

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The English College Dubai

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The English College Dubai

Location	Al Safa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.englishcollege.ac.ae
Telephone	04-3943465
Address	P O Box 11812, Dubai, UAE
Principal	William Johnston, Jane Ballard
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS -Year 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	1028
Largest nationality group of Students	British
Number of Emirati students	7 (0.5%)
Date of the inspection	28th October to 31st October

## Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014 .....	4
Key strengths .....	4
Recommendations .....	4
Progress since the last inspection .....	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills? .....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development? .....	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students? .....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school? .....	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	13
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	14
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	14
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next? .....	16
How to contact us .....	16

## The context of the school

The English College, located in Al Safa, enrolls male and female students from Foundation Stage to sixth form. At the time of the inspection there were 1028 students attending the school. Almost half of the students had UK nationality; there were significant numbers of students from other European countries, the Indian subcontinent, and other countries from across the world. Seven of the students were Emirati nationals. Fifty-seven students were identified as having special educational needs. Sixteen students spoke Arabic as a first language.

The school followed the Early Years Foundation Curriculum in the Kindergarten and the English National Curriculum from Years 1 to 13. It offered a number of courses leading to GCSE examinations in Year 11 and A-level in the sixth form. A few students also took examinations at other times.

Almost all teachers were qualified in the United Kingdom (UK). The primary school headteacher had been in post for four years. . The secondary school had an acting headteacher who had been in post for more than a year, having previously been director of studies in the secondary school.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- The outstanding progress made by students in a number of subjects;
- The positive and responsible attitudes of students and their ability to learn from each other in class;
- The breadth and richness of the curriculum which was further enhanced by high quality teaching and an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities and excursions;
- The support provided for students' wellbeing at each stage of the school.

### Recommendations

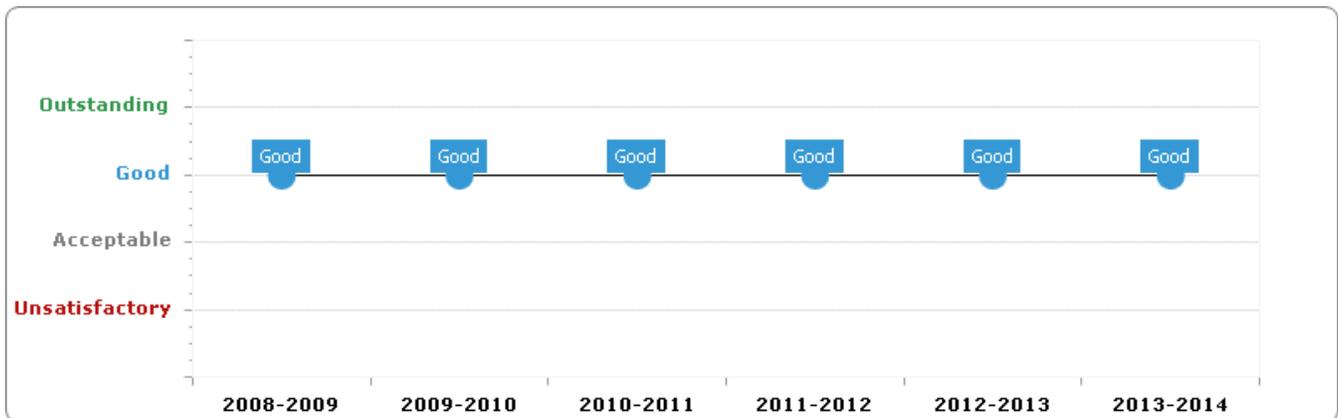
- Improve students' progress in Arabic, particularly as a first language in primary and as an additional language in secondary;
- Raise attainment and progress in Islamic Education;
- Continue to share good practice across the school to improve the quality of learning and teaching;
- Promote better continuity of education for primary and secondary students by building better links between the two departments;
- Provide more time for continuous professional development for middle managers, particularly those in primary.

## Progress since the last inspection

The school had taken steps to address the recommendations of the last inspection report.

