

The School of Research Science Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 12

Report published May 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school	5
Recommendations.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	7
How good are the teaching and learning?.....	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.

The School of Research Science was inspected in February 2011 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Qusais, The School of Research Science is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 12, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the International Primary Curriculum and the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1220 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. Overall, parents were very pleased with most aspects of the work of the school but a minority of parents felt that they did not have sufficient information from the school to help their children at home with academic work. Almost all were strongly supportive of the developments the school had made over the last year, their children's progress in key subjects and the leadership and management of the school. A few parents expressed concerns about parental involvement in the school and about the amount of homework.

How well does the school perform overall?

The School of Research Science provided a good education for its students and had the capacity to make further progress. The school had responded very positively to the recommendations of the last inspection.

Attainment and progress was outstanding in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language throughout the school. Attainment in mathematics and science in the secondary and post-16 phases was outstanding and good in English. Progress across the school was at least good and at times outstanding. The attitude and behaviour of students was good. They were courteous, engaging and committed to their studies. They were well aware of community responsibilities, had an outstanding sense of the moral and social values, of Islam and they fully appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. Teaching was good and several outstanding lessons were observed. Teachers' strong subject knowledge, detailed lesson planning and high expectations contributed to the students' good learning and progress. Teachers managed lessons well. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers and students had improved, but was not prevalent in lessons. Assessment was good and had improved since the last inspection. Marking, in the main, was detailed with helpful guidance for development. The curriculum was good. It had been improved by the adoption of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) in the primary phase and a concentration on curriculum transition between phases. The curriculum was well supported by extra-curricular activities but cross-curricular links were in their infancy. The care of students and health and safety procedures were good. Staff showed a high level of professional care for students and facilities were safe, secure and well maintained. The leadership and management were good with a number of outstanding features. Management had improved by involving all staff in raising standards and promoting the school's ethos. Evaluation of all aspects of the school had been shared more widely through the school community and this had contributed to more effective forward planning. The partnership with parents and the community was good with improvements in communication and students' greater involvement in community projects. Governance was good and had supported the school improvement by contributions to self-evaluation and challenge to the management. Staffing, facilities and resources were good. The issue of staff turnover had been addressed and an increase in continuing professional development was a notable feature of the work of the school.

Key features of the school

- Leadership and governance which is visionary and consultative and has contributed to the school's positive response to the recommendations of the last inspection;
- Outstanding attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language throughout the school;
- Outstanding attainment in mathematics and science in the secondary and post-16 stages;
- The culture of self-evaluation which involved all members of the school community leading to caring but decisive management of change to enhance students' education;
- Improvements to assessment arrangements have led to more rigorous and consistent approaches across all stages of the school;
- The improved curriculum overall, notably the introduction of the International Primary Curriculum in the primary stage.

Recommendations

- Continue to build upon the improvements in teaching and learning by achieving consistency in quality across all stages;
- Continue to raise students' attainment in English, mathematics and science, particularly by the end of the primary stage;
- Further consolidate the programme of assessment to inform teacher planning and meet the varying needs of all students.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were outstanding across the school. Students had well-developed knowledge and understanding of Islamic values. They understood the relationship between worship and practice. For example, in Year 6, students understood the value of good deeds on the Day of Judgment and also in their daily lives. Most students demonstrated a high level of application of their faith, linking it to daily life through school-linked community projects such as looking after orphans. Knowledge of major events and significant personalities in Islam was secure across the school. Students confidently quoted Qur'anic verses and Prophetic teachings to support their views.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were outstanding in all phases. Most students were very confident in using the language to express their ideas. However, a few students did not use standard Arabic with consistency and accuracy. Students developed sound grammar skills and analysed sentences well showing detailed knowledge of sentence structure. Most Year 2 students assimilated key ideas and specific information while Year 4 students expressed their ideas cogently and demonstrated well-developed listening and

speaking skills. Most Year 8 students had a well-developed appreciation and understanding of poetry. They discussed main ideas and figures of speech. Most Year 10 students understood elements of short stories and provided well-developed examples of writing.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were good. Almost all students had well-developed listening skills. They assimilated key ideas to present specific information. Most Year 1 students were able to use vocabulary of colours. They listened well and answered basic questions. Most Year 4 students understood key ideas; they were confident and accurate when reading aloud. Most Year 5 students demonstrated good comprehension skills. They identified key ideas within a text and were attentive listeners. Year 9 students were expressive in reading aloud and could write simple instructions. Overall, students speaking skills were limited mainly to familiar situations. Students' writing skills were limited during lessons.

