

INSPECTION REPORT

Oxford School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Oxford School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.oxford.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2543666
Address	DUBAI - MUHAISNA 4P.O BOX 50091
Principal	Nikhat Rehman
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / KG 1-Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2303
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	62 (3%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 13th February 2014

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The context of the school

The Oxford School, located in Al Muhaisnah, provides education for girls and boys from Foundation Stage to Grade 13, aged three to 18 years. At the time of the inspection there were 2303 students on roll. Students in the school were mainly Pakistani. Those from Arab nations were the second largest group, with smaller numbers of Asian, Indian and Philippino students. Around three per cent of the students were Emirati and one fifth of the students studied Arabic as a first language. Approximately, six per cent of students had some form of special educational need. Boys and girls studied in mixed classes from Foundation Stage to Grade 4 after which classes were separated by gender until Grade 12. The school roll had increased slightly since the last inspection.

The school had a Foundation Stage with English as the language of instruction, a primary phase (grades 1 to 6), a secondary phase (grades 7 to 11) and a post 16 phase (grade 12-13). The school followed the English National Curriculum with students taking International General Certificate examinations (IGCSE) at the end of Grade 11 and Advanced Level examinations in Grades 12 and 13. At the time of the inspection, there were 121 teachers including the Principal and a growing number of teaching assistants. In this academic year, approximately one quarter of the teachers were new to the school. Teachers had a range of academic and teaching qualifications, and most were suitably qualified for the subjects and age groups they were teaching.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Improved attainment and progress of English and science in the Foundation Stage;
- The attainment and progress of English, and of mathematics and science in the secondary and post 16 phases. The progress of Islamic Education in the post 16 phase;
- The good quality of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage as a result of the schools' greater focus on continuity and progression into the primary phase;
- Students' positive attitudes towards learning which supports their success in external examinations at the end of the secondary and post 16 phases;
- Students' understanding of Islamic values, culture and environment as well as their support for the community through various charitable events;
- Good partnerships with parents as a result of their greater involvement in the life of the school and better communication via the parent portal on the school website.

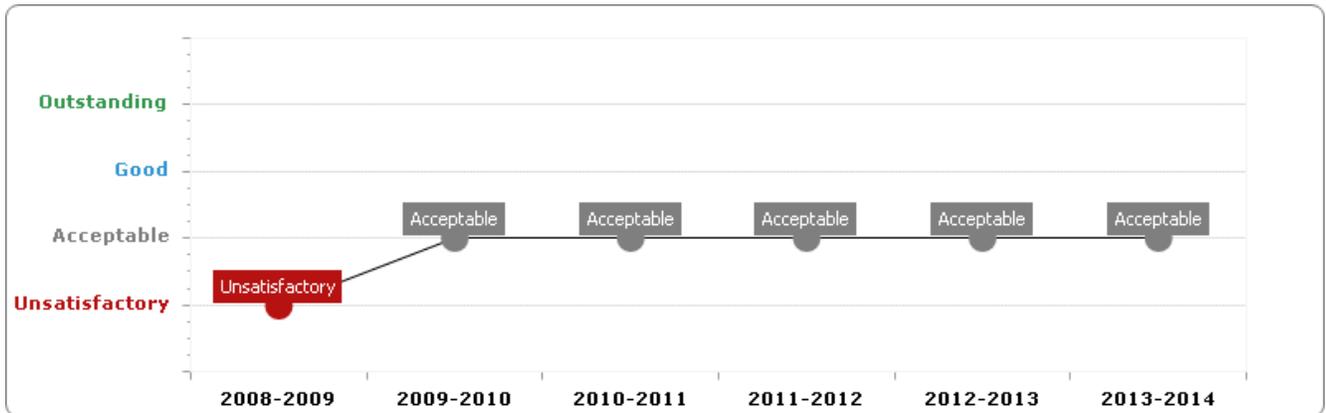
Recommendations

- Raise the attainment and progress of students in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science in Foundation Stage and lower primary phases;
- Improve teaching and learning, especially in the Foundation Stage and lower primary phase by improving recruitment and induction of teachers as well as identifying and sharing good practice;
- Improve the quality of assessment by providing specific guidance on what students must do to meet their targets and improve their achievement;
- Introduce much more rigorous procedures for the identification of students with special educational needs and their support within the classroom;
- Ensure that child protection arrangements are clearly defined and understood by students, staff and parents, and that training for staff is regular and thorough
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are engaged in systematic monitoring and review leading to development planning which is much more rigorous and focused.