- Senior leaders introduced an initiative aimed at increasing the standards of learning and teaching for secondary teachers entitled; 'Raise the Bar '. Although a promising initiative it had yet to show impact. There was not an equivalent programme in primary.
- New teachers had been appointed for Islamic Education and Arabic and improvements had been made to the curriculum and to teaching in both subjects. There were some signs of improvement in students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language, but much more was still required.
- The school had made progress in making better use of assessment information.
- Although the Board supported the extra investments made to improve Islamic Education and Arabic there were still some areas requiring further funding.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Most students had a clear understanding of Islamic values but the application of Islamic principles to real life was still developing. Students' attainment in Arabic as a first language was below the expected levels in Primary where their speaking skills were weak and for, a significant proportion of students, reading skills were insecure. In Secondary, listening comprehension skills were a strength while speaking and writing skills were less well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, most students in Primary and the majority in Secondary had adequate levels of skills. Most could read simple words in primary. However, students' writing skills in Primary were weaker and speaking and writing skills in Secondary were limited. In English, most children at Foundation Stage had well developed listening skills and an age-appropriate vocabulary. In Primary, students had well developed listening and speaking skills. Students' attainment in reading was good. They read increasingly complex texts fluently and with understanding, and they read for pleasure. Seniors had good skills of critical analysis. Mathematics attainment was good at Foundation Stage, Primary and Post 16. It was outstanding in Secondary. Students were skilled at problem solving. Science attainment was good across all phases of the school. Investigative skills were not as good as they could be. Results in post-16 external examinations were weak but attainment in lessons was stronger.

Overall the progress students made in understanding Islam was acceptable. Secondary students made good progress with recitation skills as a result of the extra practice they received. In Arabic as a first language, most secondary students made steady progress in listening to classical Arabic but the majority in Primary were not making enough progress in any language skill. Most primary students learning Arabic as an additional language were developing a satisfactory vocabulary. Students reading and writing skills were not developing as well, especially in secondary. In all phases, students made good progress in English. Children at Foundation Stage were building a firm basis in all aspects of communication and literacy. Students in secondary and Post-16 phases made good progress in reading progressively complex texts. Progress in writing was slower. Mathematics progress was good in Foundation and Post-16 and outstanding in Primary and Secondary. Students had a good understanding of number which was developed well throughout the school. Progress in science was good at Foundation Stage, outstanding in Primary, good in Secondary and acceptable in post-16. Senior students had not yet made sufficient progress from last year's poor AS results.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were good in all phases. They were enthusiastic learners and were keen to participate in activities. They were confident in answering questions and listened with respect to others' point of view. Students' willingness to collaborate had a very positive impact on learning. They worked very well collaboratively in groups and pairs. They were able to talk about their work and share their ideas, but had limited opportunities for discussion in Arabic. They made meaningful connections with other learning, for example using their writing skills in science. They could apply their knowledge to real life problems, such as using their skills to calculate mean, mode and median to the set of scores of basketball players and put forward reasoned arguments about which player to buy. Older students researched topics and gave clear presentations to their peers, but they did not often use ICT during lessons. However there were insufficient opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking.

[View judgements](#)

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

The behaviour of students was outstanding. Children in Foundation Stage quickly learned what was expected of them and their behaviour was exemplary. Students' very positive attitudes and sense of personal responsibility contributed significantly to their progress in lessons. Students were respectful at all times to other students and adults. Children in Foundation Stage had a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Older students adopted a healthy lifestyle and were proactive in improving opportunities for sport and making healthy food choices at lunch-time. Students' showed a strong respect for Islam and the heritage and culture of the UAE. In Primary, students had an in-depth understanding of the economic development that brought people to live and work in Dubai. Students showed a genuine interest in each other's culture and background. Secondary and post-16 students organised events to celebrate diversity. Students were proud of their school. They organized numerous charity events and volunteered their skills for local and overseas projects. Older students developed skills of active citizenship. They willingly took on leadership responsibilities as house captains, prefects, members of the school council and mentors to younger students. Students understood the need to protect natural resources and had a very good appreciation of the need for conservation. Older students' suggestions for recycling and fitting sensors on taps had been taken up by the school.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching in all phases was good. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge and planned imaginative activities to meet the students' different learning styles. Relationships between students and their teachers were a strength of the school. Students were confident to answer questions and ask for help. Teachers planned effective group work and discussions. The majority of teachers were skilled at questioning, but this was not consistent. Teachers planned work for different abilities but there was often a lack of challenge for higher attaining students. Teachers understood the needs of students with special educational needs and provided good support in lessons. In Primary, a minority of teachers talked too much at the start of the lesson. The development of enquiry and critical thinking skills was inconsistent. The teaching in Arabic was not as strong as teaching in the rest of the school.

