

# Dubai Carmel School Inspection Report

## Kindergarten to Grade 11

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 Carmel School was inspected in February 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 Nahda, Dubai Carmel School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 11, aged three to 18 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 722 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all agreed that their children enjoyed being at school and that efforts were made to keep them safe and healthy. Most parents agreed that their children were treated fairly and that staff encouraged them to become independent and responsible people. Most agreed that they felt comfortable about approaching the school with a question or complaint. They agreed that the school gave good information about their children's progress and that staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. Most said that the school was well led and that there were good links with parents. However, about one in ten parents felt that behaviour was not good and about one in five did not agree that their children found activities enjoyable and stimulating. A similar proportion did not feel that school was good at consulting over decisions affecting their children. About half of parents said they were unsure of the extent to which the school had good links with the community or how well the school had responded to the previous inspection report.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Carmel School provided an acceptable quality of education. Attainment in key subjects, in both primary and secondary phases, was good apart from in mathematics and science where it was acceptable. Progress was good in both primary and secondary phases in English. In Islamic Education progress was good in the primary phase. In all other subjects, progress was acceptable. In KG attainment and progress were acceptable in mathematics and science. In English, progress was good enabling children to reach an acceptable standard by the time they moved into Grade 1. The attitudes and behaviour of students throughout the school were good. Students conducted themselves responsibly and showed respect for each other and towards adults. Students showed good civic understanding and were proud of their identity as Muslims. They were also willing to take on supervisory and peer tutoring responsibilities and took an active part in the student council. Most students had a good understanding of how Dubai had developed in the last few years and had followed recent developments such as the opening of the Dubai Metro.

Teaching quality was acceptable, overall. Although over a third of lessons were good, in other lessons too much of teaching was characterised by teachers talking to the class for long periods of time with insufficient opportunity for students to be actively engaged. Consequently, learning was also only acceptable with students playing too often a passive role. In better lessons, when tasks were interesting, students responded positively and with enthusiasm. Teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses well. As a result of the introduction of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) at the secondary phase, assessment procedures were beginning to be more coherent. Generally, however, students were not provided with enough guidance on how they could improve, either through oral feedback in lessons or through marking. The curriculum was of an acceptable quality. Staff at the school had invested time in reviewing provision. Some cross-curricular work existed in the teaching of English and to good effect. Students took part in regular curriculum visits to various parts of Dubai to enrich their learning. This was supported by a small range of extra-curricular activities. Arrangements for health and safety were good. Facilities were well maintained and the school had good medical procedures. The school doctor and nurse monitored students' health regularly and promoted healthy lifestyles. Academic and welfare support for students were acceptable overall. The school worked well with parents to keep them informed of their children's progress. Performance data had increased recently but was not always used effectively to help teachers plan their lessons. Although students with special needs were freely admitted, some teachers were insufficiently trained to deal with them effectively.

The leadership in the school was good, with a central purpose and vision to create an inclusive family ethos. There was a strong commitment to team work. The management structure was clear and there was good action planning. A number of structures and initiatives had been established over the past year but as yet they were not having enough impact on raising standards. Partnerships with parents and the community were strong, but governance lacked

accountability to major stakeholders who were not represented amongst the membership. The school made good use of the restricted resources that were available.

## Key features of the school

- The positive friendly and family ethos permeated the work of the school at all levels;
- The attitudes and behaviour of students were good;
- The quality of students' spoken English was good;
- There was commitment to a coherent and balanced UK style curriculum, albeit at an early stage of development.
- The teaching styles did not always encourage active learning by students;
- The students with special educational needs did not always receive effective support.

## Recommendations

- Raise attainment in all key subject areas.
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that in all lessons :
  - students have sufficient opportunity to explain their thinking;
  - lesson planning and delivery reflects the different needs of students;
  - students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve;
  - Better use is made of support staff.
- Bring children's learning experiences in KG into line with best practice internationally;
- Improve the quality of academic and pastoral support so that the needs of all students are fully met;
- Ensure that there is sufficient expertise available to support students who have special educational needs;
- Ensure that the governing body includes representation from parents and other stakeholders.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment was good throughout the school. Progress was good in the primary phase, and acceptable in secondary. Most students memorised the chapters of Holy Qur'an, and could recite them with few errors. In primary, most students knew the principles of Islam, such as believing in all of the other Holy books and naming many of the Prophets. In the secondary phase, most students understood the concept of Jihad and learned about its different degrees and types. The majority of them made good progress in their knowledge of Islamic concepts. However, students made limited progress in developing their thinking about Islamic values and exploring how to apply them to their daily lives.

