

Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Cycle 3

Report published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School 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 Oud Metha, Al Rashid Al Saleh School is a private school providing education for girls and boys aged three to 18 years, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 2461 students on roll. The students' attendance for the last semester was outstanding.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most said they were happy with the quality of education. They were pleased with progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science though a few expressed dissatisfaction with progress in English. Most thought the quality of teaching was good. A majority said their child enjoyed lessons. A majority of parents were dissatisfied with the lack of extra-curricular opportunities available. A majority said the school helped students with future career choices, helped them make healthy lifestyle decisions and handled bullying issues effectively. Almost all felt their child was safe. Most said they were happy with communication and felt the school responded well to concerns, assigned appropriate homework and delivered informative reports. A majority said they found parent-teacher meetings helpful. Almost half of residents said that parents could be more effectively involved in the work of the school. A majority said the school's response to the last inspection report was positive and it helped them to make an appropriate school selection. They felt the inspection had led to improvements. Leadership was highlighted as a key strength, whilst most thought teaching was the area they would like improved.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School provided an acceptable quality of education overall. The school performed effectively in many aspects of its work. While there were some weaknesses, the senior leadership team had a good understanding of the challenges and how to address them. The school fulfilled most of its promise to its parents. Significant progress had been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous report and the capacity of the school to improve further was good.

Student attainment had improved across the key subjects in Cycle 3. There was improvement also in Cycle 2, but this was less consistent. Attainment and progress in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 remained acceptable. Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1, though good in Cycles 2 and 3. Recent additions to the school's senior leadership team had resulted in a better understanding of teaching, particularly in the upper grades. The protection and support for students had improved. New arrangements for governance had led to improvements and there was effective communication in place between governors and parents.

Key features of the school

- The campus was maintained to a high standard and the school had improved furniture and information and communications technology (ICT) provision;
- There had been improvement across all of the key subjects;
- Cycle 3 students demonstrated outstanding understanding of their Islamic and civic responsibilities;
- Teaching had improved as a result of focused support from senior leadership personnel, particularly in Cycles 2 and 3;
- There were very effective arrangements in place to ensure the safety and protection of students;
- Teaching and learning had not improved in Kindergarten and Cycle 1.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress in the key subjects in Kindergarten and Cycle 1;
- Increase opportunities for economic and environmental awareness by more extended projects to enhance understanding;
- Improve teachers' understanding of how young children and students become independent learners;
- Use the tracking system and analysis of assessment data to inform lesson planning and to better meet individual students' needs;
- Ensure international benchmarks are introduced in all cycles to compare and raise standards;

- Enrich the curriculum through improved partnerships with the community to broaden learning experiences;
- Develop leadership skills in understanding how young children learn and ensure that this is reflected in lessons;
- Deploy staff more effectively to enhance learning.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. Older students researched projects on Islamic values and demonstrated clear opinions of their impact on real-life situations. Most students could recite verses and chapters from The Holy Qur'an, using correct reading and recitation rules. They participated confidently and made significant gains in their knowledge about many issues, such as how the universe marks the Day of Resurrection. A significant minority of younger students did not understand table manners, expectations in friendship and behaviour during visits based on etiquettes in Islam.

In Arabic, attainment and progress were acceptable in Kindergarten and good in Cycles 1 and 3. In Cycle 2 attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Children in Kindergarten developed initial reading skills and their listening skills were acceptable. Most Cycle 1 students could speak confidently and fluently and their reading and writing skills were well developed. The majority of Cycle 2 students enhanced their understanding of grammatical rules through the practical use of the language. However, their ability to express themselves imaginatively was weaker. Most Cycle 3 students read fluently and with expression and comprehension. While writing skills were acceptable in most grades, students did not write enough and their work lacked creativity.

Attainment in English in Kindergarten and Cycles 1 and 2 was acceptable and good in Cycle 3. Progress was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. Across all levels a majority of students spoke fluently, using age-appropriate vocabulary and correct pronunciation. Older students were able to conduct assemblies and debate with confidence. Throughout most grades, listening was well developed. Reading skills were slightly less developed. Cycle 2 and 3 students regularly chose books and completed book reviews and logs. Below Cycle 3, writing opportunities in a range of genres were limited. These students did not develop sufficient creative or imaginative skills. They did, however, use correct grammar and spelling in their writing and handwriting was good.

