

# Dubai Modern Education School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report published May 2010

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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.

Dubai Modern Education School was inspected in March 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 Al Muhaisnah, Dubai Modern Education School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12, aged five to 17 years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum in The National Section and a US style curriculum in the US section. The school had experienced a significant turnover in staff in the months immediately prior to inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were 2553 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. Parents were mostly positive about the school; however there was a significant number who lacked knowledge and a few who were dissatisfied with several aspects of the education provided. Whilst most parents felt that their children liked school and that progress in key subjects and teaching were good, comments showed concern over the lack of activities, safety on buses and behaviour. There were a few strong comments about individual teacher's lack of expertise and poor attitudes towards students and a small minority felt that the school did not treat students fairly. The survey showed that parents were mostly happy with the information provided by the school; communication was seen as a growing strength by parents interviewed as part of the inspection process. However, parents' comments supported the view of the inspection that communication between home and school is still an issue despite the recently upgraded web site and text message system. Parents were critical of the divide between National and US sections and the fact that some

staff did not speak English at all or spoke poor English. A quarter of parents did not know how they could help students with school work. Most few parents believed that the school was well led. Most did not know what the school had done to address the recommendations from the previous inspection and a few did not feel included in decision making.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Overall the school provided an acceptable standard of education and the inspection identified several good features and significant progress in response to the previous inspection recommendations. In the key subjects students' attainment and progress were mostly good. In English attainment was acceptable with good progress in KG and elementary and acceptable progress in middle and high in both sections. Students' personal and social development was good overall but behaviour and attitudes in middle and high school were acceptable. Most students showed positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school was generally good apart from negative attitudes and poor behaviour from a few older boys in the US section. Students' civic understanding was also good. Students were responsible and showed respect for and appreciation of Islam in most cases. Their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of local traditions and cultures were strengths and were embedded in the ethos of the school. Elementary age students' economic and environmental understanding was good with many able to discuss Dubai's economic situation and local and global environmental issues in some depth, however, this was less well developed in the middle and high school.

Teaching was acceptable, except in elementary where it was good. However, although there was good teaching, there were still too many lessons in which teachers used a limited range of styles and strategies and did not provide enough challenge to students. The few outstanding lessons included clear assessment strategies that teachers used well to ensure students knew what to do to improve. However, this practice was inconsistent across the school. The curriculum followed the Ministry of Education and, in the US section, the school had made efforts to enrich the curriculum with a limited range of visits, visitors and activities. Extra-curricular activities were lacking. The quality of protection for students was good and all staff were conscientious in adhering to the policies for health and safety. Medical had excellent strategies for monitoring chronic illness. The arrangements to support students' welfare and positive personal development were acceptable. However, behaviour management strategies were weak in a few cases and this led to negative behaviour. Tracking of student progress using the information management system was at an early stage of development and was not consistently applied across the school; the analysis of data was insufficiently detailed. However, the science department were analysing the data well and aligning this to personal development.

The leadership was ambitious for the school and had worked hard to address the issues arising from the previous inspection with significant progress in most areas, including governance which was very strong. There were several strong subject leaders within the school who had significant capacity to support school self-evaluation and improvement. However, there was not a clear overview of the attainment throughout the school in relation to international benchmarks. Professional development for all staff did not ensure good practices were implemented in all areas. The school had successfully improved the processes for self-evaluation, including the involvement of all members of the school community. However, many initiatives were new and had not yet become embedded in school life and so lacked impact on attainment. With the educational expertise of the leadership and the strong culture of professional development together with the support of the governors and owners, the school had significant capacity to improve further.

### Key features of the school

- The committed leadership and staff dedicated to improvement;
- The strong subject leadership especially in science;
- The positive attitudes to learning especially in KG, elementary and girls sections;
- A lack of cohesion between the US and National sections of the school;
- The high quality professional development which had led to developments in teaching and learning;

### Recommendations

- Implement strategies to promote student centred learning throughout the school;
- Review and modify the curriculum to ensure it is relevant to all students needs in both sections of the school;
- Initiate and sustain a range of extra-curricular activities to suit all students;
- Ensure that teachers and supervisors are trained in behaviour management techniques;
- Develop resources to support collaborative and enquiry based learning, including a range of appropriate reading materials in the libraries;
- Improve the canteen as an environment suitable for eating.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good throughout the school except in middle school where their attainment and progress were acceptable. Most students could recite and memorise verses and chapters of The Holy Qur'an with few errors. In lower grades most students knew the Faith Pillars. They made the link between Allah's Books and the Prophets. The majority of them knew the importance of correct recitation. In middle grades the majority of students understood the unbelievers' characters, and clarified the unbelievers' fate. In higher grades most students showed knowledge of Islam principles in relation, for example, to adoption. They understood the value of working hard in Islam.