Some outstanding teaching was seen in a range of subjects across the school. For example in an economics lesson, students took the role of owners of small businesses and acted out their changing relationships in differing economic situations.

Assessment was good in all phases. The school had effective systems in place to record and monitor students' progress. In most subjects information was accurate and recorded frequently. School leaders made very good use of the assessment information to track progress. Data was analysed in depth to identify underachievement and gaps in knowledge and understanding. Teachers had a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses and most checked understanding during lessons. However, the quality of feedback to students was variable. Peer and self-assessment were features of a most lessons, but teachers rarely referred to targets either in marking or in lessons. Teachers used assessment information to plan lessons, but this did not focus enough on helping students work on their next steps in learning, especially for the higher attaining students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in all phases. The Foundation Stage had a good balance of directed and student -initiated learning and a strong emphasis on developing skills of listening and speaking and early reading and writing skills. The primary curriculum had specialist physical education, French and music provision and used cross-curricular themes. Students were given the opportunity of developing research skills in term-long homework tasks but there were too few planned opportunities in lessons for independent learning, research and critical thinking. The curriculum was notable for a very strong extra-curricular provision and other enrichment activities involving a wide range of visits both locally and

internationally. Good processes were in place for the smooth transition between primary and secondary phases but the school did not take advantage of the close proximity of their buildings for more extensive integration of curriculum activities. The curriculum for meeting individual needs of different groups of students was good in all phases. In the Foundation Stage, activities were tailored to meet the needs of specific groups. There were opportunities for children to make choices about activities and to select materials when making pictures and models. Students with special educational needs had individualised adaptations to the curriculum to give them the support they required. Able students were given extra investigative challenges in mathematics lessons but this provision was not yet fully embedded. The primary and secondary curriculum did not have sufficient flexibility for individual students to make their own choices, or to learn in their own ways and at their own pace. Secondary students had a wide range of option choices for GCSE courses.

[View judgements](#)

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

Arrangements for students' health and safety were outstanding, and students were safe and secure. The school buildings were maintained to a high standard, and regular health and safety audits were carried out. The school premises, equipment and resources met the needs of almost all students. School transport was carefully monitored by a member of the school senior staff and detailed records indicated that regular fire drills and evacuations had taken place. Medicines and hazardous chemicals were securely kept in locked cupboards. Good medical facilities and updated student records were positive features of the school. Teachers and students were aware of policies in relation to child protection, personal safety and bullying. Relevant staff and counsellors were accessible to students who required advice on academic, careers and personal issues. Healthy living and healthy food choices for students were strongly promoted by academic and medical staff. Support for students with special educational needs was good.

[View judgements](#)

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

Overall, the quality of leadership was good. The primary headteacher and acting secondary headteacher were dedicated to improving the school. Strong leadership, very effective teamwork and good pastoral care were evident in the secondary senior leadership team. The primary headteacher provided effective support to primary staff. There were strengths and shortcomings in middle leadership with insufficient capacity to drive improvements. In Foundation Stage and primary, teachers with other responsibilities had very little time to discharge their roles.

Self-evaluation was good. Senior leaders knew the strengths of the school and the areas where improvement was required. They used a range of self-evaluation methods to evaluate the quality of teaching. A very good approach to lesson observation had been adopted in secondary phase which made it clear the high standards of teaching which were expected. Senior managers analysed assessment data and examined students' work. The results of lesson observations were used in teachers' performance management reviews. Despite these useful processes the school's judgements on quality were not robust enough and as a result the basis of improvement planning was not secure and also it was incomplete. Although key priorities for action were recorded, the timeline and those responsible for undertaking them were not.

