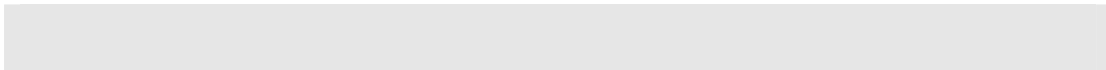


DUBAI SCHOOLS INSPECTION BUREAU

Initial Quality Inspections Handbook

Edition 1



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Section 1

1.1 The purpose of the handbook

The purpose of the handbook is to provide:

- support and guidance for inspectors in their role
- information for schools and key stakeholders about the process and organisation of inspections
- benchmarks and criteria for schools to use as a basis for evaluating themselves.

1.2 Foreword

School inspection plays a vital role in defining and measuring educational quality to support the improvement of education in Dubai. The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau¹ will provide comprehensive information on the standard of education in Dubai, which will inform improvement planning at school and policy level.

A unique feature of Dubai is the diverse range of schools, both public and private, and the many different curricula being studied. Irrespective of context, the purposes of inspection remain the same. It should provide:

- an independent and accurate view of the school
- a means of accountability
- information for the Government of Dubai about the quality and standards of schools
- information to support parental choice
- a tool to support schools in raising achievement.

This first Handbook of the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau aims to provide support and guidance for inspectors in their vital role. Because we recognise inspection as a transparent process, the Handbook also aims to provide information for schools, parents and communities about the process and organisation of inspections in Dubai.

The Handbook sets out the framework of Quality Indicators against which inspectors make judgements on the basis of their observations of practice. This framework should help each school to evaluate its own performance. Accreditation already provides a framework for some schools in Dubai to strive towards educational excellence and inspectors will take account of evidence from that process in inspections.

Inspection will evolve further in the coming years and revised versions of the Handbook will reflect the changes needed for it to remain a current and useful part of the school improvement story. Inspection must play its part in the broader aim of establishing a global reputation for Dubai's education system that supports its long-term position as a world hub for investment and economic development.

Jameela Al Muhairi

Chief of Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

¹ The mission, values and strategic objectives of the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau appear as Appendix 1.



Section 2

2.1 Introduction

The guidance in this handbook is intended to ensure that inspections are of the highest quality and that the judgements inspectors make about schools are fair and rigorous.

All inspections should conform to the standards stipulated in the following Quality Promise, which is derived from the values set out by the DSIB.

2.2 Quality Promise

- In every inspection sufficient valid and reliable evidence will secure the judgements made about the standards achieved and the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and other aspects of educational provision.
- Each school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve its performance will be clearly identified and reported.
- Inspectors will establish effective working relationships with the staff of every school, based on professionalism, sensitivity and an understanding of their concerns and the circumstances in which they work.
- Inspections will be well planned and effectively managed.
- Through its communications with schools, DSIB will make every effort to ensure a clear and shared understanding of what is involved at each stage of the inspection process.
- Inspectors will readily explore issues through professional dialogue with the staff of schools.
- Feedback to school staff and governing bodies, given orally and in writing, will be clear and unambiguous.

Inspectors will aim to leave the staff of each school feeling that they have gained from the experience of inspection. Those involved in running schools should recognise the thoroughness of the evidence base as well as understand and respect the judgements that emerge. The entire school community should feel that the inspection has provided a valuable contribution to its strategy for improvement.

2.3 School self-evaluation

The DSIB is committed to promoting self-evaluation as a key aspect of the work of schools. Monitoring and evaluation provide essential information for setting priorities and planning further improvement.

In line with international good practice in school inspections, DSIB will place increasing emphasis on the role of self-evaluation. The transition will be deliberately managed in line with the schools' growing familiarity and confidence with the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Self-evaluation will play only a limited role in Initial Quality Inspections, which aim to establish essential baseline information about all schools. However, the concept of self-evaluation will be introduced in the following ways:

- Each school will be asked to submit documentation containing the self-evaluative information that it possesses, as a component of its pre-inspection profile.
- Principals will be invited to make a brief presentation to the inspection team about what they see as their school's key strengths and areas for development.
- The Quality Indicators will require a judgement about the quality of each school's self-evaluative processes.
- The Quality Indicators will be shared and schools can use them for self-evaluative purposes.

Over time DSIB expects self-evaluation to become a key element in the inspection of an increasing number of schools, with the aim of adopting a significantly self-evaluative approach to inspection in most schools.

