

INSPECTION REPORT

The Winchester School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Winchester School

Location	Jebel Ali
Type of school	Private
Website	www.thewinchesterschool.com
Telephone	04 882 0444
Address	PO Box 38058, Dubai
Principal	Ranju Anand
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3,346
Number of Emirati students	72 (2%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 11th to Thursday 15th March 2012

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?	10
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	11
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	12
What happens next?	13
How to contact us	13
Our work with schools	14

The context of the school

The Winchester School is situated in the Jebel Ali district of Dubai. Students travel to the school from a wide range of areas in Dubai and Sharjah. There were 3,346 students on roll and most had English as their second language. There were 75 classes in the Foundation Stage and primary phase up to Year 6, and 32 in the secondary and post-16 phases, Years 7 to 13. Over 90 different nationalities were represented among the student population. Seventy-two students were Emirati. About two per cent of the students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need. These students received learning support in withdrawal sessions in an Achievement Centre with specialist staff and also during normal lessons. The school followed the National Curriculum for England, from the Foundation Stage through to the post-16 phase. Students were entered for IGCSE at the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced Level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

At the time of inspection, there were 189 full-time teachers on staff, excluding the senior leadership team. The teachers in the school had a range of academic and teaching qualifications. They were supported by 72 teaching assistants. The Principal was in her seventh year at the school, having been promoted from Vice Principal in 2010. Approximately 25 per cent of teachers were newly appointed during 2011.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Winchester School provided a good level of education and had improved. The school focused on educating the whole child, providing knowledge for life-long skills. Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school, and relationships between staff and students were a key strength. Teaching had improved throughout the school; the leadership had worked successfully on improving the quality of teaching, but this had yet to fully impact on learning in every class. A good range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), was often deployed well by teachers. However, there were few examples of effective use of ICT by students to develop independence, enquiry and critical thinking skills. Assessment practices for monitoring, tracking and analysing students' progress had

improved since the last inspection. These improvements had contributed to better progress in Arabic as an additional language and science.

The curriculum was good across the whole school with notable improvements in secondary and post-16. A wider choice of subject options was now offered for the senior groups of students which more effectively met their academic and vocational needs. Systems to support students with special needs had improved with a well-planned balance of class support and small-group tuition to meet individual needs. Parents were actively encouraged to be partners in their children's learning and were subsequently highly supportive of the school and its good leadership.

Key strengths

- The quality of relationships between all students and staff;
- The outstanding civic, economic and environmental understanding at post-16;
- The improved teaching and assessment throughout the school;
- The improved quality of the curriculum in secondary and post-16;
- The outstanding partnerships with parents and community.

Recommendations

- Improve the attainment in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and Arabic as a second language;
- Further develop differentiation practices so that the needs of individual students and groups are addressed;
- Develop the use of ICT by students to support independent learning and enhancement of critical thinking skills;
- Maintain the focus on staff retention and continuous professional development.

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

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

Students' attainment in key subjects was uneven across the school and ranged from acceptable to good, with consistently good attainment in English. Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable across the phases with strengths in understanding and the implementation of Islamic etiquettes, morals and values. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was good in the primary phase. The majority of students had good skills in listening and understanding. In English, Foundation Stage children reached their early learning goals but attainment was variable. Primary students read fluently and followed oral instructions well. Secondary students analysed texts and communicated their conclusions confidently. In post-16, students used sophisticated language to express opinions and ideas. Attainment in mathematics was good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and acceptable at secondary and post-16, with signs of improvement at these senior stages. Most students performed well to the high expectations set for them by teachers in knowledge of number, calculation skills, understanding of shapes and, at secondary and post-16, in algebra, trigonometry and calculus. The majority of students in the most successful science lessons demonstrated an ability to use scientific concepts and apply their understanding and observations well in investigations.

Progress was mostly good across subjects and phases, and there were improvements in Arabic as an additional language and science. In Islamic Education, progress in general was better in understanding and applying Islamic etiquettes, and weaker in applying the correct recitation rules in the Holy Qur'an. Students made good progress against their previous learning and lesson expectations in English throughout the school. Mathematics progress was generally good, with students responding well to a high level of challenge in the tasks and effective support in many classes. In science across the school, students' progress increased when they discussed, sorted, tabulated and evaluated their findings, drawing together group and whole-class discussions. The progress of students with special educational needs was acceptable in most subjects. They made good progress in learning oral and written forms of English and this enabled them to access the curriculum in other subjects. Progress was also good in spoken Arabic and mathematics.

