

INSPECTION REPORT

Kings' School Dubai

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Kings School Dubai

Location	Umm Suqeim
Type of school	Private
Website	www.kingsdubai.com
Telephone	04-3483939
Address	P.O. Box 38199, Dubai
Principal	Alison Wilkinson
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-13 / Foundation Stage - Year 8
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	870
Largest nationality group of students	UK
Number of Emirati students	29 (3%)
Date of the inspection	28th to 30th October 2013

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The context of the school

Kings' Dubai is a private school located in Umm Suqeim. It provides education for boys and girls aged three to 13 years in the Foundation Stage, and primary and secondary phases up to Year 8. Plans are in hand to return to providing only for the Foundation Stage and primary phase in the next academic year and a new school is scheduled to open in September 2014. The school followed the recently reformed Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum for Foundation Stages 1 and 2. In the primary and secondary phases, it followed the English National Curriculum. Students were assessed at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 using National Curriculum standardised assessment tests. The school had started to use the SAT testing as a benchmark in key subjects at Key Stage 3.

At the time of the inspection, there were 870 students on roll. Forty six nations were represented in the school, with almost two thirds coming from the United Kingdom. There were 90 teachers and 36 learning assistants on the staff. This showed an increase of 42 teachers new to the school, but all had prior teaching experience. There were 29 Emirati students, representing approximately three per cent of the school roll. The school also included 27 students with special educational needs.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Outstanding

Key strengths

- The outstanding relationships between staff and students leading to a good work ethic and high levels of engagement;
- The outstanding attainment and progress of students in English, mathematics and science in the Foundation Stage and primary;
- The inclusive curriculum which nurtured and develops students' talents;
- The promotion of independent learning through critical thinking and enquiry across all phases;
- The quality, design and utilisation of the school building creating a high quality learning environment;
- The focused leadership and governance that have produce an outstanding school.

Recommendations

- Further improve the attainment and progress of students in Arabic as a first and second language across the phases and ensure that all four linguistic skills are well developed.
- Use the good practice from within the school to improve teaching, learning and assessment in the secondary phase.

Progress since the last inspection

- The improvement in attainment in Islamic Education in the secondary phase;
- Further improvement in the students' robust knowledge of the world and community;
- The students now have a strong voice and a positive impact on their environment across all phases;
- The school has sustained outstanding attainment in the Foundation Stage and primary phase.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Islamic Education			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good
English			
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Mathematics			
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Science			
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was good in Islamic Education and acceptable in Arabic. Attainment was also good in secondary English, mathematics and science, but it was outstanding in these subjects in the Foundation Stage and primary. In Islamic Education, most students showed good knowledge and understanding of key aspects of the subject. However, their Qur'an recitation skills and the application of "Tajweed" rules were less well developed. In Arabic as a first language, students were secure in their listening skills but were less competent in reading and speaking. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had acceptable skills but speaking and writing were the least developed. In English, students listened very well and spoke with confidence across the Foundation Stage and primary. By the end of Year 6, students produced very good descriptive and creative writing. In secondary, the majority had very good skills in speaking to an audience and understanding of literary devices. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children could describe regular 2D shapes. Primary students confidently used a range of mental strategies and handled graphs skilfully. Secondary students could calculate the surface area and volume of cuboids. In science, students were especially good at problem solving and investigative work. Secondary students were less capable because they had limited time in lessons to complete experiments.