2.4 Code of Conduct for inspectors

Inspections must not only arrive at fair and accurate judgements about schools, but they must also be done in the right way.

Any assessment of professional competence can cause anxiety, and inspection is no exception to this. Inspectors will treat all the people they encounter as part of the inspection process with interest, courtesy and respect. The right of entry into schools is a privilege.

Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work; and ensure that staff are treated fairly and that schools benefit from the experience of inspection. The process will be transparent and carried out openly, with the outcomes clearly communicated to all parties. The standards expected for inspectors are set out in the DSIB Code of Conduct for Inspectors.

School Inspectors are expected to:

- make their evaluations objectively, be impartial and have no connection with the school that could undermine their objectivity
- present an accurate, honest, fair and reliable report of what the school achieves and does
- carry out all work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- do all that they can to allay worry or anxiety throughout the inspection process
- act with the best interests and well-being of students and school staff in mind
- maintain purposeful and productive relationships and dialogue with those being evaluated and communicate outcomes clearly
- respect the confidentiality of information.

Effective inspections are those which schools regard as fair, rigorous and helpful. If schools respect and value the quality of inspections they will be more likely to accept and make use of the findings to help them improve.



Section 3

3.1 Framework of Quality Indicators

Introduction

This set of quality indicators has been developed following consultation with Dubai stakeholders and evaluated during the Pilot Inspections in April 2008.

Quality indicators are at the heart of most high-impact inspection systems worldwide. They provide a framework within which inspectors make judgements on the basis of evidence of observed practice. They serve a number of purposes:

- Indicators create a vocabulary for a conversation with, and between, schools about the key purposes of schooling and the key determinants of educational success.
- The highest level statements provide schools with a picture of educational excellence to which schools can aspire.
- The lowest level statements provide schools with a clear understanding of levels of provision that are considered unacceptable and must be improved.
- The indicators can be used by schools for self-evaluation purposes, and can be linked to school improvement through effective development planning.
- The use of a common set of indicators encourages consistency in judgements across different inspection teams; inspectors base their judgements on the evidence of the practice they actually observe, rather than with reference to set norms or by employing relative ratings.
- The publication of inspection indicators enables schools to see inspection as a transparent process.

The strategic plan for the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau involves an initial phase during which all schools will receive a relatively short inspection. The result will be an authoritative view of both the whole school system and the developmental priorities for every individual school. This document sets out the indicators for this phase of Initial Quality Inspections. The criteria are structured as seven central questions:

1. How good is the students' progress?
2. How good is the students' personal and social development?
3. How good are the teaching and learning?
4. How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?
5. How well does the school protect and support students?
6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?
7. How well does the school perform overall?

An eighth section in the inspection report on every school will set out the inspectors' recommendations for what the school needs to do to improve further.

The choice of indicators is based on research into school effectiveness. While there are legitimate disagreements about some aspects of the purpose of schooling, there is an almost universal consensus in the literature that an effective school will seek to secure the best possible academic or cognitive outcomes, while also enabling students to thrive in terms of personal development, interpersonal skills and the affective side of human development.

These two key outcomes – progress and personal development – are the measure of school effectiveness and form the basis for the first two sets of indicators. The next four indicators focus on what the research tells us about the most powerful factors determining school effectiveness: purposeful teaching and learning, an appropriate and challenging curriculum, pastoral care and leadership. The indicators conclude with a final question involving an overall judgement of school effectiveness.

Inspectors will make judgements on a four-point scale. The four levels on the scale are defined as follows:

Level 4: Outstanding quality – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Level 3: Good quality – the expected level for every school in Dubai.

Level 2: Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Level 1: Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Consistency in quantitative terminology

The following terms are used consistently throughout the indicators with the following definitions:

All	100% or as near as makes no difference
Almost all	90% and more
Most	more than three quarters but fewer than 90%
Majority	more than half but fewer than three quarters
Few	up to about 15%

Inspection Questions

1. How good is the students' progress?

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to each significant age group in the school, taking into account the students' age and scaling their expectations accordingly. Inspectors will take account of any significant variations in the performance of different groups of students, such as boys and girls and those of different nationalities and different abilities.

