

# Deira International School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Post-16

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.

Deira International School was inspected in March 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 Festival City, Deira International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from the Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years. The school's curriculum is based on the English National Curriculum with the International Baccalaureate (IB) at the post-16 stage. At the time of the inspection there were 1222 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Overall, most parents were pleased with most aspects of the work of the school. However, a minority of parents were not satisfied with attainment levels in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all parents were pleased with the extra-curricular programme, the emphasis on a healthy lifestyle, the school's support of students and students' behaviour. A minority of parents voiced concerns about a lack of communication by the school about important decisions.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Deira International School continued to provide an acceptable quality of education for its students. It was an improving school, which had responded positively to the previous inspection and had made good progress towards the recommendations.

Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic had remained at an acceptable level overall although progress in Islamic Education in the primary stages was good. Progress at post-16 in Arabic as a first language was also good. Attainment and progress in English had improved in the secondary and post-16 stages and was good throughout the school, apart from in Foundation Stage, where attainment was acceptable. Attainment and progress in mathematics was good throughout the school up to the post -16 phase, where it was acceptable. Attainment and progress in science were acceptable at all stages apart from post-16 where attainment was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the secondary phase and good in all the other phases. Several outstanding lessons were observed. The quality of leadership was acceptable with a number of good features. The new management team demonstrated a good capacity for further improvement.

## Key features of the school

- Good attainment and progress in English across the primary, secondary and post-16 phases and in mathematics in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases;
- A constructive approach by the senior leadership to the improvement of standards in all areas;
- Students' enjoyment of their school life and their celebration of their international diversity;
- The good quality support for students;
- Improvements in assessment which meant that most students were aware of their target grades;
- Unsatisfactory attainment in science at post – 16.

## Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the school's best practice is reflected across all phases;
- Continue to raise attainment in all key subjects, particularly science;
- Further improve the post-16 curriculum to widen the range of certificate courses;
- Consolidate the improved links with parents so that their views contribute to the further development of the school.

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

Students' attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable across the school. Progress was good in primary and acceptable in secondary and post-16. Most students had sufficient knowledge and understanding of Islamic values and could express their impact on daily life. Most students were able to recite The Holy Qur'an verses and chapters correctly. In primary, most students showed acceptable understanding of the Prophet's early life (PBUH) and the events surrounding the battles during the early growth of Islam. In secondary and post-16, students made expected progress and they had acceptable levels of knowledge about Muslim minorities across the globe. Most students memorised appropriate chapters of The Holy Qur'an. Post-16 students completed research projects but did not always link the relevance of Islam to their own daily lives. Post-16 students did not always apply the rules of recitation confidently.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were acceptable in primary and secondary, while attainment was acceptable and progress was good in the post -16 phase. Students' listening skills were good and particularly strong in the primary with most students able to understand a short story in standard Arabic and answer comprehension questions. Students' speaking skills were not as well developed. The majority of students, especially in the upper years, found it difficult to express their opinions and thoughts using grammatically correct standard Arabic. Reading skills were acceptable and comprehension skills improved in the higher years. A few students were developing excellent analytical skills when studying contemporary literature in the IB classes. Writing skills were good in the lower primary, but under-developed in upper primary and lower secondary phase and so failed to meet expected standards.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a second language were acceptable in both the primary and secondary phases. Students had well-developed listening skills. The majority of students in upper primary and lower secondary followed lessons conducted almost entirely in Arabic. Students in the lower primary demonstrated a good range of vocabulary and were beginning to use these when constructing sentences orally. Reading skills were acceptable but students did not always understand what they were reading. The majority of students in the upper primary and secondary schools found it difficult to understand comprehension questions. In the upper primary and secondary phases, students did not make the expected progress in their writing skills. The majority of students were still at the copying stage by Year 6 and were not able to construct sentences independently by Year 9.

Attainment in English was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases and progress was good throughout the school. Most children entered the Foundation Stage as additional language learners. They made good progress by the end of this phase and could talk confidently on a range of topics, form letters correctly and connect them with sounds. By the end of the primary stage students had well developed English skills, notably in grammar, spelling, speaking and extended writing. They understood and used a change of perspective whilst speaking. By the end of the secondary and post-16 stages most students had made good progress and attained levels above international

expectations. Most students in these senior stages had well-developed language skills across all aspects of English. Students understood and analysed text well, for example, as demonstrated by IB students when they discussed the symbolism in a Tennessee Williams' play.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in all phases apart from at post-16 where these were acceptable. Almost all children in the Foundation Stage knew number bonds and could write simple addition statements. Almost all primary students were secure in the four mathematical operations. Most students in secondary attained well in a wide range of concepts and skills and had opportunities to attain at higher levels. In the examination years, most students demonstrated good knowledge and well-developed mathematic skills but did not always fully understand the concept. This was apparent in their work on algorithms. Applying mathematical understanding to real-life situations, problem-solving and the development of mental strategies were strengths of most students across the four phases.