Attainment in mathematics was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. Progress was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in other phases. Children in Kindergarten could count to 20 and had a sound understanding of number. Students were confidently calculating equivalent fractions in Cycle 1. Their application of skills to real life settings was less developed. By the end of Cycle 2, students were able to find the volume of pyramids and cubes. They manipulated number effectively in problem-solving situations. Cycle

3 students had a very good understanding of number and calculations; Grade 12 students were confidently working with hyperbola in conics and constructing formulae to explain movement. Throughout the school, students' progress in computational and spatial skills was good.

Attainment and progress in science for Kindergarten, Cycles 1 and 2 were acceptable. Attainment and progress in Cycle 3 were good. Children in Kindergarten demonstrated factual knowledge but did not explore and discover an understanding of their world through first-hand experiences. In Cycle 1, students identified the characteristics of the solar system and their relative position to the sun, but did not conduct investigations independently. Cycle 2 students understood facts about renewable energy sources but rarely worked independently. By the end of Cycle 3, good progress was made due to students' ability to hypothesise and use evaluations to confirm their predictions. Across the school students did not have sufficient laboratory time to develop scientific skills.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good at all phases. They showed respect for each other and their teachers inside and outside class and followed the school rules. The behaviour of a few of the older boys in Cycle 2 needed improvement. Most students had knowledge of healthy living and understood about a good diet and exercise and made appropriate food choices. Attendance across the school was reported by the school as outstanding and there were few latecomers.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture was acceptable in Kindergarten, good in Cycles 1 and 2 and outstanding in Cycle 3. While children in Kindergarten had an age-appropriate knowledge of Islamic responsibilities, their awareness of how they could contribute to civic issues was underdeveloped. Students in Cycles 1 and 2 contributed to the life of the school and participated in a range of activities and events. The oldest students demonstrated outstanding understanding and awareness of the impact of Islam on Dubai and they led a number of projects on how they could support civic development in the UAE.

The quality of economic and environmental understanding was acceptable across all phases. Older students could express a general understanding of how Dubai had developed and were aware of its vision for 2021. The majority were strongly committed to acquiring the skills needed to make a contribution to that success. Students had acceptable awareness of how they needed to look after their environment and of the need to recycle. Students knew about alternative forms of energy and the implications for global warming. Most students did not engage in regular activities that demonstrated a commitment to maintain their own environment.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. A comprehensive professional development programme had contributed to some improvements in the range of teaching approaches used by staff. Planning and teaching in Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2 did not take sufficient account of the interests and needs of the youngest students, who were passive for long periods. Lengthy, over-prescribed teacher inputs limited students' active participation. Elsewhere, teachers used their secure subject knowledge to give clear and accurate explanations and to present lesson content sequentially and at an appropriate pace. A broad range of teacher-made resources and interactive technology complemented textbook provision in the majority of lessons. Peer tutoring was an effective strategy, for example, where Grade 6 students had prepared and presented a lesson using ICT effectively.

The quality of learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. The oldest students took responsibility for their own learning. They were mature, highly motivated learners prepared to support and challenge each other through discussion and debate. The majority of lessons involved some collaboration in pairs or groups, and role play. Cycle 3 students used higher order thinking in mathematical language and symbols in presenting a reasoned argument. Across the school, the application of skills was still underdeveloped and reflected the lack of opportunities for students to access real-life contexts. Connections were rarely made with other learning, except in physics when students used mathematical formulae to calculate water pressure. Enquiry and research was rarely a feature of students' learning. In Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2, there were insufficient open-ended, practical experiences to engage students and promote creativity and independence.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. Assessment was not yet an integral part of teaching and learning in classes in Cycles 1 to 3. Assessment in Kindergarten, based on observations of students, did not consistently inform planning and provision to meet children's needs. Across the school, use was made of the centralised tracking data system to identify students who required further support. The information in student profiles was not used consistently to match work to the students learning needs. Teachers regularly checked students' understanding through marking work and by asking questions. Feedback did not indicate how to improve or identify next steps in learning. A positive feature was the introduction of some peer and self-assessment strategies, including a checklist of what had been learned and what further help was needed by students.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten, Cycles 1 and 2. In Cycle 3, it was good. The rationale for the Kindergarten curriculum was unclear, with too few opportunities for children to become independent and active learners. The Ministry of Education curriculum provided appropriate breadth and balance through the other cycles. The curriculum in key subjects was