The descriptors will be applied to certain key subjects:

- Arabic
- Islamic Studies
- English
- The language used for teaching and learning, where it is not Arabic or English
- Mathematics
- Science – for Grades 6–12

1.1 Attainment in each key subject in relation to international standards

Key aspects	Attainment in relation to appropriate benchmarks used by the school Trends in attainment over time			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	In relation to benchmarks used by the school, and on the basis of all available evidence of attainment, the students' recent performance against relevant measures is consistently high.	In relation to benchmarks used by the school, and on the basis of all available evidence of attainment, the students' recent performance against relevant measures is well above average.	In relation to benchmarks used by the school, and on the basis of all available evidence of attainment, the students' recent performance against relevant measures is close to the average.	In relation to benchmarks used by the school, and on the basis of all available evidence of attainment, the students' recent performance against relevant measures is significantly below average.

1.2 Progress over time				
Key aspects	Progress against starting points, and over time Suitability of expected levels			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Assessment data indicate that most students consistently make very good progress in relation to their starting points.	Assessment data indicate that most students make good progress in relation to their starting points.	Assessment data indicate that the progress most students make is in line with what is expected of them.	Assessment data indicate that fewer than three quarters of the students make progress in line with what is expected of them.

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to each significant age group in the school, taking into account the students' age and scaling their expectations accordingly. Inspectors will take account of any significant variations in the performance of different groups of students, such as boys and girls and those of different nationalities and different abilities.

2.1 Attitudes and behaviour				
Key aspects	Observed attitudes and behaviour of students in and about the school Student–staff relationships Attendance Punctuality			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Students are self-disciplined, respond very well to adults and resolve difficulties in mature ways. They always arrive at school and to lessons on time. Daily attendance is at or very close to 100%.	Good behaviour and relationships prevail throughout the school. Students exercise self-control. Almost all students arrive in good time for lessons and at the start of the day. Daily attendance is very high.	Behaviour and relationships are acceptable. Rules are respected. The school is orderly and safe. All but a few arrive in good time for lessons and at the start of the day. Most students attend every day.	The poor behaviour of a few students disrupts lessons and/or causes difficulties around the school.

2.2 Spiritual and civic understanding

Key aspects	<p>Understanding of national identity in the context of the nature and aims of the pluralistic society of Dubai</p> <p>Appreciation of local traditions and cultures, and Islam.</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>Almost all students fully understand and appreciate the pluralistic society of Dubai, the region's traditions and cultures, and Islam.</p>	<p>Most students understand the concept of national identity. They understand and appreciate local traditions and cultures, and Islam.</p>	<p>A majority of the students are developing an understanding of national identity, and an appreciation of some of the local traditions and cultures, and Islam.</p>	<p>More than a few of the students have little or no understanding of national identity and little appreciation of local traditions and cultures, or Islam.</p>

2.3 Economic and environmental understanding

Key aspects	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the nature of Dubai’s economic planning and progress and its place in worldwide developments</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the implications of local and global environmental issues</p> <p>Awareness of students’ own potential contribution to Dubai’s progress</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>Almost all students fully understand the importance of striving for Dubai’s economic progress and are well equipped to contribute to it.</p> <p>They understand that economic decisions affect the sustainability of the environment.</p>	<p>Most students understand the importance of Dubai’s continued economic progress and know that they can contribute to it.</p> <p>They understand the need to protect local, national and world resources.</p>	<p>A majority of the students understand the importance of Dubai’s continued economic progress and that they will have a role in contributing to it.</p> <p>They take care of their immediate surroundings and are aware of some important environmental issues.</p>	<p>More than a few of the students are unaware of the importance of Dubai’s continued economic progress and of their potential to contribute to it.</p> <p>They show little concern for their immediate surroundings and have little awareness of important environmental issues.</p>

3. How good are the teaching and learning?

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to each significant age group in the school, taking into account the students' age and scaling their expectations accordingly. Inspectors will take account of any significant variations in the provision for different groups of students, such as boys and girls and those of different nationalities and different abilities.

3.1 Teaching methods				
Key aspects	Teacher–student interaction and the use of dialogue and questions Management of time in lessons Matching teaching strategies to meet the full range of students' needs so as to maintain challenge, pace and sustain students' interest Effectiveness of lesson planning and the use of available resources and space			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Teaching is stimulating and challenging, time is always used productively and activities are closely matched to individual needs and the intended outcomes.	Teaching methods are imaginative and matched to the intended outcomes. The needs of individual students are well catered for. Teachers set challenging tasks.	Lessons are well planned and resourced. Teachers manage time well and make the work interesting. The levels of challenge are realistic.	Lesson planning may be detailed, but teachers take little account of what the students already know. The work they set is not sufficiently challenging.

