

Dubai Modern High School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report issued February 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 High School was inspected in November 2009 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 Nad al Sheba, Dubai Modern High School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) 1 to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years. The school followed the curriculum for the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE). The students spoke several languages and for most students the English and Arabic languages were not their first language. The school had moved to new premises in May 2009. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,317 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were extremely happy with the education of their children and with the way the school promoted good habits of behaviour and the values of respect, honesty and responsibility. The positive interaction between parents and staff was highly valued and appreciated. They were pleased with the school's curriculum and especially its extra-curricular provision. All approved of the school's emphasis on developing civic responsibility and awareness of the wider world through assemblies and in lessons. They welcomed the regular communications through the school's website to keep them informed of news and developments. Almost all parents judged that the school dealt effectively with any concerns they raised. While a few raised some health and safety concerns about the start and close of the school day, almost all were confident that the school was safe and that their children were well looked after. Parents of children who required additional support with their learning were very positive about how the school helped them.

How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Modern High School provided a good education for its students, with some outstanding features. Students' attainment and progress improved steadily in each of the key subjects as they moved through the school. Standards were acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic. Attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were acceptable at the KG stage and good in the primary and secondary grades. The achievement of students in Grades 10 to 12 reflected the sound foundations that had been laid in earlier years. At both the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and Indian School Certificate (ISC) stages, students achieved good examination outcomes, above international benchmarks in nearly all subjects. These were the result of some very knowledgeable and focused teaching of the examination specifications and the students' willingness to learn. The attitudes and behaviour of students were of a very high standard. Students were polite and courteous and showed good leadership on many occasions. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school was excellent. Students had an awareness of their responsibilities as citizens and they showed an understanding of and a respect for Islam. The older students' economic and environmental understanding was good and most had a growing understanding of Dubai and of how and why it was changing. The students' environmental understanding was less well developed.

Teaching was good overall and, in a few lessons, outstanding. In the best lessons, varied teaching strategies were used to good effect. However, particularly in the primary grades, teachers spent too much time talking to students, which meant that they were often not given sufficient opportunity to show what they knew and what they still needed to know. By the time students reached Grade 10, most had developed good learning skills. They spoke clearly and confidently when given the opportunity and could make notes for themselves from a variety of sources that gave them a good basis from which to revise for their examinations. Homework was undertaken diligently and a high proportion used the school's website productively to develop their studies. The school had acceptable procedures for assessing the students' work. Teachers tested students' knowledge regularly and marked their work accurately. However, they did not routinely give sufficient help and guidance on what students should do to improve further. The school was in only the early stages of analysing data on student performance, with a view to adjusting teaching strategies in the light of any trends. The school offered a good curriculum which met most students' needs well. It was regularly reviewed and updated and, in KG, it was at times imaginatively interpreted. The school's extra-curricular provision made an outstanding contribution to enhancing the taught curriculum. Despite the occasional lapse, the care and support for students' welfare were also of high quality. All staff took their duty of care very seriously and health and safety policies and procedures were followed thoroughly. The buildings and facilities were safe, secure and well maintained. Healthy lifestyles were promoted and child protection procedures were well established and implemented.

The quality of leadership and management of the school was good. The senior leadership team had a clear vision for the school and had successfully managed the transition to the new buildings. The school was well aware of most of its strengths and weaknesses, although its priorities for improvement were not identified clearly enough. The school had developed outstanding partnerships with parents and the community.

Key features of the school

- The outstanding behaviour and attitudes of students of all ages, which provided a productive climate for learning inside and outside of the classroom;
- Students showed good leadership qualities in carrying out the duties and responsibilities they were given;
- While the overall standard of teaching and learning was good, teachers in the primary grades in particular spent too long talking to students who, in turn, spent too much time as passive rather than active learners. This limited the students' learning and reduced their opportunities to excel;
- An impressive extra-curricular programme allowed students to enjoy and achieve in a wide range of settings;
- Care and support were of high quality and students' well-being and personal development were a high priority for all staff;
- The partnership with parents was well developed, which enabled the school to support its students effectively and in turn feel supported.

Recommendations

- Improve teaching and learning by targeting the school's professional development programme in response to a rigorously conducted needs analysis;
- Create more opportunities for teachers to share good practice;
- Develop improvement planning so that priorities are plainly identified and timescales and responsibilities are clearly allocated.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. In all grades, students made steady progress in developing an understanding of the meanings of The Holy Qur'an. Students in Grades 1 to 5 were making good progress in memorising short chapters. The majority of students followed appropriate Islamic behaviour and most students in Grades 6 to 12 could read short chapters of The Holy Qur'an with accuracy, although their recitation skills were somewhat weaker than average.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable overall. In relation to their age, the attainment of students in Grades 1 to 5 was higher than that of students in Grades 6 to 10. In all grades, most students could copy and write dictation with clear, neat handwriting. Although some students reached an acceptable level of understanding in grammar, by the end of Grade 9 most students still had difficulty in reading long passages in Arabic and in speaking fluently. Few students could speak Arabic on entry to school and, in relation to this low starting point, most were making acceptable progress over time in speaking, reading and writing.