reviewed annually to identify priorities. Whole-school curriculum review was less well developed, with limited opportunities for cross-curricular links to apply key skills. There was restricted provision for extra-curricular activities though Islamic Education exhibitions, writing and sporting competitions had enriched the curriculum. Saturday classes supported learning for almost all students. The Cycle 3 curricular review had developed opportunities for a few students to learn independently and collaboratively.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all students were good. Students were well supervised at all times and in particular when boarding the buses. The standard of cleanliness throughout the school was outstanding. The doctor and two nurses carried out regular health checks and dealt with incidents effectively. They maintained comprehensive records and knew the individual needs of students. The doctor regularly monitored the school premises to ensure adherence to hygiene standards. The quality of healthy food available in the canteen had improved significantly. The doctor had promoted a new healthy eating policy, adopted by almost all students and their parents. The promotion of healthy lifestyles was a key part of her role. Child protection arrangements were well established. The school had good record-keeping procedures.

The quality of support provided by the school was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycles 2 and 3. Positive relationships existed between almost all teachers and students and amongst students. The students' well-being was monitored by the pastoral team and the information provided support to both students and parents. Comprehensive academic assessment results were available in key subjects. These tracked the progress of all students. Systems were not in place to measure baseline data and progress of Kindergarten children and students in Grades 1 to 3. Students were able to make informed choices about their future through visits to universities. Attendance and punctuality was monitored daily and parents contacted to ensure the safety of students.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership in the school was acceptable. The Principal was committed and had developed a vision for the school based on co-operation, kindness and a willingness to improve continuously. Senior leaders had developed the teaching and learning in the school, particularly in the upper grades. Most teachers displayed a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to the vision and worked diligently to implement it. The roles of the most senior staff were defined. There was a need to ensure a clearer management structure with informed and empowered leaders distributed effectively. The school displayed a strong capacity to improve, with prioritised improvement in leadership and teaching and learning in Kindergarten and Cycle 1.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Through its new tracking system, a developing teacher-appraisal procedure and clearer success criteria in its action plan, the school knew itself well. There was a good understanding of the need to respond immediately to challenges that arose regarding teaching. The school had responded effectively to most of the recommendations of the last inspection and attainment, teaching and governance had improved.

Partnerships with parents and the local community were acceptable. Through good communication procedures and a positive relationship between school and parents, progress information was regular and informative. Parents' views were regularly sought and the school website was used effectively to gather opinions and ideas. The involvement of the parents in the work of the school was underdeveloped. Some links with the community resulted in positive learning experiences. However, the richness of the local environment was not used to help students apply acquired skills in real life contexts.

Governance was good. The board was representative of the school community. Parents, teachers, former students and local business people met monthly and more regularly when needed. Details of meetings and decisions made were recorded, with key success criteria identified to ensure all actions taken were effective and timely. The board held the school to account by focusing on these criteria, attending subject department meetings, liaising with the Parents' Association and analysing the feedback from surveys. Since its formation, the board had had a positive impact on school priorities.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. All staff members were appropriately qualified and almost all knew their subjects well. Middle management personnel had been allocated less class teaching to focus on teaching and learning development. There were no teaching assistants in the Kindergarten classes. The campus was maintained to a high standard. There had been significant improvement in the quality of furnishings and the ICT laboratories. While library stock had improved, it needed further expansion in quality and quantity. Students' use of ICT and library resources for investigative and independent learning was underdeveloped.

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
100% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

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

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

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

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

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Good
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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