3.2 Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them

Key aspects	Extent to which teachers demonstrate through their teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sound knowledge of the subjects they teach • sound knowledge of how to teach knowledge and skills beyond reliance on textbook and media support 			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Teaching of a consistently high quality stems from teachers' expert knowledge of the curriculum, of how to teach it, of how students learn and from rigorous reflection on the impact of their teaching.	Teachers' good subject knowledge and regular reflection on their teaching lends confidence to their teaching styles. Their questioning is probing, which challenges and extends students' thinking. Subject coverage is secure.	Teaching is accurate because teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects that they teach. There is evidence that teachers reflect on the impact of their practice.	More than a few teachers have insufficient knowledge of the curriculum they teach. This results in inaccurate teaching and incomplete syllabus coverage.

3.3 Quality of students' learning

Key aspects	Ability of students to demonstrate what they have learned, and how it relates to previous knowledge and skills			
	Ability of students to work without supervision and with others			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>Almost all students make consistently good progress. They understand how current learning relates to previous work and what comes next. They are engrossed in their work. They have the confidence to take the initiative and find solutions to problems independently of the teachers. They work productively with others.</p>	<p>Most students make good progress. They make links between what they learn at different times and in different subjects. They apply what they have learned and show initiative in solving problems and managing new situations. Students are keen to learn and they achieve well. They are able to work independently and as part of a team.</p>	<p>Most students make the progress that should be expected of them. A majority use their time well and make the most of the choices they are given. They explain clearly and confidently what they have learned. They are sufficiently self-confident to take the lead sometimes and work constructively with others. They deal satisfactorily with problems as they arise.</p>	<p>Some students make insufficient progress. More than a few find it difficult to work without supervision and frequently disengage. They do not have the capacity to work well in a team. They cannot cope well with problems and give up quickly.</p> <p>Too much of the teachers' time is spent managing students' behaviour.</p>

3.4 Assessment

Key aspects	<p>Assessment as part of the teaching and learning processes: formative and summative</p> <p>Assessment methods and arrangements for recording, including school policy and its implementation</p> <p>Use of assessment information by teachers and students.</p> <p>Quality of feedback and use of assessment data by teachers and students to inform learning and teaching</p> <p>Quality of reporting on students' progress and achievement</p> <p>Level of teachers' knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses</p>			
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	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>A thorough programme of assessment and review, including students' own assessments of their work, is used consistently throughout the school. Teachers are effective in helping students to know what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>Consistent and effective assessment practices are in place for monitoring students' progress. All staff use them to focus sharply on how students are doing and what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>Assessment is used to track the achievements of students, to indicate what they have learned, to involve them in evaluating their work and understanding what they need to do next.</p>	<p>Assessment is not well developed. Teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of students' progress and achievements.</p>

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

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to each significant age group in the school, taking into account the students' age and scaling their expectations accordingly. Inspectors will take account of any significant variations in the provision for different groups of students, such as boys and girls and those of different nationalities and different abilities.

4.1 Curriculum quality				
Key aspects	Breadth, balance and level of challenge in the curriculum Continuity of the curriculum from year to year Quality of processes of review and updating of the curriculum Relevance of the curriculum to the range of needs of the students			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Imaginative curriculum design maintains students' interest. The curriculum is broad, balanced, and regularly evaluated to ensure that it meets changing needs. There is extensive additional support for all students.	The curriculum is well balanced, reviewed and updated regularly to increase its relevance to students. Additional support is provided for all students who need it.	The curriculum is soundly planned and regularly reviewed to make learning worthwhile and there are no significant gaps in content. Some additional support is provided for those who need it.	There is discontinuity in the curriculum in some subjects from year to year. There are significant gaps in content. Additional support for students is minimal.

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to each significant age group in the school, taking into account the students' age and scaling their expectations accordingly. Inspectors will take account of any significant variations in the provision for different groups of students, such as boys and girls and those of different nationalities and different abilities.