In English, in the Foundation Stage and primary years, attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Attainment and progress were good in secondary and post-16. On entering the school most children demonstrated limited skills in English but at later stages achieved good results against international standards in first language International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) and Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level. In Foundation Stage they showed confidence in linking sounds to letters and re-telling stories. By the end of the primary stage, most students spoke, read and wrote accurately in a range of styles. Students in Year 7 talked enthusiastically about the themes of their fiction reading and, in Year 10, students could construct persuasive arguments using appropriate vocabulary. Year 12 students were adept at analysing imagery in modern poetry.

In mathematics, attainment in Foundation Stage and primary was acceptable and progress was good. In secondary, attainment and progress were outstanding. In post-16 attainment was outstanding and progress good. In the Foundation Stage most children successfully developed their numerical skills and were able to recognise numbers up to 10. Primary students showed an increasing confidence with number, shape and measurement and algebraic skills. For example, Year 5 students could state the characteristics of 3D shapes and calculate the number of faces, vertices and edges. Older students in the secondary phase developed their mathematical skills at an excellent rate, being able to work on tasks in a range of real and abstract situations, selecting appropriate strategies. Students in Year 12 were able to analyse problems logically and select appropriate mathematical methods to solve them.

In science, attainment was acceptable in Foundation and the primary phase. Progress was good in both of these phases. Attainment was outstanding in secondary and post-16 and progress was good in both phases. Students' knowledge and understanding in the senior school were well above age-equivalent levels. At Foundation and primary phases attainment was equivalent to international standards. Students' investigative skills in the better lessons were sound. They could describe a fair test, plan an investigation appropriately, collect evidence and evaluate their findings. This was not yet consistent across the school. In Kindergarten students could design, manufacture and test the effectiveness of a pirate boat. In Year 4, students could construct a simple circuit to test conductivity, draw circuit diagrams using correct symbols and determine which items were conductors. In Year 9 students

understood the domain theory of magnetism, while in Year 12 chemistry, students were able to describe forward and reverse reactions.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of students were good throughout the school. Students were welcoming and well behaved. They supported each other well both in and out of class. Students listened to the opinions of others and were respectful of alternative viewpoints. Relationships between students and staff were strong, reflected in good humour in lessons and students' willingness to seek help from staff. Students reported that they felt the staff had their best interests at heart. Students articulated their commitment to healthy lifestyles, both in terms of diet and physical activity. Attendance was acceptable but prompt arrival at lessons was not observed by all.

Students' civic understanding and their appreciation of Islam were outstanding. They readily held roles as school leaders and representatives. Their service on the school councils, acting as counsellors to younger students and being team captains all reflected students' awareness of community responsibilities. Of particular note were secondary students' contributions to the governors' student forum. Appreciation of Islamic moral and social values was strong. Students reflected the reality of their commitment through practical work in local mosques and support of charities for the disadvantaged. Students were very aware of the multi-cultural nature of the Dubai community and a notable example was the primary students' Japanese marketplace held during the inspectors' visit. Whilst students appreciated their lives would be linked with those of other cultures, they were proud and protective of their national identity.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. They were aware of the economic structures of Dubai and articulated the challenges of recession. Students reported that the visit of a representative from NASA helped them understand the entrepreneurial aspect of Dubai's economy. Students were committed to the improvement of both the natural and human environment. Their work on the environmental committee supported recycling and energy-saving and their involvement in Human Rights Day reflected their equal commitment to preserving basic freedoms.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The overall quality of teaching was good with several outstanding lessons observed. Teachers had very secure subject knowledge which significantly enhanced student learning. Teachers often provided real life examples to give relevance to classroom activities. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, supermarket packaging provided the context for working on three-dimensional shapes. A positive and stimulating learning environment was very effectively created in most classrooms, particularly in the primary and Foundation phases. Displays were current and relevant to learning needs. Lessons were well-planned and follow a prescribed structure. However, on a few occasions, strict adherence to this format inhibited teachers being proactive to students' specific needs. Technology was used well in order to stimulate and add variety to learning activities. ICT, however, was underused in Arabic lessons. Teachers

were skilled in utilising additional resources, often originally created and beyond the standard textbook. Teachers questioned well to challenge students to think more deeply. In the best lessons students were given time to develop their responses which reinforced individual learning. The specific learning needs of individuals were effectively accommodated by well-matched group activities which reflected students' ability levels. Teachers' expectations were high, appropriate to the achievement goals of these students.

The quality of students' learning was good. They were given many opportunities to take responsibility and be active in their learning. A stronger and productive emphasis had been given to investigative work and students showed increasing skills in independent learning. They collaborated well with each other, contributing their own ideas but also showing respect for others' views. They were increasingly confident in demonstrating their knowledge of the real world and make connections across different areas of the curriculum. A developing feature of the most effective lessons was the emphasis given to higher order and critical thinking.

