

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Modern High School

Report published in February 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Modern High School

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Location | Nad Al Sheba |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.gemsmhs.com |
| Telephone | 04 326 3339 |
| Address | P.O. Box 53663, Dubai |
| Principal | Darryl Lancelot Bloud |
| Curriculum | ICSE |
| Gender of students | Boys and Girls |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups | 3 - 18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12 |
| Attendance | Good |
| Number of students on roll | 2,355 |
| Number of Emirati students | 0 |
| Date of the inspection | Monday 10th to Thursday 13th October 2011 |

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The context of the school

The Dubai Modern High School is located in Nad Al Sheba. The school opened in 1986. The school had a roll of 2355 students, aged three to 18 years, from Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12.

Affiliated to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), the school prepared students for the ICSE examinations at the end of the secondary phase.

All students came from Indian backgrounds and almost all spoke an Indian language as well as English. There were no Emirati students on roll. Approximately two per cent had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need and they received support from specialist staff. Another group was being monitored and were having their needs assessed.

There were 185 teachers, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 21 teaching assistants. Staffing was very stable and only eight teachers had been newly appointed this year. At the time of the inspection, the Principal had been in post for 12 years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Outstanding

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Dubai Modern High School provided an outstanding quality of education. It had a number of outstanding features, particularly attainment and progress in the Kindergarten and in most subjects in the high school, although students' attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Students' personal development, their civic and Islamic understanding and their economic and environmental understanding were outstanding. Teaching for effective learning was outstanding in the Kindergarten and in the high school and it was good in the primary and middle phases. Occasionally, in these latter two phases of the school, work was not matched well enough to all the students' needs and teaching strategies were not as diverse as in other parts of the school. Overall, the assessment of students' progress was outstanding. The school provided an outstanding curriculum and had excellent arrangements for health, safety, student guidance and support.

The school had a good track record of incremental improvement. It had built on its strengths and attended to its weaknesses. Its outstanding leadership had recognised the need to increase the rigour of analysis of some school data and improve planning further by using more measurable success criteria. The school had an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Key strengths

- Students' attainment was good and much of their progress was outstanding, especially in the Kindergarten and in English throughout the school;
- The school had an ethos that successfully developed confident and well-rounded students;
- Senior students provided exemplary leadership and role models;
- The curriculum provided wide opportunities for fostering talent;
- Committed leaders at all levels combined strategic direction with attention to detail.

Recommendations

- Review the organisation of learning in Arabic in order to raise standards;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further in the middle of the school;
- Continue to include more measurable success criteria in action plans and increase the rigour of analyses.

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

| | Pre-Primary (KG) | Primary | Middle | Secondary |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Islamic Education | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Good |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Outstanding | Good | Good |
| Arabic as a first language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Arabic as an additional language | | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Good | Good | Good |
| English | | | | |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Mathematics | | | | |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Good | Outstanding |
| Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding | Good | Outstanding |
| Science | | | | |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Good | Good | Outstanding |
| Progress | Outstanding | Good | Good | Outstanding |

Attainment was outstanding in English, mathematics and science in the Kindergarten. Spoken English, knowledge of numbers and making predictions were strengths. In the rest of the school, attainment was good in Islamic Education, acceptable in Arabic as an additional language and outstanding in English. In mathematics, attainment was outstanding in primary and high and good in the middle school. In science,

attainment was good in primary and middle and outstanding in the high school. In Islamic Education, most students had good skills in memorising and reciting The Holy Qur'an; the application of knowledge of Islam to their own lives was acceptable. In Arabic, listening skills were acceptable but writing skills were weaker. Girls' reading was more advanced than boys'. In English, older students spoke fluently and wrote well-structured extended essays. In mathematics, mental calculation and application of skills to real life were strengths but this latter aspect was not as advanced in the middle school. In science, older students had excellent subject knowledge; primary students' investigation skills were underdeveloped.