Students' progress mirrored their attainment exactly, except in Arabic as an additional language where it was good. Students progressed well in their understanding of Islamic concepts and principles. In Arabic as a first language, students made acceptable progress in all the language skills. In Arabic as an additional language, students made good progress against lesson objectives, but over time their progress in writing and speaking skills was slower. In English, progress based on prior learning and in lessons was very good in the Foundation Stage and primary. In secondary, students developed the capacity to think deeply and critically about texts they read. However, progress in extended writing was slower. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children made rapid progress in applying basic skills. Primary students gained strong skills in estimating, approximating and using calculators to check their answers. Students in Year 7 and 8 understood the properties of triangles and quadrilaterals well. In science, critical thinking skills were developing very well across all phases. Outstanding progress in investigative skills in the Foundation Stage and primary was not replicated in secondary, because students were not fully challenged in lessons.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was outstanding in Foundation Stage and the primary phase, and good in the secondary phase. All students learned enthusiastically and were highly motivated. They understood the importance of learning and showed this by being absorbed and actively engaged in classroom activities. Most students were very aware of their progress and their strengths in learning. Their independence showed itself in the ways that they used information and communication technology (ICT) as an integral part of learning. Students enjoyed working collaboratively, employed effective group skills and readily offered support to one another. They were confident in explaining their thinking, and in challenging the thinking of their peers. Investigations and problem solving had further developed skills of independent learning. Whenever opportunities allowed, students were successful in applying their skills to problems reflecting real-life situations. Responsibility for learning was accepted enthusiastically by students, though those in Year 7 and 8 had fewer opportunities.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was outstanding in all phases. Students shared an excellent sense of responsibility and very positive relationships with each other and with staff. Students' behaviour was excellent; they were very motivated and took great pride in their school. They embraced healthy living as an integral part of school life. The attendance and punctuality was good during the inspection. Students demonstrated a clear appreciation and understanding of different Islamic values. They knew about the Islamic architecture of Dubai and could relate many of the city's social aspects to the influence of Islam, such as the high security levels, the dress code in malls and the different festivities. Most students were positive about the Emirati culture and were knowledgeable about Emirati traditions. The multi-cultural nature of Dubai society provided students with opportunities to learn about other cultures. Most students knew how Dubai had developed and could give some reasons for the changes in Dubai and the other Emirates. Civic responsibility to each other and towards the community was a prominent part of their learning. Students had recognised and responded to national and international issues and shared an understanding and empathy with others less fortunate, most recently through a link with a school in Uganda. Students actively and constantly promoted and supported environmental awareness with green initiatives both in and out of the classroom. They had an excellent understanding of how Dubai and the UAE were viewed in relation to the rest of the world. Secondary students were taking collective responsibility through a variety of leadership tasks and responsibilities.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and in the primary phase, and good in the secondary phase. Teachers had created an exceptionally positive learning environment where learners were respected. Most teachers had excellent subject knowledge but the success of teaching strategies was variable, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Nearly all lessons were very effectively planned with clear learning objectives that were reviewed with students to ensure accelerated progress. Most teachers provided a balance of activities that allowed for individual, group and pair working. 'Talk Partners' was a most effective technique to create opportunities for students to interact, discuss and exchange ideas. Group work was used to good effect in a significant majority of classes to promote critical thinking and independent learning. Most teachers were skilled in their use of questions to arouse interest and stimulate enquiry. Students' responses resulted in adjustments to the pace of learning, although less so in the secondary phase.

Assessment was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase, and good in the secondary phase. Regular and accurate benchmarking and tracking of students' attainment and progress resulted in the identification of individual performance, as well as special needs and talents. This awareness by teachers ensured high quality support for most students up to the end of Year 6. This was less well developed in the secondary phase. Teachers used assessment data very successfully in planning the next steps for learning for their students, and in evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and their learning programmes. The 'Learning Journey' in the Foundation Stage was exemplary in tracking achievement, sharing that with parents and planning for the best next steps. Self- and peer-assessment by students enabled them to better understand the progress they were making. These assessment techniques were less established in Year 7 and 8.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding across the school. The rationale was very clear, as it was based on the English National Curriculum. The school provided high quality experiences which ensured breadth and progression for students' learning across year groups and through the school in all key subject areas. The curriculum delivery was well supported by a range of specialist subject teachers, including ICT, music, physical education, French and Spanish. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum comprised a lively, purposeful range of exciting activities which covered all prime areas of learning. The UAE culture and identity were very evident across the curriculum. The curriculum for Arabic as a first language was based on Ministry of Education textbooks and was compliant. However, it was not planned as well as the

programme for Arabic as an additional language which extended and enhanced students' learning. This was helped by the school's decision to group students according to their years of learning the language, rather than age. Personal and social development was a strong feature across the school. The carefully planned framework of themes helped to deliver the cross-curricular experiences very well. Very effective transitions took place from home to school and between each phase of the school. Throughout the school, students were encouraged to make links with the local and wider international community. The extra-curricular programme, available before and after school, offered opportunities for students to enhance their learning.

Curriculum design was outstanding across all phases. The school had modified programmes of study well to meet the different needs and interests of almost all students, including those with special educational ends. For example, French native speakers in Year 5 attended an accelerated course enabling them to be entered earlier for the French IGCSE examination. Challenge and extension for more able students were not always consistent. The curriculum for Arabic as a first language lacked sufficient modification to enhance the experiences for all students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for the health and safety of students was outstanding. All staff demonstrated a high level of care and support, and this permeated all activities. Teachers, parents and students benefited from buildings and facilities that were new, thoughtfully planned and welcoming. Students were well supervised throughout the day and their health and well-being was managed by a dedicated medical staff. Healthy living was successfully promoted through class work and students had opted for healthy lunches. Child protection arrangements were comprehensive and included an excellent policy on students' internet usage. Record keeping was excellent, including medical records, incident reports and details of evacuation drills. The school had reviewed its arrangements for parents and other adults collecting children from their classrooms at the end of the school day. A new colour-coded lanyard system was in place and was beginning to have a positive impact.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Teachers and students formed excellent relationships based on mutual respect. Students' behaviour was exemplary and was very well managed in class and around school. Celebration of achievements encouraged students to work hard and behave. Staff knew students very well and intervened to support their care and emotional needs whenever necessary. Students received good quality individual guidance such

as in their regular discussions with teachers about their learning and development. Guidance on future education for older students was developing well. Attendance and punctuality were closely monitored and systems were implemented to follow up any unexplained absences.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding. All leaders strove for excellence in order to secure the best outcomes for the students. Clear directions from the Principal and the school leaders had ensured all key staff were clear about the professional expectations, procedures and systems in the school. This ethos of excellence pervaded every area of the school. This was particularly the case in the Foundation Stage and primary phase where a shared feeling of accountability had secured outstanding outcomes for students. This sense of strong leadership was mirrored by the students whose voice was strong in school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. Middle managers increasingly used data effectively to identify areas and strategies for improvement. Accurate evaluations and analyses had led to high quality performance and professional development. This was particularly the case in the early phases. Performance management was a regular and established feature of the school life. It continued to impact positively on students' attainment and progress in key subjects. Strategies to improve teaching methodologies were explored in Arabic and Islamic Education. However, observations confirmed that lessons delivered in Arabic lacked the specialist knowledge to provide a wholly accurate evaluation of students' attainment and progress. Some progress had been noted in Islamic Education in secondary but this was less obvious in Arabic.