Overall, the attainment of Emiratis students was acceptable and progress was good. In Islamic Education, their attainment was good and in Arabic as a first language, progress and attainment were good, as a result of students' good spoken language. In English, Emirati students attained well and made acceptable progress across the school. In mathematics, attainment was good in all phases apart from secondary where it was acceptable. Emirati students' progress was good in mathematics, matching the attainment of other students. In science, attainment for these students was higher in secondary, and good overall. Progress in science was good as a result of students' development of the skills needed for practical work.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Relationships between staff and students were positive and students generally showed respect to their teachers and each other. When lessons lacked challenge and failed to meet their needs, most students demonstrated high levels of self-control. Attendance was good. The school worked hard to reduce lateness at the start of the day, which was an on-going problem. Students had a clear understanding of Islam and its impact on society in Dubai and the wider world, and could give pertinent examples. They demonstrated an appreciation of tradition, heritage and values of the UAE that influence life in Dubai and provided good examples to support this appreciation. Most students valued the multi-cultural nature of Dubai as well as celebrating their own culture. Older students talked confidently about the importance of diversity and its positive impact on enriching people's lives. Civic, economic and environmental understanding was good in Foundation Stage, primary and secondary and outstanding in post-16. Students understood their role as responsible citizens but lacked opportunities to show this in reality. Students knew how Dubai has developed and could give reasons for this development. Environmental and economic issues were well understood by students of all ages. Students' knowledge of conservation in primary and secondary was not as well developed for their age as in post-16 where it was outstanding.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

Teaching was good throughout the school. Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge. They planned well-structured lessons to meet clear objectives, building on students' previous learning. Good teacher-student relationships throughout the school encouraged interaction, enthusiasm and engagement in learning. Most teachers planned a range of tasks which met students' different learning needs and styles. Occasionally, this was done exceptionally well. In weaker lessons, poor application of the lesson plan to meet students' needs was a significant factor. Most teachers used effective questioning skills to assess, consolidate and extend students' learning. A good range of resources, including ICT, were often deployed well by teachers and so students were motivated in their learning. There were few examples of effective use of ICT by students to develop independence, enquiry and critical thinking skills.

Learning was good in primary and post-16 phases and acceptable in the Foundation Stage and secondary phase. Although the school had worked very successfully on improving teaching, this had yet to fully impact on learning in every class. Most students enjoyed their learning, were very keen to participate in lessons and worked hard. In the minority of lessons where teaching was not well matched to students' needs, students were passive learners and more reliant on the teacher's direction. In most lessons, students were engaged in a good balance of whole group and paired work with active learning tasks, including regular opportunities for collaborative learning. They communicated their learning confidently and clearly. Learning was particularly good when it was related to a real-life context. Older students showed good enquiry and research skills, and demonstrated a few excellent examples of critical thinking.

Assessment was good in all phases. The procedures for monitoring, tracking and analysing students' progress had improved since the last inspection. The school had introduced a more effective system to identify students requiring additional help in their learning. Systems for referral were securely in place and

programmes of intervention were consistently monitored to check their effectiveness. Assessment practices started well in the Foundation Stage with all children having a baseline of information from which progress could be tracked. Comprehensive learning profiles were used to record progress towards early learning goals. Progress was effectively tracked and formed the basis for regular and focused discussions with students and their parents. Assessment to inform learning in the classroom was acceptable with a few good and outstanding examples. Most teachers knew their students well and gave good feedback, verbally and in marking, to help students understand how to improve. Peer and self-assessment were developing well in some subjects.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was good across the school. It had breadth and balance, and met the needs of almost all of its students. Transition arrangements for new students, as well as between the phases, ensured that most students were well prepared for the next stages of their education. Regular review of the curriculum, together with whole-school approach towards action research into areas for improvement had led to improved cross-curricular links in the Foundation Stage, primary and the early stages of secondary. These developments had provided opportunities for students to be more creative as well as providing a greater focus on critical enquiry and thinking. However, opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were still few and inconsistent across the grades. A wider choice of subject options was now offered for the senior groups of students which catered more effectively for their academic and vocational requirements. The variety of enrichment activities including, extra-curricular activities, inter-school competitive sports and a wide activities programme of events supported students' personal development as well as meeting their needs and interests.