5.1 Health and safety

Key aspects	<p>Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security in all parts of the school, on school transport and in other environments used by the school</p> <p>Suitability of accommodation and facilities</p> <p>Quality of maintenance and monitoring, including monitoring of records of inspections, fire drills and medicines, together with records of incidents and subsequent actions</p> <p>Provision for and promotion of healthy lifestyles</p> <p>Care and welfare of students including child protection</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>The school consistently and in all respects provides a fully safe, hygienic and secure environment for students and staff. Buildings and equipment are maintained in excellent condition. Excellent supervision of students prevails at all times.</p>	<p>Frequent thorough checks are made and acted upon to make sure that a safe environment is maintained. Buildings and equipment are hygienic and kept in a good state of repair. The students are well supervised in classrooms, playgrounds, as they move round the school and on school transport.</p>	<p>Requirements for maintaining the health and safety of students are met. Buildings and equipment are secure, safe, in sound repair, well maintained and clean. Students are kept safe throughout the school day and accidents are rare.</p>	<p>Policies for health and safety are poorly implemented. Health and safety checks are irregular and not rigorous. Some parts of buildings or equipment are unsafe and/or unhygienic. Supervisory practices are weak.</p>

5.2 Quality of support

Key aspects	<p>Staff–student relationships</p> <p>Student advice and guidance</p> <p>Staff handling of behaviour issues</p> <p>Tracking and supporting students’ overall well-being and progress</p> <p>Management of student attendance and punctuality</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>Staff have very good relationships with all students, track their progress and well-being and consistently provide well-judged advice and guidance.</p>	<p>Students’ educational and personal well-being is a high priority for staff. There are well-developed systems for tracking students’ progress and for giving good advice and guidance.</p>	<p>Teachers know their students well. They show them respect and respond to their personal and academic needs with appropriate advice and guidance.</p>	<p>The school is slow to diagnose and respond to students’ needs. Assessment and pastoral arrangements are weak or are not applied consistently. The students receive insufficient advice and guidance.</p>

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Inspectors will make evaluations on the basis of the evidence they gather in relation to the leadership and management of the school as a whole and of key sections within it.

6.1 Leadership and management capacity

Key aspects	Leadership qualities Professional competence and commitment Vision, direction and guidance Development of relationships, teams and leaders at all levels			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Leadership and management are good or better in all respects and dedicated to high standards. Senior staff set a clear direction and empower the teachers. They are observant and perceptive, with the capacity to plan, anticipate and solve problems and further the school's development.	Leadership and management provide a clear sense of direction. Senior staff focus strongly on raising standards. The staff team share common purposes. The school has the capacity to devise practical strategies to secure further improvement.	Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Senior staff are competent and committed. They are not complacent and aware that further improvements can be made, with adequate capacity to make them.	Leadership and management exert little positive influence over the way the school works. Senior staff pay insufficient attention to, and have little impact on, standards. They may be complacent, insecure or insular, and their capacity to improve the school is limited.

6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning				
Key aspects	<p>Processes for school self-evaluation</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, including teaching and learning</p> <p>The processes and impact of school improvement planning</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>Systematic and rigorous self-evaluation is embedded in the school's improvement planning and in its practice at all levels. Strategic thinking is clear. Ambitious improvement planning combines successfully with achievable goals.</p>	<p>Through effective self-evaluation, which takes into account the views of parents, managers know their school well. They use the outcomes to plan and take action promptly to make necessary improvements.</p>	<p>The school's priorities are based on sound analysis of its performance. The work of the school is monitored effectively, including the performance of staff and students, and appropriate actions are taken.</p>	<p>Self-evaluation is poorly developed so managers do not have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Planning for improvement is not based on realistic priorities.</p>

6.3 Links with parents

Key aspects	<p>Engagement with parents and their involvement with their children’s learning and the work of the school</p> <p>Procedures for communicating with and reporting to parents</p> <p>The school’s role in the local and wider community</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>There are highly productive links with parents, which help improve their children’s learning and raise standards.</p>	<p>The school has productive links with parents, which strengthen students’ learning and contribute to good standards.</p>	<p>There are some established links with parents, which support students’ progress and personal development.</p>	<p>The school does not have sufficient links with parents, from which students would benefit.</p>

6.4 Role of the governing body

Key aspects	<p>Strategic and advisory role of owner/governing body, including holding the professional leadership of the school to account for its performance</p> <p>Influence of the owner/governing body on the ability of the school to meet its commitment to parents</p>			
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	<p>The governing body makes a significant contribution to the leadership of the school and its successes. It works highly successfully in support of the school's educational leaders.</p>	<p>The governing body exerts a positive influence on the work of the school. It plays a significant strategic role in leading the school's development.</p>	<p>The governing body meets all its responsibilities. It has clear aims and policies and sets an overall direction for the school.</p>	<p>The governing body does not discharge its responsibilities effectively. It does not support and may impede the efficient and effective management of the school.</p>