Progress in the Kindergarten and in English was outstanding. It was mostly good in other subjects but in the high school progress was broadly outstanding. Good progress generally stemmed from students assimilating new ideas and making connections with what they had previously learned. Outstanding progress was the result of students' careful reflection of prior learning and their application of new techniques in wider contexts. Students with special educational needs made good progress overall. Their pace of progress increased when they were taught separately but occasionally it slowed when work was not set at the right level in lessons.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

| | Pre-Primary (KG) | Primary | Middle | Secondary |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture | Good | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Civic, economic and environmental understanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

Students' personal and social development was mostly outstanding. They were confident and highly motivated learners and took great pride in their school. Positive and supportive relations prevailed. All

students had a very clear understanding of what constituted a healthy lifestyle, especially the students in the Kindergarten. Students had good punctuality and attendance rates. Students in primary, middle and high school could discuss the values of Islam and linked that very well to Dubai and its quality of life. Students in the Kindergarten had a good knowledge of Islam and the culture of the United Arab Emirates that was appropriate for their age. While understanding and celebrating the diversity of the Dubai population, all students maintained a strong pride in their own Indian heritage. Students in general and high school students in particular, were highly proactive in the life of the school, and were excellent ambassadors beyond it. Through various roles and responsibilities, students brought about positive changes to school life and to lives of people less fortunate than themselves. Environmental understanding was a strength of the school.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

| | Pre-Primary (KG) | Primary | Middle | Secondary |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Outstanding | Good | Good | Outstanding |
| Quality of students' learning | Outstanding | Good | Good | Outstanding |
| Assessment | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

Teaching for effective learning was outstanding in the Kindergarten and in the high school. It was good in the primary and middle schools. Teaching in English was outstanding in all phases and also in mathematics and science in the high school. There were also examples of outstanding practice in a variety of other subjects. In Islamic Education and Arabic, teaching was acceptable overall. Almost all teachers had very secure subject knowledge. Their lesson planning was good and almost all lesson objectives were achieved. Most teachers motivated their students successfully and managed the timing of lessons and students' behaviour well. The majority of lessons had a good range of activities and student groupings. Teachers' probing questioning reinforced knowledge and tested understanding. Homework was set regularly and helped students consolidate and extend their learning. Teachers generally matched work well to students' needs using worksheets but, in a few lessons, these did not provide enough challenge for high attaining students or enough support for students with special educational needs. Teachers made good use of

resources such as information and communication technology presentations to involve students. The activities in a few lessons were not related to the real world; there was too much rote repetition of words and a lack of opportunities for collaborative activities. The quality of teaching for effective learning in other subjects, such as in music and art, was often outstanding.

The quality of learning was outstanding in Kindergarten and in the high school and good in the primary and middle phases. Students were responsible, independent and strove to achieve their best. Their engagement in lessons was a real strength. They worked productively in groups or with a partner and the quality of discussion afterwards was outstanding. Students could apply their previous learning to new situations such as in English when comparing poems. In many lessons, they applied what they were learning to real life contexts. In science in the high school, their enquiry and investigative skills were also well developed. Homework played an important role in students' learning as it enhanced class work and offered opportunities to develop critical thinking. In a few lessons, students did not work independently or take sufficient responsibility for their learning.

Assessment was outstanding. There was a comprehensive system for gathering, analysing and using information about students' attainment, progress, personal development and attitude to work. The school communicated this information regularly to students and parents and used it to modify the curriculum and revise teaching approaches. Teachers marked work regularly and recorded marks and comments to support improvement.

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

| | Pre-Primary (KG) | Primary | Middle | Secondary |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Curriculum quality | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

The outstanding curriculum had a clear rationale which reflected the commitment to develop exceptional future citizens. The curriculum provided breadth, balance and progression for all students, with a wide choice of academic pathways. Well-established transition arrangements ensured all staff were fully appraised of students' performance and their needs as they moved through the phases of the school. Regular and systematic curriculum review involved all stakeholders and informed change. For example, staff had been fully involved in the development of the curriculum towards a more skills-based curriculum. Comprehensive planning ensured that the needs of all students were met through the challenging and stimulating provision. Cross-curricular links were well-planned and implemented. Most subjects enhanced learning by linking theory through to real life applications. Students had excellent access to information and communication technology in dedicated laboratories and open learning areas. There was a wealth of

opportunities for students to enrich their education through additional school based activities. Outstanding links with local, national and international communities provided additional enhancement and enrichment.

