

# Dubai Modern High School Inspection Report

Pre-Primary to Secondary

Report Published February 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.

Dubai Modern High School was inspected in October 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 Nad Al Sheba, Dubai Modern High School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from pre-primary to secondary, aged three to 18 years. The school follows an Indian (CISCE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 2378 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. Overall, parents were satisfied with most aspects of the school's work and thought that the school was well led. Almost all thought that the school kept their children safe and most agreed that it responded well to parental concerns and kept them well-informed about academic progress. Almost all thought that the teaching was good and that children enjoyed their lessons. Despite this, a minority of respondents thought that the school should continue to focus on improving the quality of teaching. Almost all appreciated the extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school. Most parents felt that the school was good at helping their children to choose a healthy lifestyle. A few parents felt that the school could be better at explaining its plans for improvement. The Parent Council also felt that they could make a more direct contribution to supporting the development of the school.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Modern High School provided a good quality of education with some outstanding features. It had ensured a clear focus on the key recommendations of the last report. The school's approach to improvement planning was now more thorough and senior and middle managers had supported all teachers in understanding the scope of the improvement objectives. There had been a significant focus on improving teaching and learning, with a particular emphasis on enriching the experience of the learner in the primary grades. Teachers and middle managers had worked hard to achieve a change in classroom methodologies, supported by lesson observations and continuing professional development. Teachers were helping students to be independent and develop their skills in research activities and critical thinking. Teachers needed to develop further their classroom management techniques. Overall, based on its current direction and focused planning, the school had the clear capacity to continue to improve. Improvement would be ensured through a clearer, more systematic and rigorous management of the process at senior management level.

The overall performance of the school was good with some clear strengths. In Pre-primary (Kindergarten), attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were outstanding. In Primary and Secondary, attainment was good in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science, and acceptable in Arabic. Progress was good in all key subjects. Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across all levels, as were their civic understanding, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture. Students were very involved in the life of the school and many successfully took on leadership roles. The quality of teaching and learning was outstanding in Kindergarten and good from Grades 1 to 12. Assessment was outstanding in Kindergarten and good throughout the rest of the school. Effective records were kept of student progress. All teachers used a variety of assessments to identify students in need of support and those requiring further challenge. The curriculum was outstanding at Kindergarten and good in Grades 1 to 12, with appropriate attention to breadth and balance. Individual subject curricula were good and cross-curricular links were clearly in evidence. However, the choice of subjects at Grade 11 was too narrow. Provision for health and safety was outstanding in Kindergarten and secondary and good in Grades 1 to 8. Healthy living was promoted in a variety of ways. There was a well documented child protection policy. The quality of support was outstanding from Kindergarten to Grade 8 and good in secondary. The excellent provision for special educational needs was a testimony to the inclusive nature of the school. The Principal had established a positive culture among his teachers, empowering managers and encouraging good teamwork. The Vice Principal's growing knowledge of the school played an important role. The school had established a number of methods to evaluate its work. Senior managers now needed to bring the many components of self-evaluation together in a more systematic way and manage the school's continuing improvement in a more rigorous manner. Partnership between the school and parents was outstanding. The representative of the governing body held the school accountable. The school premises provided a very good learning and social environment.

## Key features of the school

- The commitment of all managers and teachers to the school and its students and to school improvement;
- The very good overall culture of the school with its emphasis on developing rounded, confident, responsible citizens;
- The celebration of student achievement;
- The opportunities for students to enrich their life skills and learning through the rich extra-curricular activities;
- The quality of self-evaluation at the level of the classroom and the good range of staff training to support improvement.

## Recommendations

- The school should continue to focus on improving the quality of students' learning and teachers' classroom management to achieve greater consistency across the school;
- Senior managers should build on the strengths of the current system of self-evaluation, to achieve a more systematic and rigorous management of the school's ongoing improvement;
- The school should extend its overall provision of information and communications technology (ICT) and science laboratories to enable key activities to be more integrated into the learning process;
- The school should offer senior students a wider choice of subjects under the guidance of the Board.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment and progress across the school were good. Most students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Islam and good progress was evident in understanding the values of Islam and how to live a good Muslim life. In Grade 1, students were able to name the different prayers and knew the timings of these prayers. In general, most students memorized and recited well required Surats from The Holy Qur'an and Hadiths. Students in the middle school had a good understanding of Islamic concepts and values. For example, girls in Grade 8 understood and were able to discuss the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs and could link them to health and social issues. In Grade 9, most students understood what a Muslim should do to get to paradise.