In Arabic, students' attainment was good throughout the school progress was acceptable. In the primary phase, most students studied Arabic as a first language and could read letters and words and spoke confidently. In the earlier secondary grades, students had increased their vocabulary and made acceptable progress in developing their abilities to read short and medium-length texts. Handwriting and spelling improved over time. In the upper grades, most students made acceptable progress in developing their writing skills. However, throughout the school, students made less progress in developing their ability to apply the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to unfamiliar contexts. Of the few students who studied Arabic as an additional language, most made acceptable progress across the school.

Attainment in English was acceptable in the KG and good in the rest of the school. Most children entered KG with little or no English but made good progress, especially with listening and speaking. By the end of KG most children had acquired good knowledge of letters and sounds and a few could read simple sentences. In Grade 5 students were confident in changing tenses of words. Throughout the primary grades, they read with increasing fluency and, by Grade 6, they could express opinion in their writing. In Grade 7 many students could read with expression, although their knowledge of authors was weak. Grade 8 boys were developing specialised vocabulary through themes such as aircraft travel. By Grade 10, as students worked towards IGCSE, writing became increasingly mature and most could make predictions from texts they had read. Spelling improved well with age.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were acceptable across the school. By the end of KG, children were able to form number symbols, count in sequence up to thirty and recognise basic geometric shapes. During the primary grades students made acceptable progress in adding and subtracting numbers, including fractions and they had a satisfactory knowledge of multiplication tables. By the early secondary grades, students continued to make acceptable progress; they worked with decimals and plotted graphs using appropriate axes and they worked out gradients. As they approached IGCSE in Grade 10, students were able solve problems involving the area of sectors of a circle to an acceptable standard. The majority of students found simple transformations and reflection in geometry a challenge.

In science, progress and attainment were acceptable in each phase. In KG, children could name their five senses, many of their body parts and recognised the difference between living and non-living things. In Grade 6, students could describe the properties of solids, liquids and gases and explain the differences between physical and chemical change. Grade 10 students knew the properties of metals. They understood and applied formulae for calculating velocity and acceleration and they appreciated some of the harmful effects that human activity had on the environment. Throughout the school, students' skills in developing practical investigations were not well developed. However, most students had gained a range of useful scientific vocabulary.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. They moved between parts of the school in an orderly manner and followed their teachers' instructions. Students had positive attitudes towards learning, were proud of their school and completed the work given to them in lessons, with enthusiasm. During break-times, most students played responsibly, behaved well and showed respect for each other and towards adults. Almost all students arrived in time for lessons during the day; however, although attendance was good, a significant number of students arrived late for the morning assembly.

Students' civic understanding and their understanding and appreciation of Islam were good across the school. They were proud of their identity as Muslims but also understood the importance of respecting others, regardless of their race, colour or religion as part of their religion's values. They were happy to take on supervisory and peer tutoring responsibilities. Some took an active part in the students' council. Most students had a good knowledge about Dubai in present times and its status in the UAE and the world. However, only a minority of them had good knowledge of its history and its future aspirations.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Most students had a good understanding of how Dubai has developed in the last few years; they named projects that were recently opened, such as the Metro, and explained the impact these would have on life in Dubai. Most students had a good knowledge of global environmental issues and they took part in environmental activities in the school. However, too few students had a good understanding of local environmental challenges or were able to make suggestions on how these challenges could be addressed.



## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in each phase. The KG provided subject teaching and this did not offer enough opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves and to learn through practical exploration and play. In most lessons, there were good relationships between teachers and their students. In the best lessons in the primary phase, introductions and explanations were clear. There was a balance between teacher talk and student activity, and questioning. This encouraged the development of students' thinking skills, particularly in English. In the best lessons in the secondary phase, teachers began by asking students to recall previous learning, provided extension work for the more able and gave good individual support to students. However, much of teaching in each phase was characterised by teachers talking to the class for long periods of time. Consequently, students rarely worked in pairs or small groups to help them develop their understanding and problem solving skills. Teachers did not plan sufficiently well to meet students' differing needs and abilities and, as a result, activities were often insufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able students. In some lessons, teachers used their adult assistants effectively but in many lessons support staff were under-used.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable throughout the school. In general, students demonstrated good attitudes to their work, their school and to each other. However, children in KG had limited opportunities to explore and to find things out for themselves using a wide range of tools and materials. In many lessons in the primary and secondary phases, students' learning was passive as a result of lessons involving long periods of teacher direction. In some cases, in the secondary phase, students became restless. When given interesting, relevant and challenging tasks, for example in some English lessons, students responded positively and enthusiastically.

Assessment was acceptable in each school phase. Teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses and there were established, coherent systems for testing and recording student attainment. The school's assessment arrangements were clearly set out for students and their parents, for example, in the IGCSE 'Student Diary'. The school had carried out an analysis of its IGCSE results, identified concerns and targets for improvement. In a few lessons, students were given advice and support as they worked. However, they rarely received direct information about how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve, either through verbal comments or through evaluative marking of their written work. Nevertheless, students' efforts were reinforced in lessons.