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students were good in the Foundation Stage and in primary; they were outstanding in secondary and post-16. The organisation of transport was very thorough. Students benefited from a safe and well-maintained environment, with many positive features. Supervision of students by adults was effective, although the number of minor accidents which was recorded was relatively high. Health and safety procedures included thorough checks and risk assessments, including scrutiny of fire-hoses and extinguishers. Emergency evacuation procedures were practised effectively. Some classrooms in the Foundation Stage and primary phase were crowded, and posed a potential hazard in the event of fire. The importance of healthy diet and exercise was promoted very effectively and students responded well. The quality of canteen food had been further improved. The doctor and nurses monitored students' health, and administered first aid and appropriate medicines as required. All staff were fully aware of the school's child protection policy.

The quality of support for students was good across the school. Students accepted the clear codes of conduct and 'stepped response' of the discipline code. They were well informed about course options, career and higher education opportunities through a cohesive programme of information and guidance. Improvements for recording and monitoring attendance and lateness enabled the school to contact parents promptly. This was key to the work on reducing absence and lateness. Systems to support students with special needs were well planned with a balance of class support and small-group tuition to meet individual needs. The effective support in the small group setting was successful in helping those students to make good progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers and support staff were less effective at meeting the needs of students with special needs and this limited their progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good. The school benefitted from the Principal's strong leadership, ably supported by a dedicated senior leadership team focused on improving standards. There was a clear direction and shared accountability. A key strength was the effective distributed leadership, with both senior and middle leaders encouraged to lead and drive improvements at the school, and students promoting and sustaining a positive atmosphere in the school. There had been success in raising educational outcomes, for example progress in science and mathematics, and leaders at all levels had good capacity to secure further improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good, and the school was fully aware of its strengths and areas for further development. The school rigorously monitored its performance and this guided the comprehensive programme of professional development. Whole-school review and effective self-evaluation procedures were in place and supported the improvement planning process. The school had made significant progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Links with parents and the community were outstanding. A programme of family learning enabled parents to help their children and improve their learning. As a result, students achieved well. Frequent communication ensured parents were kept well informed. Suggestions and concerns were taken seriously and acted upon swiftly. Regular progress reports were detailed with focused targets for improvement. Extensive partnership arrangements with other schools benefitted both school and community, and were effective in supporting students' development.

Governance was good, with the owning company providing a comprehensive system of support linked tightly to the school's needs. The strategic and advisory role of governance was good, including holding the professional leadership of the school to account for its performance. The Principal was responsible for the school development, and worked closely with the parent company to ensure quality. The Principal was monitored by means of a performance management system which included feedback such as parents' surveys. Parents were included in the Extended Development Group, which had a direct input into the school's self-evaluation process.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was good. Almost all teachers were suitably qualified, but learning support assistants were not all equipped to do their work effectively. Ancillary staff had been engaged to maximise the use of specialist facilities. The number of new teachers each year replacing those who had left remained high. Many aspects of health and safety in relation to the premises had been upgraded. While outside play areas were of good quality, indoor areas were more limited and this was a drawback in hot weather. Learning resources were in good supply and well used to support 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 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	328	14%
	Last year	464	23%
Teachers	75		40%
Students	61		15%

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

A few parents responded to the survey, much less than last year. Most parents agreed they were effectively involved in the life of the school, and that the school reports and the parent-teacher meetings were regular and helpful. A majority of parents and students believed students made good progress in Islamic Education. A majority of students and parents, and almost all teachers agreed that the behaviour of most students was good. A minority of students and parents believed there was good progress in Arabic as a first language. Only a minority of students agreed that there was good progress in Arabic as an additional language. A large majority of parents and students agreed students were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. All groups of respondents agreed that students enjoyed life at the school. Most students believed their lessons were good, and a majority agreed they could choose from a good range of subjects in my school. Almost all students, parents and teachers agreed that students were well looked after and safe in this school. Almost all teachers felt that the school supported their continuing professional development and there were sufficient resources of good quality to support their teaching. Teachers also agreed that assessment systems in this school were effective. Most students and parents, and almost all teachers, agreed that the school was well led. Most parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school.

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

Copyright © 2012

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.

It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.