In Arabic as an additional language, students' attainment in Grades 1 to 9 was acceptable and their progress was good. In Grade 1, most students were able to identify, pronounce and write the alphabet correctly. By Grade 5, most students were able, independently, to use pronouns in sentences by applying a given model or pattern. By Grade 9 most students were able to use demonstrative pronouns in correct sentences and use appropriate sentence structure and vocabulary to create a short narrative. In general, most students were able to read, say and write sentences from their prescribed books. Students made the least progress in writing for different purposes and using varying genres.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in Grades 1 to 12. Children entered KG with few skills in English, and by KG2 almost all students were attaining standards that were above the expected level. Their writing and vocabulary skills were well developed. They responded to instructions, participated in conversations and wrote facts about animals and insects. Between Grades 1 and 12 their speaking skills developed well. By Grade 8, students used a variety of structures in conversation, could read passages, pick out unfamiliar words and use dictionaries to find meanings. They wrote compositions after brainstorming ideas. As students moved through to Grade 12, they could appreciate poems, create reports and essays, paying attention to detail and making good use of their imagination. Extended writing skills were progressing well. Students were confident about their opinions, highly articulate and used a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding in Kindergarten and good in Grades 1 to 12. Across all grades, students exhibited strong knowledge and understanding of key concepts and ideas in mathematics. At Kindergarten, students were able to count, recognise, write and add numbers. As they moved through the stages, they successfully completed work in a range of expected topics at ever increasing and more complex levels. Students were able to transfer previously acquired knowledge to new parts of their studies. There were limited opportunities to apply what they had learned to real world situations. Students made insufficient use of ICT, which was a limiting factor in their progress and attainment in mathematics.

In science, attainment and progress in Kindergarten were outstanding and in Grades 1 to 12 were good. Children were making better progress in Kindergarten than in the last inspection. They could successfully construct their own knowledge base from a wide range of stimulating activity-based learning. Students from Grades 1 to 12 were able to work safely and skilfully in groups, or independently, on designated experiments requiring critical thinking and observational skills. Upper primary students were able, for instance, to distinguish between herbivores and carnivores based on the shape of the teeth in a skull. Nevertheless, apart from in biology, there were insufficient opportunities for students to relate their scientific knowledge to the real world. Teachers did not ask students to apply their scientific knowledge in unfamiliar situations or to design their own scientific investigations.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across all levels as were their civic understanding, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture. Students at all levels exhibited poised and confident behaviour. They demonstrated care and respect for their teachers, fellow students and other adults. They were self-disciplined and could handle working collaboratively with other students in a mature manner. Students understood that proper eating and exercise contributed to good health. They arrived at school and to classes on time, although overall attendance was not as high as it could be.

Students were very involved in the life of the school and many successfully took on leadership roles in a wide variety of activities. They served on the student committee and led various teams, clubs and other activities. They were very aware of Islam and could discuss its importance. They appreciated the multi-cultural aspect of living in Dubai and had friends from many faiths and backgrounds. Students knew about, and could describe, the origins of Dubai and its early heritage.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good from Kindergarten to Grade 8 and outstanding at the secondary level. The place of Dubai in the current world economy and its rapid development over the last forty years were familiar to even the youngest students. Knowledge of the environment and the need for conservation to preserve it were evident in many activities in which the students were involved. These included recycling various materials, planting and caring for plants, joining the environmental club and participating in assemblies celebrating "Green Day."

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was outstanding in Kindergarten and good in Primary and Secondary. Teachers were highly committed to the school and their students. Through co-operative planning and preparation, teachers in Kindergarten provided students with stimulating opportunities for experiential learning. In Grades 1 to 12, a conscious move away from more traditional teacher-directed learning had led to more student-focused, investigative learning. Teachers, in particular at the primary stages, needed to be more consistent in the way that they managed their classrooms, in order to maximise the potential of these new methods. There remained too much focus in the secondary school on the acquisition of knowledge, rather than the development of understanding and skills.

The quality of student learning was outstanding in Kindergarten and good in Primary and Secondary. In Kindergarten, there was clear evidence of students taking increased responsibility for their own learning in the more formal activities and also in the 'free flow' activities time. Experiential student learning in the upper phases of primary was enhanced by the availability and use of well-appointed dedicated laboratories. The 'extended writing projects' initiative had led to all students being given the opportunity for personal investigation, leading to the development of more sophisticated research skills. The schools' outstanding extra-curricular programme extended, enhanced and complemented student learning in a wide variety of ways. As the school extended its initiatives to enrich student learning further, it needed to consider expanding its ICT provision, as there were currently insufficient computers available to support effective, independent research in such a large school.

Assessment was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good throughout the rest of the school. Effective records were kept of student progress, especially in Kindergarten where the relatively new tracker system was used to create a comprehensive picture of student development. This was regularly updated and used to inform individualised learning interventions. All teachers used the new entry tests, as well as continuous assessments and examinations, to identify students in need of support and those requiring further challenge. The school needed to make better use of data drawn from these sources to inform teaching, especially with regard to challenging higher achieving students. More could also be done to help students to set themselves realistic long- and short-term individual targets, beyond the broad self-reviews undertaken currently after summative examinations.