Progress since the last inspection

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved in the Foundation Stage but remains a weakness in the lower primary phase
- The quality and variety of teaching resources including the use of technology has improved but is still variable across subjects
- The use of assessment data is more consistent but rarely provides specific guidance on what students must do to meet their targets

Trend of overall performance



جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable across all phases. Islamic Education students in the lower grades demonstrated acceptable levels of Quran memorisation and recitation skills. Across the school most students had secure knowledge of the Prophet's Seerah. Students learning Arabic as a first language were confident listeners and speakers although their speaking was highly dominated by colloquial language. Students' reading skills were stronger whilst writing was weak across all phases. In Arabic as an additional language, students' listening was in line with expectations. Most students could recognise and read aloud previously learnt letters, words and a few short phrases and sentences. Older students could recall and use a few familiar phrases to participate in brief conversations. However, students' ability to use the learnt vocabulary to construct new sentences was underdeveloped.

Attainment in English was good. By Grade 11, high attaining students wrote imaginatively and to a high standard. Speaking and listening skills were good in all stages and pupils were able to converse fluently. Attainment in mathematics was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary, good in secondary and outstanding in post 16. Children in the Foundation Stage attained best in their number work, as did lower primary students. Students in the upper primary phase had a greater breadth of mathematical knowledge and skills. In the secondary and post 16 phases, students' attainment in examinations confirmed well developed numeric and algebraic skills which students could apply to problem solving. In science attainment was acceptable in foundation Stage and Primary and good in the rest of the school. Foundation Stage children had a good understanding of the world in which they lived and conservation issues affecting their lives. In the primary phase, understanding of science was under developed while older students demonstrated good attainment in international examinations.

Students' progress in Islamic Education was strongest in post 16 where they made significant progress, linking their understanding of Islam to their personal lives. Progress in Arabic as a first language was secure particularly in listening and reading but weak in writing and in communication using standard Arabic. In Arabic as an additional language, most students across the school were developing an expected level and range of vocabulary. Progress in independent oral and written communication was limited. Progress in English over time was consistent and performance in external examinations was above international standards. In mathematics, children in the Foundation Stage grew in confidence as they took part in practical activities. The slower progress in the early primary years improved over time resulting in good or better results in IGCSE and A Level examinations. Foundation Stage children developed good skills of enquiry in science but these were not adequately developed in the lower primary phase. Older students made good progress in understanding scientific concepts.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning was judged to be acceptable in the Foundation Stage and the primary phases and good in the secondary and post 16 phases. In the best lessons in the secondary and post 16 phases, students were given opportunities to develop independent learning skills through dedicated subject study time and special project work. This work enabled students to develop their individual research skills and make valuable contributions to group discussions as well as practicing their presentation skills. Students generally collaborated effectively in group work throughout the school and supported each other very well. This was particularly demonstrated through the role of 'study buddies' where students helped to support the learning of students with special educational needs. Across the school, too few opportunities were provided for students to develop their enquiry, investigative and critical thinking skills. Few lessons included time for students to reflect on their own learning and clarify their next steps.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development were good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and outstanding in the secondary and post 16 phases. In the Foundation Stage, children demonstrated positive attitudes, were well mannered and respectful. Primary students, especially in Grades 4 to 6, were generally well behaved and polite. Positive and supportive relationships between students and teachers prevailed in lessons in these grades. The behaviour of students in the secondary and post 16 phases was exemplary and students demonstrated mature attitudes to their studies. Older students were aware of the importance of keeping fit and actively involved themselves in after school sports activities. Attendance was good overall.

Students' understanding of Islamic culture was good as was their local, cultural and global awareness. Students had a strong understanding of living in Dubai's multi-cultural society and being a valuable member of it. In addition, they showed a clear understanding and considerable respect for the local traditions and heritage of the UAE. They were able to compare their own culture and other cultures within the Islamic world. However, their understanding of worldwide cultures and heritage required further development.