The quality of assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection and was good. Teachers had access to detailed summative and formative assessments of student performance. This data was increasingly used as a basis for teachers to plan the next steps in learning. This use of data was reflected in the analysis the school provided about the impact of its strategy for improving boys' reading. Curriculum and year teams had access to attainment data and used it effectively to evaluate curriculum impact and teaching outcomes. These analyses were reflected in whole school and individual targets which were being set to monitor student performance. Students and parents were aware of these targets and used them to gauge progress. The school had yet to achieve consistency of practice and confidence in the use of information by staff in its new data-rich environment.

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

The curriculum throughout the school was good. A clear curriculum rationale reflected the school's educational vision. A working group was responsible for continual curriculum review, but the school provided opportunities for students and parents to contribute to the review through the student council and regular surveys. The effectiveness of this group was seen in the changes made since the previous inspection. The introduction of the International Primary Curriculum was one of the key improvements that had impacted on the overall quality of learning. The number of subject options for students entering Years 10 and 12 had also been increased. These changes were in direct response to the needs of students in order that they were well prepared for the next phase of their education. Much emphasis had been placed on ensuring a smooth transition between phases within the school through the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Whilst there had been development of cross-curricular themes, for example topics in the International Primary Curriculum and in individual secondary subjects such as mathematics, there was no systematic planning in place for cross-curricular links. Students' development benefitted from a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Every student took part in a school camp and many were involved in activities beyond the school

which matched the school's vision of learning without boundaries. Students contributed to debating, sporting and charity events, supporting, for example, Pink Ribbon Day. The school was highly active in the community and recently played a role in refurbishing a mosque. Older students had the opportunity to experience professional life through extended visits to companies, university links and careers presentations provided by parents.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were good across all stages of the school. All school buildings were clean and well maintained. Site security and supervision of transport facilities were sound. Students and staff indicated that they felt safe. Mandatory fire drills and appliance inspections occurred and all health and safety policies were in place. Nutritionally sound meals of a high quality and variety were available. Three full-time registered nurses and a part-time doctor were employed. The administration and storage of medications had well developed systems and the monitoring of students with medical issues was carefully managed. Healthy lifestyles and exercise were promoted effectively and regularly with displays throughout the school, units of instruction in the curriculum and in assemblies. A child protection policy was in place and awareness of its implications was well known by all staff.

The quality of support was good across all stages. Students with behavioural needs or learning difficulties were identified and their progress was monitored. Arrangements for tracking and supporting students were good and provided focused support for students' academic progress and their personal development. Staff-student relationships were good across the school. Students were able to identify staff who they could consult on an informal basis. Students' benefitted from a strong programme for college and career advice. Students were guided regarding university choices and the application process. Attendance and punctuality were monitored effectively, though senior boys' lateness to class, particularly in the early morning and after lunch, remained an issue.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management of the school were good with some outstanding features. Strong direction had been given by the new principal. Staff and parents were confident that the ethos and aims of the school were in good hands. A noteworthy feature of this new leadership was the way in which staff at all levels had been involved in raising of standards. The work of senior and middle managers had been complemented by staff planning groups, which contributed ideas for refining assessment procedures, developing curriculum content and sharing best practice. Appraisal was thorough and led to increased opportunities for professional development, including placements in schools in the United Kingdom. The management of the school clearly had the capacity to make further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good and a hallmark of the school's managers. The development plan, drawing on the process of self-evaluation, had taken into

account the views of staff, students, parents and governors. It had identified priorities for action across all phases. These priorities had encompassed action on the recommendations of the last inspection which had been robustly addressed, although the school had identified strategies for further improvements in curriculum, assessment and teaching and learning standards.

The partnerships with parents and the community were good. Communications with parents had been strengthened through improvements to the website and greater use of electronic systems. Equally, parents reported that they were welcomed to the school and valued being able to talk with staff on an informal level. Reports to parents were clear, gave indicators of attainment and guidance for development. Community links were good with increased opportunities for students to engage with other schools through sport, debate and community projects with local mosques and volunteer groups.

Governance was good with some outstanding features. Indicative of the governors' commitment to school improvement was their active involvement in planning the responses to the recommendations of the last inspection. Governors reviewed policies and procedures each term and communicated regularly with staff and students. The membership of the governing body included parents, thus ensuring that parental views contributed to governors' deliberations. Governors gave good support to the school but also held it to account for its performance.

The staffing, facilities and resources were good. Staff were well qualified, sufficient in number and committed to improvement in all areas of the school. Support staff enhanced the quality of students' education. The quality of the buildings and the range of resources enriched students' learning. The school buildings were attractive, safe and allowed for ease of student movement. Classrooms and specialist areas were well maintained and enlivened by displays of students' work throughout the school. The generous provision of computers and interactive whiteboards contributed to students' research and teachers' support of learning. Of particular note was the quality of the main library, where students enjoyed reading and investigating, supported by a student-friendly search and borrowing system.

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	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
80% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good

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

Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good

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

Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
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:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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