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

The Kindergarten curriculum had developed its rationale to be clearly focused on developing the individual child in a number of creative ways. The children were encouraged to explore their world through a well-managed balance of free flow and more planned activity, which created a stimulating environment and encouraged high achievement. There were good links with the parents and local community, and good opportunities to inculcate core values at an early age. Most of the subjects taught in the primary years were meaningfully interlinked and made relevant to the children's lives. The curriculum was securely based on an accurate and sensitive awareness of students' educational needs. It had breadth and balance across and within each of its various elements. Transitions between sections were well planned and students were well prepared for the next stages. Cross-curricular links were evident in many subject areas. Individual subject curricula were good. The extra-curricular component in the school was significant and not only enriched a number of areas of student learning but also supported them in achieving a wide range of other life-skills and aptitudes. For example, it provided creative, aesthetic and sporting experiences, and opportunities to develop leadership qualities. The curriculum for students with special education needs was well designed. The choice of subjects at Grade 11 was very narrow and students felt that there should be more choice of subjects, to enable greater flexibility and scope in furthering their education. ICT was not consistently used as an integral part of delivering the curriculum.

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

Provision for health and safety was outstanding in Kindergarten and secondary and good in Grades 1 to 8. The school premises and facilities were maintained very well, safe and secure. The transport system was efficiently organised and safe. Buses were equipped with mandatory safety features and every child was accounted for through the system of scanning student cards. Regular health checks were carried out and records maintained. Healthy living was promoted through classroom teaching, displays, assembly activities and workshops. The school canteen provided healthy food, on the basis of the dietician's professional advice. There was a well documented child protection policy in place and teachers were well aware of the proper way to work with children. Students felt safe in the school.

The quality of support was outstanding from Kindergarten to Grade 8 and good in Secondary. Teachers knew their students well and the rapport between them was exemplary. Students felt confident in approaching teachers for guidance and teachers were sensitive to students' needs. The careers counsellor gave excellent support to senior students on their choice of subjects. There was effective support for students applying for universities abroad. There were sound policies in place for managing behaviour as well as good support from a counsellor. The excellent provision for special educational needs was a testimony to the inclusive nature of the school. The progress of these students was well monitored. The school had set up an on-line

portal to maintain an accurate record of students' attendance, academic performance and personality development, which was easily accessible to parents as well as students.

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

The Principal had a number of professional strengths. His vision and that of the school was broadly to encourage every student to fulfil his or her potential and to celebrate that child's achievement. He had established a very positive culture among his teachers, empowering managers at all levels and encouraging good teamwork, well focused on school improvement. All managers were committed to the school and its students and fulfilled their remits very conscientiously. The Vice Principal's growing knowledge of the school and clarity of insight played an important role in the school's development.

The school had established a number of methods to monitor and evaluate its work. The monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of departments and supervisors was particularly effective. Lessons were observed regularly, with good quality feedback, supported by focused professional development. Teachers were also encouraged to undertake self-evaluation as part of the process. The school's benchmarking of attainment across the grades and its increasingly efficient system for tracking student progress allowed further valuable insights. An interesting development was the increasing opportunity for "student voice" through, for example, the school's discussion board. Senior managers now needed to bring the many components of self-evaluation together in a more systematic way and manage the school's continuing improvement in a more rigorous manner. The school had made good progress in addressing the main issues identified at the last inspection.

The partnership between the school and parents was outstanding and the school greatly valued their support. Parents were well informed through ongoing communication, such as the fortnightly newsletters specific to each grade and through Open Days. They had good access to a range of information about their children's progress through the school website. A number of parents were involved in the work of the school. There were strong links with the local community.

The representative of the governing body met regularly with the school's senior managers and held the school accountable at these meetings on a wide range of issues. Although the Parent Council met regularly and were able to comment on a range of issues, the school should consider how parents could have a more systematic involvement in school improvement. It should also consider widening the range of stakeholders involved in the review of the school's development.

The high quality premises were spacious, bright and well-maintained and provided a very good learning and social environment. Teachers were well qualified and there was a good fusion of experienced and younger teachers. Support staff offered a very good level of service. The school should improve the quality of teachers of Arabic and consider appointing classroom assistants to support primary classes. There was an insufficient number of computers and science laboratories to suit the needs of all learners.

## 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:   | Pre-Primary    | Primary | Secondary |
| Attainment   | Not Applicable | Good    | Good      |
| Progress over time   | Not Applicable | Good    | Good      |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?    |                |                |                |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language. |                |                |                |
| Age group:   | Pre-Primary    | Primary        | Secondary      |
| Attainment in Arabic as a first language                         | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress in Arabic as a first language                           | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Attainment in Arabic as an additional language                   | Not Applicable | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Progress in Arabic as an additional language                     | Not Applicable | Good           | Good           |

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

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics? |             |         |           |
|--|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Age group:   | Pre-Primary | Primary | Secondary |
| Attainment   | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |
| Progress over time   | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |

| How good are the students' attainment and progress in science? |             |         |           |
|--|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Age group:   | Pre-Primary | Primary | Secondary |
| Attainment   | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |
| Progress over time   | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |

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

| How good are teaching and learning? |             |         |           |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Age group:                          | Pre-Primary | Primary | Secondary |
| Teaching for effective learning     | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |
| Quality of students' learning       | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |
| Assessment                          | Outstanding | Good    | Good      |

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

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

| How good are the leadership and management of the school? |             |
|---|-------------|
|   | Overall     |
| 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](mailto: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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