Attainment and progress in English were good overall. The children in KG who learned English as an additional language had become competent English language users and learners by the time they entered the primary school. Students' attainment in examinations at Grades 10 and 12 were above average in both English literature and language. Girls performed at similar levels to boys. The highest

levels of attainment in the school were noted in speaking skills. Students in the secondary school were highly articulate, using diverse language and complex sentences. Listening skills ranged from good in the KG, primary and lower secondary classes to outstanding in upper secondary classes. Attainment in reading was also good in all grades, with some outstanding examples seen in senior secondary literature classes. Students' writing skills were not so strong as the other elements of English language learning throughout the school. Students were making good progress in the KG, but the rate varied between acceptable and good in the primary and secondary schools. However, students' progress in literary analysis and writing in Grades 10 to 12 was good to outstanding.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in the KG and good in the primary and secondary grades. In the KG, children developed their understanding of numbers well and during the primary grades students made good progress and could apply the rules of arithmetic accurately. Students developed geometrical ideas with increasing confidence, but most were weaker in their knowledge of probability. Students generally progressed at a uniform pace in learning their tables and learning about shapes. By Grade 9, students were confident in showing their detailed working and tackled word problems competently. They demonstrated that they could solve demanding problems on topics they had covered in class. Examination outcomes for mathematics in Grades 10 and 12 were well above the average for Indian schools and, in 2009, were better than all other subjects in the school, with most students scoring over 90 per cent in Grade 12. Girls performed at similar levels to boys.

Students' attainment and progress in science were acceptable in the KG and good in the primary and secondary grades. In the KG and the primary grades they were able to develop concepts relating to nutrition and human development and explored ideas such as forces with increasing confidence and success. In the secondary grades, students developed a good understanding of the elements of matter and how to balance formulae in chemistry. In physics they knew the fundamental ideas about electricity and optics. While students could follow instructions carefully and efficiently, they did not always write effectively about the methods of scientific enquiry they were following, such as when challenged to discover an unknown mass or resistance, or to ensure that tests were fair, reliable and consistent. Students' understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of science was stronger than their ability to apply those ideas and to experiment. Outcomes for students in national examinations were above average in physics and biology and near the average in chemistry. Girls performed at similar levels to boys.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The overall quality of students' attitudes and behaviour was outstanding. In almost all cases students were well behaved in classrooms and elsewhere. They demonstrated an increasing responsibility for their learning. Students in Grade 8, for example, wrote down the homework to be done for the day on the classroom whiteboard themselves. Student-teacher relationships were of a high order and most students were clearly enjoying school. This was reflected in the good attendance rates and there were very few latecomers. Senior students made an increasing contribution to the school and wider community as they progressed through it; this included their part in a highly motivated and functional student committee. Some changes recommended by the students had been taken up by

the school, such as providing more buses and planting trees. Students were developing a strong social awareness through various projects; these included help for children with special needs, the donation of books to an orphanage in India, and a breast cancer awareness campaign.

Students' civic understanding was good, as were their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture. They had a basic knowledge of Islam and demonstrated respect for traditions. Girls, for example, were conscious of wearing their scarves before they entered the Islamic Education class. Students demonstrated a strong appreciation of the multicultural nature of Dubai and valued the UAE national identity. Older students were able to explain key aspects of local heritage; they knew about traditions and their significance to people in the UAE.

Older students showed good economic and environmental understanding. For example, they could explain how and why Dubai was changing and even younger students understood the importance of money and the need to spend it wisely. However, environmental education and understanding were less well developed outside of environmental science and geography lessons.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good overall but with some variations between different grades. It was good in the KG and secondary grades; in the primary grades it was acceptable. All teachers had good subject knowledge; they used it to ensure that, in most of the lessons observed, the content was well-planned and key knowledge and understanding were covered. The learning needs of most students were met as the work was mainly pitched at the right level of challenge. In the KG teachers organised the classes and managed time to good effect so that children could make the most of the many interesting activities. Most teachers encouraged children to gain confidence and to think for themselves by providing opportunities to inquire and respond; most lessons offered many chances for children to interact with each other, talk about what they were doing and initiate their own ideas. The quality of the teaching in the primary grades was acceptable. The main difference in lesson quality between these grades and those throughout the rest of the school was that the teachers closely controlled too much of the learning. The result of this was too little student-initiated work in the primary grades. Although some teachers asked probing questions, there were limited opportunities for students to undertake independent work or to develop their skills in enquiry and critical thinking. In the secondary grades, the students' high levels of commitment and keenness to further their own learning were recognised and harnessed to great effect; good teaching maintained their interest and motivation.

Children in the KG were learning at a good pace. In particular, their skills in language and communication developed well. They were beginning to read new words and stories with confidence and make connections between what they read and real life situations. Opportunities for learning through practical play activities also encouraged children to experiment: for example, through playing with clay and dough and through drawing illustrations for stories. The quality of learning was acceptable in the primary grades and good in the secondary school. Throughout the primary and secondary grades, most students collaborated effectively and showed a positive attitude towards learning. The quality of learning was better in the secondary grades because students were able to take more responsibility for their own learning and had more opportunities to exhibit skills in critical

thinking and evaluation. In the primary grades, whilst the rate of learning was acceptable, students acquired their knowledge and skills from a more limited range of contexts and had fewer chances to think for themselves.