From Grades 1 to 5, students' attainment and progress in Arabic were good. They had a good understanding of the text and wrote answers to text book questions independently, with clear and legible writing. From Grades 6 to 12 students' attainment and progress were acceptable. Most students in both sections had a basic understanding of grammatical rules and could apply these to short familiar sentences. Most students could write and read simple sentences accurately without errors, but very little extended writing and reading for different purposes was evident.

Attainment in English in the KG and elementary stages was acceptable and progress was good. Both attainment and progress were acceptable in the middle and high school sections. Students in KG to Grade 3 listened attentively and answered questions accurately. Most students had an increasing knowledge of phonics and read classroom materials competently. From Grades 1 to 3 students spoke confidently and gave brief presentations. However, this was not maintained throughout the middle and upper grades where the majority of students used poor pronunciation and did not read with ease. Most students could understand and apply the rules of grammar and respond correctly to questions. However, their progress in conversation was limited, with the exception of a minority of students in Grades 10 to 12, who could engage in a good level of discussion. Most students had limited vocabulary because of their lack of exposure to reading. The quality of writing across all grades was underdeveloped. Overall attainment and progress in the National section was better than that in the US section.

Students' attainment in mathematics was acceptable in the KG and elementary phases and good in middle and high school sections. Progress was good in all phases. By the end of KG most children had an understanding of counting, ordering, reading and writing numbers. By the end of Grade 5 they showed understanding of place-value when multiplying and dividing whole numbers. However, students' problem-solving abilities were under-developed. In the middle and high school, students had good mathematical knowledge and numeracy skills. Most students were attaining at internationally expected levels and many were progressing beyond this level. Students were able to build on prior knowledge and solve complex algebraic and geometric problems in unfamiliar and real-world contexts.

Attainment in science was acceptable in KG and elementary, and good in middle and high school sections. Progress was good across the whole school. Children in KG gained knowledge of introductory general science, such as plant and animal identification. Elementary students gained practical science understanding through teacher-directed experiments. Many were able to complete good science projects using simple research skills. Middle school students were able to conduct advanced laboratory experiments, and most were skilled in using microscopes and scientific equipment safely. High school students understood processes of collecting, classifying and analysing data and they had good knowledge of chemistry, biology, astronomy and physics. Students successfully participated in conservation and environmental competitions linked to science.

### How good is the students' personal and social development?

Overall the behaviour and attitudes of students were good in KG to Grade 5 and acceptable in Grades 6 to 12. Respectful and caring relationships between students and teachers were evident at all levels, although relationships between supervisors and a small minority of boys in the US section were sometimes strained. In classrooms, there was a positive attitude to learning; students reported that teachers and supervisors were helpful to them. Students' behaviour was good except in those instances when adult supervision was insufficient. Hallway behaviour was unruly in boys' upper elementary and in the US high school sections. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable but more than a few students failed to arrive in time for opening activities and lessons.

Student's Islamic and civic understanding was good. Most students in the school appreciated and listened respectfully to The Holy Qur'an in the assembly and during recital lessons. Many students showed adherence to Islam through their co-operative manner and their every-day behaviour. Most students showed respect for the multicultural community of Dubai. Most students knew the history, customs and traditions of Dubai and UAE. Students showed responsibility in most situations and many were involved in prefect and school council roles.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good overall. Students were aware of the main businesses in Dubai and the impact of the economic downturn on people in Dubai. They had good knowledge of Dubai and the UAE's economic development. They were aware of the environmental impact posed by the construction work and traffic in Dubai and could suggest solutions. They had good understanding of certain global environmental issues. A few students took an active and regular part in local environmental projects and competitions. However, a few students were unsure of how to apply global environmental knowledge to their local context.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable throughout the school, although the best teaching was observed in the National section. It was good in the elementary phase. Overall, teachers had sufficient subject knowledge and planned appropriate lessons for the stages they taught. The KG teachers made little connection of what they taught to the wider world and children's experience; there were limited opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves and to learn through practical exploration and play. In the elementary grades, most teachers encouraged group discussion but activities were sometimes not appropriate for collaborative work. In the best lessons, there was a good balance of teacher talk and student activity. In the middle and high school stages, most teachers displayed good questioning techniques and good rapport with their students. Science laboratories and resources were used effectively for science investigations but information and communication technology (ICT) was not used to support learning in most lessons.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable throughout the school apart from in elementary where it was good. Most teachers encouraged students to learn actively but students rarely worked without close teacher direction. In KG and elementary phases students had few opportunities to explore and to find things out for themselves through using a wide range of tools and materials. Learning was still passive in classes at all stages of the school but when given interesting, relevant and challenging tasks, students responded positively and enthusiastically and made good progress. A start had been made in a majority of classes to developing skills for collaborative working through initiatives such as the 'junior teacher'. The quality of group work was impeded by students' lack of English language skills in the US section. There was insufficient evidence of students being given the opportunity to develop and apply enquiry and critical thinking skills. Students also lacked opportunities to develop creative and imaginative responses to the wider world.