6.5 Staffing, facilities and resources

Key aspects

Appropriateness of the accommodation and the overall learning environment, including off-site facilities
 The use of the space and resources for effective teaching and learning
 Sufficiency of suitably qualified staff and their effective deployment

	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Brief illustrative descriptions	Staffing, facilities and resources are of a high order. The school makes excellent use of them to achieve the best standards possible for students.	Teaching and support staff are sufficient in number and well qualified. Facilities and resources are good, with high priority given to students' and staff's access to them.	The school has sufficient qualified staff. Learning is not impeded significantly by any difficulties with recruiting and retaining staff. Facilities and resources are well organised and well maintained. They support teaching and learning adequately.	The school is not adequately staffed or resourced. Not all the teaching or support staff have the expertise required to meet the needs of the students they teach. Deficiencies in facilities or resources restrict students' progress and personal development.

7. How well does the school perform overall?

Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
<p>Almost all elements of the school's work operate highly effectively. There are significant examples of excellent practice.</p> <p>The school delivers fully on an ambitious set of promises to parents.</p>	<p>The school performs well in all the key aspects of its work. The senior staff are capable of leading further improvement.</p> <p>The school delivers well on all the key aspects of its promise to parents.</p>	<p>The school has no significant weaknesses, but may face challenges in some key aspects of its work. The senior staff are aware of them and understand what will be involved in overcoming them.</p> <p>The school fulfils most aspects of its promise to parents.</p>	<p>The school has evident weaknesses. It appears at present to lack the capacity to improve significantly without considerable support.</p> <p>The school does not deliver key aspects of its promise to parents.</p>



Section 4

4.1 Before the inspection

Notification of inspection

Schools will be notified by email approximately four working weeks before their inspections are due. Schools should let DSIB know immediately if there is a compelling reason why the dates proposed for the inspection are not possible from the school's perspective. DSIB will then contact the school by telephone within a few days to arrange a preliminary visit to the school.

Depending on the size of the school, a team of between three and five inspectors will spend between three and five days on site.

Information requested from the school

Each school is asked to check and update its online School Profile document. This covers the key information that the team needs to enable it to plan the inspection.

Each school is asked to gather together a few key documents for collection during the preliminary visit, in either electronic or hard copy format. These are:

- the school's brochure or similar publication
- the school's development or improvement plan
- any recent reports (internal or external) on the quality of any aspect of the school's work
- information about the school's management structure, in the form of a diagram if possible
- a list of the teaching and administration staff, showing which subjects and/or age groups they teach and any management responsibilities they have
- the school's weekly timetable, showing clearly for each class:
 - the teacher
 - the location of the lesson

- a map showing the location of the school and a floor plan of the school building(s).

Evidence from parents

Each school is asked to distribute a Parents' Questionnaire to a sample of families whose children attend. The size of the sample of parents depends on the total number of students on roll. The questionnaire asks for parents' views of the school.

The inspection team uses an analysis of the parental questionnaires to help it prepare. A summary of issues raised forms part of the inspection evidence base.

The preliminary visit

A senior member of the DSIB staff, who may be the school's Lead Inspector, will visit the school to explain the process of the inspection in detail and answer any questions. The visit will take between two and three hours. Besides discussions with the Principal and other senior staff, it could include a tour of the school and a chance to meet any other members of the staff and (if appropriate) members of the governing body.

Pre-Inspection Briefing document

The Lead Inspector then prepares a pre-inspection briefing document for the members of the inspection team. This provides a briefing for inspectors so that they are well prepared to start the inspection before arriving at the school.

4.2 During the inspection: gathering evidence

All inspection findings must be rooted in evidence. The most useful evidence is that which is gathered at first hand from observing and analysing the school at work and examining students' work and progress. Discussions with staff about the work seen, looking at evidence of learning and evaluating assessments and records reinforce this.

Less reliable is what inspectors are told about things they have not witnessed directly, and assertions must be tested; evidence should be corroborated in a

process of 'triangulation'. Assertions may be true, and intentions genuine, but inspection should focus on what is, rather than what might be.