Attainment and progress in science was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases. Attainment at post-16 level was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. Foundation Stage children showed a basic knowledge of science concepts and could apply their knowledge in practical situations. Primary students carried out experiments that demonstrated their understanding of fair tests and their ability to connect science work with their observations beyond the classroom. Secondary students, in all three sciences made acceptable progress and were able to apply concepts and knowledge to real life situations. Most IB students applied scientific facts and concepts well in physics and they communicated effectively using scientific methods. However, their understanding across the three sciences was under-developed and they lacked independence in applying the scientific process. From secondary to post-16, attainment in chemistry and biology was weaker than in physics.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. In nearly all lessons students were well behaved. They were respectful of each other and of their teachers. In a few less effective lessons, a minority of students were inattentive. Most students collaborated well when working in groups and often supported each others' learning. Students throughout the school moved in an orderly manner between lessons and were courteous to visitors. They demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living and most chose healthy food options, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Attendance levels for the last academic term were acceptable. Almost all students arrived in good time for school and to lessons.

Students' understanding of Islam, their civic understanding and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good across the school. Students shared their opinions and contributed to decision-making through a very active Student Council, student publications and surveys. Older students were initiated and led various projects in the school and the wider community. Students at all stages were acquiring a better understanding of Islam and local traditions through well-planned school initiatives. All students strongly appreciated and celebrated the multi-cultural and international nature of their school.



Economic and environmental understanding was good in Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 and acceptable in primary. Most students were developing their understanding of how the UAE and Dubai had developed over the last few years. Most students in secondary and post-16 phases had a strong understanding of the reasons underpinning Dubai's economic success. Students were very positive about their possible future contributions to Dubai's success. Secondary and post-16 students had a good understanding of local and global environmental issues and suggested ways they could help sustain the environment, while a majority of students in the primary lacked knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and their role in sustainability.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was good overall but inconsistent across phases and less effective in the secondary phase, where it was acceptable. Throughout the school, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and created a positive learning ethos although teachers' understanding of how students learn was variable. Across the school, most lessons had clear objectives that were shared with students. In the best lessons thorough planning provided a good variety of activities designed to meet the needs of a range of learners. For example, in the primary phase, pace was brisk and open-ended. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used consistently well as a teaching tool across the school. Teacher-student interactions were mostly positive. However, the majority of lessons, notably in the secondary phase, were too teacher directed and questioning lacked challenge and pace. Nevertheless, there were a few examples of good and outstanding teaching where students' needs were met well, including those students with special educational needs.

The quality of students' learning was good in all phases apart from secondary where it was acceptable. A major focus on learning throughout the school had led to improved learning in the majority of classes. An inquiry-based approach to learning in lessons in Foundation Stage meant that children had greater choice, were more involved in their learning and more independent of their teachers. Primary students were consistently well engaged in their learning and worked effectively individually and in groups. In most lessons, students had opportunities to solve problems and carry out practical experiments. At the secondary stage, a few highly effective lessons led to good student engagement and independence and strong connections to the real world. There were also a few examples of effective collaborative work at this stage, but there was often a heavy reliance on teacher guidance with students taking passive roles. Students' enquiry skills were not fully developed in secondary, but had greater emphasis at the post-16 stage. ICT was used by students out of class to develop inquiry and research skills. There were a few good opportunities for critical thinking across the school, but these were often limited in lessons by closed questioning and insufficient time for students to reflect on their learning.

Assessment was good throughout the school. The school had collected a good range of assessment data and was starting to use it to improve learning and attainment. An extensive database of student attainment was used increasingly to inform teaching and learning. Assessment information included comparisons with English National Curriculum levels and

international schools assessment results. The school used a tracking system to monitor students' progress throughout primary and secondary phases. In most lessons, assessment data was used to plan lessons to meet the needs of all students. All except the youngest students were aware of their levels in key subjects and could talk about their targets. Marking was detailed with high quality feedback given to students in primary and post-16, but this was weaker in secondary. Students' awareness of their targets enabled them to self-assess where sufficient time was allowed to reflect on the extent to which they had achieved lesson objectives.