Assessment was acceptable overall. Most teachers used assessment effectively to monitor the achievement of their students and to indicate what they had learned. Though there were organised procedures for record keeping, the information was not always used to best effect when planning lessons. Feedback to students was given regularly through marking, but most was not diagnostic enough in nature and gave too few clues as to what they needed to do to improve their work.

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

The curriculum was of good quality and met most students' needs well. In the KG classes, progression was planned well and teachers interpreted the schemes of work imaginatively in most lessons. Programmes have been regularly reviewed and adapted to meet changing needs and circumstances. The thematic focus of the curriculum provided good opportunities to develop important cross-curricular links. A particularly strong feature was the opportunities provided for children to learn from their local environment and community.

The primary school curriculum was regularly adapted to help to meet the needs of those students who would benefit from additional subject teaching or support. Effective planning supported the continuity of students' learning between the KG and primary classes, and similarly between primary and secondary phases. There were better opportunities for students in Grades 1 to 4 to learn through links between subjects than in other parts of the school. In all grades the taught curriculum was supplemented by well-planned visits and trips.

The curriculum was clearly defined for Grades 9 to 12 by the requirements of examination board specifications. In these grades it provided an appropriate level of challenge for students preparing for examinations. In Grades 11 and 12 there was a relatively narrow range of subjects, but those that were offered engaged the students' interest well.

The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities was having a significant impact on students' learning and on their personal and social development. During the two hours between formal lessons and the arrival of the buses to take students home, all students extended their learning productively. Students and staff took full advantage of the excellent arts, music and sporting facilities. Many staff were giving willingly of their time to run additional classes and support programmes that linked well with daytime lessons and enriched the students' learning.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for protecting and supporting students were outstanding overall, with teachers and supervisors working closely together to give students a high level of care and attention. Safety measures were secure, including monitoring students' arrivals and departures. The staff were highly vigilant in matters of child protection and were all aware of the school's policy. The school

provided female conductors in some buses from which girl students were the last passengers to arrive home. Good medical facilities, including first-aid, were provided; the school's infirmary was well equipped and the doctor followed up sick or injured students on a long-term as well as short-term basis. The swimming pool was cleaned daily with a water check done every day to test for impurities and chlorine content. Regular fire drills were carried out with students and teachers were aware of the procedures. The school building was new with extensive sports areas, spacious classrooms and ample, appropriate accommodation for various other activities.

The school promoted healthy lifestyles well through the many sports activities offered. Students with learning difficulties had been identified and were being provided with good support in relation to their needs. For example, students with difficulties such as dyslexia were provided with specialist professional services. The school had adopted an active approach to prevent serious problems arising. The school counsellor, for example, was conducting workshops in life skills for all students to promote their independence in addressing personal problems. Teacher-student relationships were of a high order; teachers had a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Good guidance for careers was given to students, including support for them as they prepared to seek admission to overseas institutions. An internship programme was organised for Grade 11 students, through which they could experience work in the real world. Good systems were in place for maintaining attendance and punctuality of students. Communication to parents after every term was extensive and comprehensive in reporting the students' progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was good. The school had a clear sense of direction and the efficient organisation of school routines created a friendly, orderly and purposeful learning environment. The senior leadership team had managed the transition to the new school premises successfully with the strong support of all staff. Teachers and administrative staff understood their roles and responsibilities well and worked hard to develop them in the best interests of students. Most did so successfully.

The school had evaluated many of its main strengths and weaknesses accurately and understood the need for a stronger focus on the continuous professional development of staff. It was aware of issues, such as the drop in performance in chemistry, and had taken action to try to improve outcomes for students. Heads of department and subject co-ordinators met regularly and productively to review teaching, learning and the curriculum, but the resulting improvement planning documents were too descriptive and lacked clearly stated priorities and timescales.

The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community were outstanding. The parents group acted as a critical friend and played a constructive role in supporting and, where necessary, challenging the school to do more. Parents appreciated the school's caring and committed approach to the education and welfare of their children. They were actively encouraged to be partners in their children's learning and participated in educational visits and trips. Their support for fund-raising causes was impressive. Over time the school had developed an excellent network of links with the business and faith communities and with other schools. During the inspection it shared its facilities with students from other schools with special educational needs.

Governance arrangements were of acceptable quality and provided helpful support. Regular meetings were held between the owners and the Principal to review progress regarding school improvement. There were plans to develop a parents' forum to operate at a corporate level.

Sufficient qualified teachers were in post with a good balance of expertise, age and experience. Staffing turnover was low. Premises and facilities provided a clean and attractive environment for learning and the facilities for sport were exceptionally good. In other areas of the school there were sufficient resources, but the books in the senior library needed to be updated and in several sections re-catalogued.

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.

The four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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	Outstanding
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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