The students' council effectively influenced the school management to respond to students' concerns. Most students were positive about their work. Fund raising for charity was a regular feature of the school and students had raised substantial amounts of money. A few post 16 students supported younger

students in their classes. Most students had good awareness of environmental issues and a majority participated in conservation work such as collecting cans and cleaning beaches. Notice boards across the school showed a commitment to the environment.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and the primary phases and good in the secondary and post 16 phases. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge but, in the lower grades, a substantial minority had a less secure understanding of how to organise effective and active learning. In most Islamic Education and Arabic lessons, as well as in a majority of primary lessons, the level of challenge and expectation was insufficient with too few opportunities for students to participate or to work independently and in groups. The best teaching was seen in the secondary phase. In the best lessons, teachers had good classroom control, high expectations and used planning to ensure a good pace and a range of learning activities targeted at the needs of all groups of students. A majority of teachers did not modify generic lesson plans to meet individual learning needs. Little independent work or use of technology was seen in lessons and the range of collaborative activities was limited.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and the primary phases and good in the secondary and post 16 phases. The school recorded the attainment of students, tracked their progress and set targets using effective but cumbersome systems. Data was suitably analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses of students as well as provide regular and detailed reports to parents. The school did not sufficiently involve students in assessing their own learning or provide them and their parents with detailed guidance on how to improve performance. Assessment was more effective in the secondary and post 16 phases where it was linked to external examination requirements. In Islamic Education and Arabic, assessment systems lacked rigour and validity. Most teachers had a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses but the majority did not plan effectively differentiated work to meet their individual needs.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good across all phases, an improvement from the previous inspection. Cross curricular links had become an important part of the planning process and transition across phases was much improved especially the transition between Foundation Stage and Grade 1. Curriculum reviews were now undertaken annually and planning took greater account of students' views. Provision for enrichment was strong with numerous educational visits and a range of sporting, hobby and academic related activities which were appreciated by students. The school promoted itself as offering the English National Curriculum but the reality was a modified curriculum with limited opportunities in the secondary phase to experience technological, creative or aesthetic subjects.

Curriculum design was unsatisfactory as it did not provide for different groups of students. The provision for those with specific learning difficulties was inadequate as many staff did not know or understand how to cater for their specific needs. Differentiation was narrowly focused on worksheets which were different but not necessarily differentiated. Provision for gifted and talented students was not much better as few lessons included sufficient challenge to broaden and deepen their knowledge. The Foundation Stage curriculum was based on the English curriculum but provided limited opportunities for child initiated learning across all areas of learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for students' health and safety was acceptable. Buildings, equipment, and resources were maintained in good condition and well suited to the educational needs of students. Students were always adequately supervised on the school site. The school's full-time doctor and two nurses provided students with good health services and promoted healthy living, for example, by providing overweight students with activities such as aerobics and morning walks. The canteen served healthy food such as salads and fruits, and students were encouraged to make healthy food choices but did not always do so. Students in the Foundation Stage were not completely safe on buses because the seat belts they used were inadequate for them. The school had a written child protection policy in place, but not all students, parents, and staff were aware of it.

The quality of support for students was acceptable across the school. Relationships between teachers and students were good. Teachers managed behaviour well in lessons and consequently there was little disruption to learning seen during the inspection. The counsellor maintained a good level of contact with parents regarding attendance, punctuality and any behaviour concerns. Data on individual students was extensive but the quality of feedback was inconsistent. As a result, students were not always clear about

how to improve their work. This also applied to students with SEN because individual education plans were ineffective and did not guide teachers on how to adapt their teaching or provide suggestions of strategies to be used to support their learning. Teachers had not received recent child protection training. Older students received helpful advice on possible career options but had limited opportunities to attend university open days and career fairs to assist them in making informed choices on future career paths.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was acceptable. The Principal and her team were committed and dedicated to improving the school, and shared a clear vision for students' educational and personal futures. However this vision was not always effectively translated into improvement activities. An identified area for improvement was the development of high quality teaching and learning in the classrooms against the challenges of high staff turnover. However, inconsistencies in the expertise needed to carry out systematic monitoring and review limited progress in this area. Lesson observations and feedback sometimes lacked rigour. Leaders at all levels had an acceptable capacity to secure further improvements. Students, individually and collectively, were keen to promote and sustain the good ethos of the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Whole school self-evaluation procedures were in place, including the regular use of questionnaires by students, staff and parents. Systems to evaluate performance focused on monitoring and evaluation activities used to shape the improvement plans. Lesson observations were regular but did not always give sufficient attention to the impact of teaching on students' learning, and this limited their contribution to improving practice, especially in the lower primary phase. Performance management was a developing feature and was becoming more closely linked with professional development needs. There had been limited progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report.