School's links with parents and the community were good. Frequent two way communication between the school and parents had developed. A particular strength was the proactive approach taken by staff with a pastoral role in contacting parents. Some parents acted as helpers in Primary. High quality reports on students' progress were available twice each year for parents. A good feature of the primary reports was the space given to students to reflect on their own learning. Good links had been formed with the local community and valuable work experience was arranged for students.

Governance was acceptable. The Board received regular reports on the school's academic attainment. Headteachers felt supported by the governing body and were held to account for the performance of the school. The Board provided an increase in staffing in response to the last inspection. However, not all key stakeholders were represented on the Board and parents were unable to communicate directly with them.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was good. Day-to-day operations of both school sites ran very smoothly. Staff were well qualified and effectively deployed for their teaching responsibilities, and induction arrangements for new staff were thorough. The school premises and learning environment were clean, and class space was generally adequate. Classroom resource levels, and those in the school libraries, were good and effectively supported teaching and learning. Secondary students had limited access to computers.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress were broadly in line with other students in the school at each phase. Attainment and progress were good in English, mathematics and science and acceptable in Islamic Education. In Arabic as a first language, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory at the primary phase in line with their peers.

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

The school had good provision for students with special educational needs (SEN). Co-ordinators in both school sites provided effective leadership and guidance for teachers. SEN staff were enthusiastic and skilled in developing SEN provision and in supporting staff development. Teachers and SEN staff quickly and skilfully identified the specific learning needs of the students, in line with DSIB categories. Individual education plans and support programmes were prepared by staff to assist the teachers' planning and to enable individual support to be provided by class teacher. All teachers were aware of those students with special educational needs in their classes and what their specific needs were. However, teachers did not consistently differentiate classwork in order to address the specific needs of the SEN students. There was limited tracking of progress of these students against short-term learning targets. The links between the SEN support staff in each of the school sites was weak. Staff did not share resources, share effective practice both within the SEN staff and across the school, or effectively monitor, track and evaluate the impact of the support provided.

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

The quality of teaching was inconsistent across the school. In Primary, teachers gave insufficient opportunities for students to work independently and with each other. They did not plan lessons well enough and did not always include a sufficient variety of activities that would make progression in the four skills of the language possible. In Secondary, there were appropriate levels of challenge in reading and basic levels of writing provided for most students. However, teaching was often textbook driven, teacher talk was excessive and students were mostly expected to listen or routinely complete low level activities. Across most grades in both Primary and Secondary, the teaching of writing was a significant weakness.

In Primary, teachers' short-term planning of the curriculum did not contain sufficient purposeful activities to ensure that students developed each of the four language skills. In Secondary, the curriculum was based on a clear rationale but it did not fully meet the varying needs of students'. Opportunities for students to apply their learning in meaningful contexts and to make useful connections between the different skills were rare. Extra-curricular activities took place from time to time but they did not always integrate well with the learning experience of the classroom.

## 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	199	28%
	Last year	251	37%
Teachers	36		37%
Students	119		52%

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

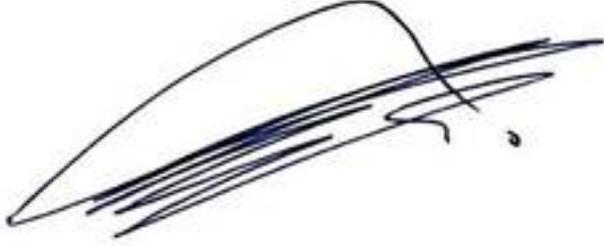
Parents supported the school strongly. Almost all parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. They thought that the school was well led and that their child enjoyed attending school and was well cared for and safe. Almost all students and teachers thought that student's behaviour was good. Parents and students felt that school work was interesting and challenging and that the school offered a wide range of subjects and activities. Parents and students thought that teaching was good and that teachers provide helpful comments on written work. Almost all parents said that there were good arrangements for progressing from one stage to the next in school. Almost all parents thought that their child made very good progress in English, mathematics and science and the majority thought that their child made good progress in Arabic as an additional language. Most parents think that their child understood the importance of Islamic values in Dubai.

## 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.



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## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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