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

The curriculum was good across all four phases of the school with breadth and balance reflected at the respective stages, although at the post-16 phases this was restricted by smaller numbers of students. There was a clear rationale to the curriculum and it was reviewed and developed regularly to meet the changing needs of the students. For example, the Foundation Stage and primary phase teachers had adapted the curriculum to a local context and raised the priority of scientific investigations. The Arabic curriculum for post-16 students was enriched through the study of texts by a range of influential Arab authors. Curriculum continuity and progression were supported well through the school's scope and sequence programme and by a common focus on enquiry-based learning. In a few curriculum areas transition from primary to secondary was inconsistent. Post-16 students benefited from the choices presented by the IB diploma or vocational certificates. The school was aware of the need to increase the range of options for these students. Cross-curricular links were strong and there was a wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities throughout the school. The school utilised the support of parents well to enhance the learning in the classrooms and the use of the local environment to apply and develop learning was a common feature of the curriculum.

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

The arrangements to ensure students' health and safety were good across the school. Security was well organised with main entrances monitored continuously. Transport arrangements, including the arrival and departure of children by private vehicles and school buses, were effectively and safely managed. The school premises were clean and well maintained. All records relating to the buildings and maintenance were in place. The evacuation procedures were clear and fire drills were carried out frequently. The school was developing a risk assessment policy to further enhance safety measures. Students had the benefit of a well-organised clinic where medical staff held comprehensive records, ensuring that all students received the necessary care when required. Healthy eating and lifestyles were promoted strongly across the school and were well supported by students, parents and the medical professionals. The school's child protection policy was in the final consultation stage. However, staff knew the requisite procedures and students were made fully aware who to contact if they needed support.



The quality of support across the school was good. Teachers and support staff knew their students well and relationships were positive and based on mutual respect and trust. Effective structures were in place to ensure that students received the guidance, advice and support to help them with their future academic choices and possible career options. The school's clear behaviour policies were effectively implemented. Students benefited from school counsellors who were available to help them with any concerns. Students with special educational needs were identified, received good support and made good progress. The tracking systems to monitor students' progress and identify any underachievement were now in place and supporting. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality were effective.

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

Leadership in the school was acceptable with good elements and the leadership demonstrated a strong capacity for further improvement. The new director had ensured a renewed focus on improvement through the sharing of the school's vision and identification of priorities. Senior staff worked well together to raise standards of attainment and improve teaching and learning. Improved communication systems had led to greater involvement of the wider school community in development of initiatives. Senior leaders had a clear idea of priorities and well-defined roles and responsibilities meant that change was well managed.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable and had improved. A detailed analysis of all aspects of the school had led to the formulation of an action plan which included appropriate development priorities. As a result of this improved planning the programme of assessment had been improved. Subject department audits were in place and had begun to inform the development of the curriculum. Regular performance management arrangements had informed professional development and led to improvements in teaching. Senior managers' monitored the effectiveness of new initiatives well. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. The school had instigated systems which had enabled parents to be better informed about the school's development plans, its curriculum and the new assessment programme. Reports gave parents information on students' grades and guidance for improvement. Parents provided feedback to the school through an annual questionnaire and class representatives had been appointed. However, a forum for regular consultation with parents had not yet been established. A minority of parents were still concerned about the communication of key decisions such as changes in senior personnel. The school's community links were developing well and students were involved with charitable activities and local business and commerce.

Governance was acceptable. ESOL managed the school on behalf of the owner and the ESOL board had oversight of the school's development. Members of the board received regular reports from the director and the board held the school to account for its activities. The board had recently constituted an advisory body of experienced educationalists who had advised the school on improvement issues. Whilst informal processes were in place for obtaining parents'

and students' views, parents were not involved in the governance of the school in any formal way and the board did not hold meetings with students.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. The recruitment of able and committed teachers was a priority. Staff were well qualified and effectively deployed and support staff added to the quality of students' educational experience. The quality of the premises was good and they were well maintained, clean and attractive. Libraries were well stocked and supported students' research and reading. Specialist rooms were a feature of the senior school and students' learning was enhanced by these facilities. Teaching resources were good and were well used by teachers to support learning. Information and communications technology was regularly and confidently used by teachers and students to develop learning.

## 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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

36% 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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	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	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

**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	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

**How good are teaching and learning?**

Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Acceptable	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	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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