Parents welcomed the good communication links with the school making use of the parent portal on the school website. Termly reports provided good quality information about the progress and attainment of their child. Meetings with their child's teachers were regular and provided good quality information about their performance. Parents reported an effective partnership with the school and appreciated the open door policy. Parents were fully involved in the life of the school, for example, representation on the Parents' Forum. Links with the community were less well developed.

Governance was acceptable. Governors had a strong commitment to the school but their monitoring of the school's development did not impact enough on students' outcomes and overall performance. The

strategic and advisory role of governors, including holding the professional leadership of the school to account for its performance, lacked rigour and challenge.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. On a day to day basis the school ran efficiently but there was a significant number of staff, particularly in the primary phase, who did not possess a suitable teaching qualification. Facilities for outdoor and indoor play in Foundation Stage were excellent. Facilities for the provision of sport and performance were good but the library did not support the curriculum adequately. All classrooms were equipped with whiteboards and projectors.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Most Emirati students were achieving at the expected level for their age group in Islamic Education and Arabic. With the exception of science, progress was generally in line with their peers in English and mathematics. Attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Students demonstrated good self-resilience and showed high levels of respect to visitors, staff and other students. They were active and engaging in lessons and thrived in co-operative learning environments with their peers. Attendance and punctuality were good. Emirati students engaged enthusiastically in cultural events, for example demonstrating their knowledge and skills during National Day celebrations. They enjoyed talking about the achievements in Dubai in recent years, including the award of EXPO 2020. Emirati parents were actively involved in the life of the school.

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

Provision for students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory. Despite the school's policy of accepting all students from diverse social background and abilities, they did not have an effective system to identify, support and monitor the progress of students with special educational needs. The school's newly appointed Counsellor had recently started to identify students with special educational needs. However, there were no effective systems in place to guide and train staff on how to support such students to learn effectively in the classroom. As a result, teachers did not have the expertise required to appropriately modify the curriculum. Consequently, students' progress was unsatisfactory in most lessons.

Suitable provision was not in place for students identified as higher attainers or gifted and talented. On occasions, identification was unreliable as class teachers were unaware of such students in their classes. Furthermore, students' individual education plans did not provide teachers with specific targets which might be used to evaluate each student's performance and ensure that they learned at their own

pace. The lack of effective tracking of each students' progress from their starting points hindered most students from making the maximum possible progress. The level of parental involvement in the provision for special educational needs students was most effective in the Foundation Stage.

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

The quality of teaching was inconsistent across all phases. It was slightly better in the post 16 phase where teachers were better focused on student learning and progress. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge but their understanding of how students learn was variable. Teacher-centered lessons, with too much talking time and a limited range of teaching strategies were commonplace. Low expectations and an inappropriate level of challenge with limited differentiation were major weaknesses. Opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills or undertake critical thinking were limited across most lessons.

The curriculum in Arabic as a first language met the Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements in terms of the teaching time which was soundly planned. There were some planned enrichment activities to support students learning and some cross-curricular links with other subject for example between Islamic Education and science. However, there were gaps in development of students' language skills such as limited opportunities for independent free writing and extended speaking. In general, the curriculum did not cater for the spread of ability and therefore did not sufficiently support all students.

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 judgements. 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	168	18%
	Last year	140	18%
Teachers	88		66%
Students	141		93%

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

Approximately 18 per cent of the parents responded to the survey which was the same proportion as the previous year. Most parents were generally positive about the school and were satisfied with the quality of education with only a few who were not. Parents felt their child was making good progress in English but were concerned about progress in Arabic; in particular as a first language. Almost all parents agreed that their child enjoyed school and most felt that they were looked after and kept safe. Parents agreed that the school was well led and the majority felt that school leaders listened to their opinions. The survey was also undertaken by 88 teachers and 141 of the older students in the school. Almost all teachers were satisfied with the quality of education and thought that the school was well led. Approximately one third of students felt that the school did not offer a sufficient range of subjects or use enough technology. Most students felt that their teachers helped them to improve and most felt looked after and safe.

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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