The quality of assessment was good at KG, but in the other sections of the school it was acceptable. Academic departments had made a little progress in using assessment within lessons to enable students to know how to improve, but this was not highly developed across the school. Student work was consistently monitored, graded and recorded using a range of tools, but this assessment was not used to plan lessons to cater to the learning needs of students of all abilities. Most teachers had knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses but did not communicate these to students. Marking in workbooks was up to date but did not give any feedback on how well a student had done or how to improve.

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

The curriculum was acceptable overall. There was an established curriculum that met the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and was complemented by US textbooks in the US section. Department heads reviewed the curriculum in their areas and all departments had detailed curriculum plans in place. However, there was no systematic review of curriculum content across the whole school to ensure that the needs of all learners were met. It therefore continued to lack breadth and balance, and was overly reliant on textbooks. Themes were occasionally repeated in lessons across the grades with little progression in the materials used in the upper grades. Some teachers supplemented the textbooks with worksheets and made links to other subject areas. A few teachers used film clips and audio tapes and where this happened, students were more interested and made greater progress. In a few departments, teachers encouraged activities and clubs to enrich the learning process. Planning was in place to extend business studies in the upper grades to offer greater choice and build on the current work which accessed students to the experience of running a business. A number of activities such as a school open day took place during the school year, linking students with the community and the local environment and helping them to develop their sense of responsibility. There was, however, no structured programme of extra-curricular activities to enhance and enrich learning. While the curriculum covered the essential areas of learning, it was too narrow in both sections to adequately challenge students or to support the needs of the less able. It offered only limited opportunities to engage and inspire students or encourage them to become active and independent learners.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety was good in KG and acceptable elsewhere. The school had made progress in this area since the last inspection. However, safety arrangements on buses could be improved further with better supervision and seat belt use. Premises were adequately maintained. The school had implemented an emergency evacuation plan but exit route maps were not displayed in classrooms. Supervision before and after school was good but supervisory practices at the end of break in the elementary were weak. Dedicated medical staff provided good guidance on a range of health issues including exercise and diet to obese students but the canteen served unhealthy food. The school had excellent procedures for ensuring students with complex medical needs were monitored and kept safe. Students were generally well cared for and child protection arrangements were clear.

The quality of support was acceptable in most of the school, but good in KG; there were several strong features throughout the school. Staff-student relationships were positive and students praised the care and guidance they received from adults. Full time social workers, who knew the students well, provided valuable support to teachers in addressing social and emotional issues. Behaviour was tracked effectively but training in accessing information from the information management system was inadequate. Most teachers managed behaviour well in lessons; however, there was an absence of behaviour management training for supervisors and teachers. Student progress was tracked systematically but these data were not always analysed effectively or linked to social development. Reports to parents provided assessment data but did not provide information on strengths and areas for development. The careers guidance programme was limited and so did not prepare students well for the next stage of their education.

### How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was good overall with a few clear strengths. The leadership team, in close liaison with the owners, was dedicated to improving the school. Senior leaders in both sections possessed a strong understanding of how to improve teaching and learning and had made significant efforts to improve the range and quality of teaching strategies throughout the school. Middle managers shared the leadership's focus on standards and provided good direction and some excellent professional development to teachers. The school leaders had developed several initiatives which were beginning to impact on standards. However, school managers did not compare student outcomes with similar schools internationally. The practice in the separate sections was not closely aligned.

Processes for evaluating the school were good and being developed with significant success. The inclusion of all members of the learning community in self-evaluation surveys had provided a clearer idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teaching and learning were monitored effectively in key subjects, and department heads were driving the improvement agenda with focused, high quality professional development. However, the monitoring process was not closely aligned to the analysis of data. The school had made significant progress towards the recommendations from the previous inspection. By combining the strengths of the whole leadership team in both National and US sections, together with a clearer analysis of attainment and progress in each section the school was well placed to develop further.

The school had acceptable partnerships with parents who were mostly supportive of the school's efforts. Whilst the school had improved the communication, this was an area perceived by parents and inspectors as in need of further development. Many parents were involved in the life of the school through the parent learning scheme. The parents' committee and advisory board both served to increase communication between home and school. The school had some good links with the local community, a good example of which was the life skills programme organised with Dubai Police.

Governance of the school was good. The leadership team received strong support and guidance from the advisory boards, which included parental representation. These two groups included a wide range of stakeholders, representative of the school community, with a range of relevant skills and expertise. Parents had been directly involved in the programmes devised since the last inspection which were beginning to have a positive impact in improving teaching and learning.

The staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. There were sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff although recent rapid turnover had put pressure on efforts to develop teaching and learning. Buildings were mostly spacious, accessible, safe, and hygienic. However, teaching rooms were small and did not allow for the flexible seating arrangements. Resources to support learning were lacking in all classes.

## 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	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Good
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: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

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