break time and after school activities, as academic coaching took place then. Provision for the development of number and basic science was acceptable in the elementary phase. Information and communication technology (ICT) was not offered as a subject until Grade 6. Art and music were not available beyond Grades 7 and 8, respectively. Weaknesses remained in the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic provision because the time allocated to these subjects remained below government requirements. The English curriculum enabled students to develop a wide vocabulary and good grammar skills, although their understanding of literary texts was underdeveloped. Problem solving, critical and higher order thinking skills were limited in all phases of the school apart from when they were part of examination preparation. Students rarely had opportunities to learn from the local community and the use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum were limited.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements in the school were good. Students were closely supervised in all parts of the school. Their arrival and departure by buses were well organised by the school, although, some parents behaved irresponsibly when delivering their children by car. The school had good systems for monitoring and maintaining health records of students. Medicines were kept secure. Routine safety checks of equipment and fire drills were regularly instigated. There was acceptable provision for raising awareness of personal hygiene, fitness and safety. The premises and children's play equipment were in good condition. The buildings officer ensured high quality maintenance although some toilet facilities were unhygienic. However, there was no easy access to the school for people with physical disabilities. Appropriate procedures for child protection were in place.

The quality of support was acceptable. Staff and student relationships were business-like. A strict code of conduct supported good behaviour in most classrooms, although a few staff used inappropriate strategies to maintain good order. Good systems were in place to track the well-being and academic progress of students. Parents had access to detailed information on their

children's progress through an internet resource. Students received excellent support with university applications but lacked help in making informed career choices at an earlier stage. No individual provision was made for students with special educational needs. All students were taught at the same pace, with the same curriculum, with no allowance for variations in ability. There were limited opportunities to accelerate the learning of gifted and talented students. Systems were in place to ensure good attendance and punctuality in the school.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The overall direction of the work of the school, vision and guidance were provided externally by the Sabis organisation. The school did not deviate from the direction offered. The director and his senior staff administered the school effectively but had no room to initiate educational developments. Likewise, the work of heads of department and heads of section was limited to ensuring smooth implementation of the overarching philosophy of the organisation and its systems. Rigorous analysis of the frequent tests and examinations served to indicate staff development needs, which were provided from within the school or by representatives of Sabis. Staff training concentrated on ensuring more effective delivery and application of the system.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The curriculum and teaching programmes were reviewed annually, but the process was conducted by the organisation and the results imposed upon the school. Any amendments proposed by the school took considerable time to be implemented. Review of performance, while rigorous, was inward looking and did not take account of best practice nationally or internationally. The school did not prepare any report on the standards and quality of its operation. It had made a very limited response towards meeting the recommendations of the previous report, none of which had been fully addressed.

Partnership with parents and the community was unsatisfactory. The school used the website to make information available to parents on a daily basis on academic subjects, and issued termly reports. Parents were discouraged from active involvement in the life of the school, apart from limited help with extra-curricular activities. The school handbook advised them against teaching their children at home. The school did not involve parents in the development of any policies, nor did it survey parents' opinions. There were no parents meetings. The school had very few links with the local community.

Governance was unsatisfactory. Regional Sabis administrators were actively involved in the work of the school. The school was directly accountable to the organisation, and subject to rigorous scrutiny. It was not accountable to parents for its performance, or for the quality of experience offered to students. There was no provision in governance for representation from the school community or from other parties. The arrangements for governance did not ensure that statutory requirements were met. The governing body comprised members of the Sabis organisation, to the exclusion of all others.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. A significant number of teachers did not hold a professional teaching qualification and were unaware of the developmental needs of children and adolescents. Some teachers were teaching academic subjects in which they had no formal qualification. The premises were generally well maintained, clean and well supervised. Some classrooms were cramped. Displays in the high school were limited to progress charts and important test dates, with nothing to support learning or celebrate success. The use of ICT in teaching was very limited, but there was extensive sophisticated use in assessment procedures.

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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
58% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

Next steps

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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