The involvement of parents in learning and in the life of the school was outstanding and key to the school's success. Parents took part in various activities which proved beneficial to the school and its students. This included charitable and community events such as supporting another school. The school made good use of the community through field trips which enriched the curriculum. Verbal and written communication between school and home was very effective and led to parents feeling empowered and wholly involved in their children's progress. This interaction impacted positively on students' attainment, progress and personal development.

The outstanding governance held the school leaders to account and ensured high quality resources were available. Governors were representative of the school and local community, and had developed excellent monitoring systems which ensured every initiative was evaluated in terms of student outcomes. The links between the board and the senior leadership team were excellent and benefitted students and teachers greatly. Governors contributed to the expansion of the new school premises for secondary and aimed to

preserve the school's strong sense of community. Board members recognised the need to share the progress of this expansion with parents to ensure transparency.

The school was exceptionally well managed and all school stakeholders contributed to the day-to-day harmony. The school premises were used well for learning and the facilities were also used regularly by community groups such as parents for meetings and workshops. Staffing levels were high and all members were well qualified and deployed effectively to support learning. This was particularly the case of teaching assistants who provided excellent support to students and teachers. The access to good quality resources such as ICT resources had resulted in a dramatic increase of students successfully applying technology to their learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Attainment was good across all phases in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. High expectations of teachers had impacted positively on attainment. In Arabic, attainment was acceptable due in some measure to a lack of direct support for students. Progress was good in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. Students had engaged in the learning process and they were confident in their relationships with teachers. Progress was acceptable in Arabic. Low-level objectives and inconsistent implementation of individual education plans had hindered greater progress. Teachers' expectation of Emirati students and subject knowledge of Arabic was not consistent. Attendance was good and behaviour was exemplary. Emirati students were involved in representing the school. There were very strong links with parents and they were highly involved in their children's education. The board of governors had a good representation of Emirati parents and the cultural and educational benefits of such positive parental support were evident throughout the school.

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The school provided good quality support to students with special educational needs. It had effective processes to identify needs at an early stage. Parents were fully involved in discussing and agreeing their child's support. Where appropriate, individualised educational programmes were drawn up, with contributions from class teachers, specialist support staff and parents. Students' progress was tracked carefully to make sure that provision matched their needs and students were making good progress. Learning support staff provided very good help to individuals and groups of students both in class and in small groups. Along with class teachers, they provided and adapted activities and resources to meet their

range of needs and styles of learning. Teachers planned for differentiated activities in class but individual students' needs were not always reflected in lessons. Enhancement of the support team had already improved the identification and auditing of students. The support team's specialist knowledge was being used very effectively in supporting and training other staff.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Across all phases, the teachers' subject knowledge was appropriate and was relevant to curriculum requirements. Teachers gave sufficient opportunities for students to work independently and with others. There was a positive environment for learning where students were encouraged to learn at a reasonable pace. Most lessons were well planned and teachers communicated the learning objectives clearly to their students. However, expectations were sometimes low and teachers did not always enable students to extend the language into real-life learning experiences. Teachers made adequate use of additional resources beyond the textbooks such as iPads and smart boards. Consequently, students' learning was acceptable. In primary, most teachers used teaching strategies that were appropriate to the age range of the students. In secondary, however, teaching was mostly textbook-driven. Questioning techniques did not engage students enough in discussing and using the language beyond the limited classroom context. Teachers did not differentiate lessons enough.

The Ministry of Education curriculum was enhanced in the primary phase by a range of teacher-made resources. However, these did not cater for the needs of all groups of students. The curriculum, particularly in the secondary phase, did not always offer good opportunities for progression in the four linguistic skills and for consolidation of previous learning.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgments. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	162	27%
	Last year	199	41%
Teachers	49		73%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school and confidence was expressed in the leadership. Parent/teacher relationships were very strong. Almost all said that teaching was good and that their child was well cared for. Most parents agreed that their children had a good range of activities from which to choose and that progress in English, mathematics and science was good. They were less positive about the provision for gifted and talented students. Parents agreed that homework was given and appropriately marked. Most parents suggested that students' understanding of Islamic culture was a good feature. Most agreed that their children enjoyed school and that the work was interesting. Most teachers were positive about the quality of professional development and suggested that the school grasped every opportunity to enrich students' personal and social development. None of the students were of an age to complete the students' questionnaire.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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

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