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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. Since the previous inspection the school had changed to a UK style curriculum in most subjects, but had retained the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education, Arabic and Social Studies. This change had provided breadth, balance and options for students and had guided teachers' planning. There was a commitment to review the curriculum on an annual basis; as recommended in the action plan from the previous inspection. Over the past year there had been a focus on raising awareness amongst staff of the importance of learning experiences brought about through enhanced curriculum opportunities. By adopting the IGCSE programme, the range of curriculum opportunities had increased. These included the extended use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, problem-solving and interactive learning. The structure of the new curriculum provided a good basis for assessment and planning, particularly in English. However, many of these aspirations had yet to come to fruition in day-to-day lessons, particularly in the way the needs of students of different abilities were met. IGCSE was offered in a wide range of subjects and take-up by students was increasing. Staff had been fully involved in evaluating current textbooks, particularly in mathematics and science. They had also been discussing and developing cross-curricular thematic approaches to their work. In English, language skills were taught successfully through a programme of themes and topics of interest to the students. The school had mapped an extensive list of regular educational visits that supported the curriculum. These included making good use of community resources such as the library, Dubai Zoo and shopping malls. The range of extra-curricular activities was limited but there was a strong and successful focus on sporting events.

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

Arrangements for health and safety were good. The school facilities were well maintained and provided a suitable learning environment for students. The school had recently conducted a risk assessment and developed a systematic approach to monitor safety in the school. Fire drills had been recently conducted and clear roles and responsibilities were assigned to staff in case of emergency evacuations. Exit doors and escape routes were marked clearly. Classrooms and playgrounds were kept clean with the exception of the two outside toilets. Gates were secured and well supervised. Good levels of supervision were observed for students arriving early, at break times and during dismissal. Bus areas were well supervised and all vehicles had adult supervision. The school had good medical processes and the school doctor and nurse monitored students' health regularly and promoted healthy lifestyles in the school.

The quality of support was acceptable overall. Teachers kept records of students' marks in tests, while supervisors monitored the welfare of students and recorded incidents that occurred. Students and their parents were made aware of the regular test results or any behavioural issues. Special education staff kept progress records of the large number of students needing special or additional support. However, the needs of all students were not always fully met. This was because some performance data was not used effectively to help teachers plan appropriate learning objectives in lessons or to provide accurate feedback to students on what they needed to do to improve. There were classes for students with special needs who were not included in mainstream lessons. However, there were no clear individual educational plans for these students and, in some cases; teachers did not have the expertise to fully address their specific needs. As a result, some of these students were not always receiving the support they needed.

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

The quality of leadership in the school was good. There was a clear focus on the school's common purpose which was to maintain a family ethos where no student, including those with special needs, was excluded from admission. Strong direction and example was shown by the Principal. All staff, particularly senior and middle managers, showed commitment to raising standards. This was exemplified further through the introduction and commitment to IGCSE and international benchmarking. The school had a strong commitment to team work. Responsibilities were clear and subject leaders and section heads were active in improving practice and school routines. The Principal had presence around the school and knew staff and students well. The Vice Principal was fully engaged in the day-to-day management of the school. She had devised detailed management systems, including the logging of teacher performance linked with good evidence of staff training, especially on teaching methodologies. However, insufficient attention had been given to the impact that this was having on students' learning.

The processes for self-evaluation and planning for improvement were acceptable. The school's action plan was thorough and there were management systems in place to gather information and evaluate staff perceptions on a range of school matters. Staff performance was evaluated through lesson observations by the senior management team, including the Principal. However, the progress made on the recommendations from the previous inspection had been slow, especially in ensuring that lessons were stimulating and challenging and that assessment data was used in this process.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were made to feel welcome in the school and there was good information provided about their children's progress. Parents of students with special needs were particularly pleased with the partnership they had with the school. Other parents were pleased with the levels of communication with the school, particularly the texting to remind them of significant events. Information to parents about what their children were learning in class was less frequent. The school had developed effective links with the wider community providing additional value to students' experiences.

Governance was unsatisfactory in that there was no representation from stakeholders, including parents, on the governing board or through any formally constituted advisory group. However, there was a strong commitment to delivering the values held by the school's founder and to the regular scrutiny of the performance of both teachers and students.

Staffing, facilities and resources overall were acceptable, including ICT provision. Space and facilities, although limited, were used efficiently. Staff were suitably qualified but some of the specialist teaching, especially amongst the younger students, was not always effective. The school had good provision of teacher assistants in the lower grades but their deployment was not always productive in improving students' learning. Expertise amongst staff to deal with some students with special needs was unsatisfactory. The school acknowledged that further advice and support in this area of its work would be beneficial.

## 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	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	KG	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
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: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

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