How well does the school protect and support students?

| | Pre-Primary (KG) | Primary | Middle | Secondary |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Health and Safety | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Quality of Support | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

The arrangements to ensure students' safety and health were outstanding. The school also took excellent care of the well-being of school staff through careful attention to living facilities, transport provision and invitation to workshops. There was improved security on campus and on buses through the installation of closed circuit television and the appointment of female bus attendants. Levels of supervision were excellent and had been strengthened by increases in staffing levels, including the appointment of teaching assistants in primary and additional support staff. Student monitors played an important role in ensuring safe movement around the school. The dining staff provided healthy and nutritious meals which the school council monitored and then suggested improvements. The school doctor checked students' health and well-being regularly and provided advice to parents and students. Healthy exercise was strongly promoted and healthy living regularly featured in the curriculum. The facilities and campus were clean and in excellent condition. Through ramps, lifts and toilet arrangements, all areas were accessible for students and staff. Fire drills were regular and efficient. Through induction and lessons, staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements.

Respectful and trusting relationships were evident throughout the school and strongly influenced by the enhanced house system. Since the last inspection, the school had paid increased attention to the needs of older students through giving them extra responsibilities, providing access to counseling and life skills workshops. The school made outstanding provision for students with special educational needs, which featured effective systems for identifying, supporting and tracking the progress of these students. A minority of them made outstanding progress and most made good progress. Students' academic performance and personal development was tracked closely to ensure the needs of students with differing abilities, needs and talents were closely met. Extensive guidance on careers and higher education was provided. This started from Grade 8 and sought to widen students' aspirations. Effective procedures were in place to deal with incidents of poor behaviour. Student attendance was closely monitored and regular attendance and punctuality were successfully promoted.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The senior leadership team, ably led by the Principal and the Vice-Principal, provided the school with a clear strategic direction. Delegation of responsibility was clear. Relationships were highly professional and a strong sense of unity and shared values were evident. The school had made good progress since the previous inspection on all of the recommendations and the school had an outstanding capacity to continue improving. A minority of middle managers were adjusting to their new role and making an increasingly important contribution to the school.

The school had refined its self-evaluation processes to enable all teaching staff to play a full part in judging its effectiveness. The school involved outside agencies to audit its work and add an external perspective. Students' performance was monitored thoroughly and results were analysed and compared. The quality of teaching and learning was regularly checked to support professional development. Strategic improvement planning had the right priorities derived from evaluations, including inspection recommendations. The school had built on its successes and attended to its weaknesses through a sharper focus on the impact of its actions. However, action plans did not always have enough measurable success criteria and some analyses of school information lacked depth. The school had a clear record of succession planning and used its performance management system to improve quality and identify staff training needs.

Parents thought highly of the school and had few concerns. They had effective ways of making their opinions known. The school listened carefully to them and took action when appropriate, such as increasing the variety and quality of the afternoon activities. Communication routes were effective. Reports were informative and helped parents understand their children's progress. The school had productive links with the community, schools and institutions both locally and further afield.

Governors had improved their level of challenge and support through increased visits with a sharper focus on data analysis, teaching quality and self-evaluation. They had a close involvement in action and school improvement planning. They had widened the stakeholders' involvement in the school through surveys

and the appointment of a Parental Engagement Officer. Governors regularly sought stakeholders' views and had made constructive responses such as enhancing arrangements for school bus safety.

The day-to-day running of the school was highly effective and older students had an important part to play. The staff were very well qualified and deployed. Training was thorough and relevant. The high quality premises had an excellent range of specialist facilities. Resources had been wisely augmented to a high standard. Vivid displays promoted a very positive learning environment.

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 | 783 | 45% |
| | Last year | 939 | 55% |
| Teachers | 130 | | 84% |
| Students | 309 | | 84% |

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

Almost half of the parents responded to the survey, a slight decline from last year. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school, as were most students. Most parents believed that their children's progress was good in the key subjects, with the exception of Arabic as an additional language. In this subject more than a few parents believed that progress was not good, an opinion shared by about a third of the senior students. Parents held broadly positive views about the school's provision, but there were some exceptions. A few parents and senior students indicated that the range of subjects, clubs and activities available was too narrow. More than a few parents believed that the homework given to their children was unsuitable, a view also shared by senior students. A majority of parents indicated that they were involved in the life of the school but again, more than a few indicated that they were not. Most teachers and students responded to the survey. Most students indicated that school leaders listened to their opinions about the school, but more than a few did not think so. Most teachers believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school and in their own teaching practices.

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.

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