The types of evidence gathering essential to the inspection process are:

- analysis and interpretation of information and data, for example test results and the school's records of students' progress
- observation of educational, interpersonal and management processes and their impact on student progress and school performance
- discussions with students to assess their understanding and knowledge, their attitudes to their work and views about their life at school
- examination of samples of students' work in different subjects and across different grades in the school
- discussions with staff, in particular senior managers or those with responsibility for leading different aspects of the school's work
- analysis of documentary evidence such as schemes of work or teachers' planning.

Observation of lessons and other activities

During the school day, the inspection team should aim to spend around 60 per cent of its time observing lessons and sampling students' work. Lessons or sessions should be observed as they appear in the school's normal timetable and inspectors should not require changes to that programme. It is necessary for inspectors to spend enough time in lessons to make valid and reliable judgements about standards, teaching and learning.

Effective inspection involves joining individual students to look at their work and discuss it with them; it also entails careful observation of teaching, including the organisation of work for students as a class, in groups or individually. Both need to be done in such a way as not to disrupt teaching or learning, and taking notes should be as unobtrusive as possible.

There should not normally be more than one inspector in a class at any time unless the class teacher agrees or there is a particular reason for it. It may be, for example, that the lead inspector is monitoring the work of team members.

Inspection will include observations of assemblies, extra-curricular activities and registration periods. It may also include fieldwork and educational visits where justifiable and practicable.

Discussions with students

This is a good source of evidence about what students know, can do and understand. It is particularly useful in judging the extent of their understanding of current and recent work, and their ability to apply knowledge in different contexts. These discussions may take place as inspectors join individuals or groups at work in lessons. Opportunities should also be taken to talk to students outside lessons to find out their views, attitudes and interests and the way in which the school supports them. In all observations it is important to listen to students' incidental talk and comments, contributions in lessons, responses to questions, questions which they initiate, views, feelings and comments expressed in discussion.

Analysis of students' work

Students' earlier and current work provides an essential source of evidence of their progress. It also offers insights into the curriculum, teaching and students' attitudes to work. The school should be informed of any samples of work required before the inspection team visits the school, but broadly speaking this should be drawn from a cross-section of students of different abilities across subject areas.

The evidence from analysing samples of work provides substantial confirmation of attainment and the breadth, depth and consolidation of learning. Inspectors may use other examples of students' work in classrooms, exercise books, portfolios and displays to help establish how representative that sample is.

Discussion with staff and others involved in the work of the school

Principals and lead inspectors will normally wish to meet daily to discuss the administrative details of the inspection, discuss matters of concern, clarify issues emerging and obtain further information. These meetings are part of the maintenance of positive, professional relationships between the school and inspection team. They enable the inspection team to share emerging views and the school to provide additional evidence where necessary, which prepares the ground for some of the judgements made before the end of the inspection.

Discussions with senior managers, staff with management responsibilities and class teachers all provide important information related to roles, responsibilities, procedures and policies; they help inspectors establish a context for what they observe.

Documentary evidence

The presence or absence of non-statutory policies or documents is not necessarily related to the quality and standards of the school. A school would not be marked down for simply not having a policy unless the absence of that policy helps to account for a weakness in an aspect of the school's performance.

Schools are not required to produce a high volume of documentation specifically for an inspection and requests for additional paperwork (other than that normally produced by the school in its everyday work) will be kept to a minimum.

Record of Inspection Judgements

This is the summary document produced at the end of each inspection, which records the team's corporate judgements. Its contents form the basis of feedback to the school and the written report. The Record of Inspection Judgements ensures that the team's findings are carried through into clear, unambiguous feedback to the school, which in turn corresponds with the contents of the inspection report.

4.3 Giving feedback

The way in which the messages from an inspection are to be received and acted upon will depend much on the trust, respect and rapport established between inspectors and the staff of the school. The way in which findings are communicated is important. The following are essential:

- Gaining teachers' acceptance: this includes talking with teachers and other staff about their work as the inspection develops, showing sensitivity in all dealings with them and students as evidence is gathered. Discreet interaction with students during lessons is a part of this.
- Considering the impact of body language during feedback: eye contact and appropriate facial expression, posture, gesture, voice and pace of speech can all help to reduce anxiety, encourage professional dialogue and gain acceptance of inspection findings.

Teachers should be offered brief feedback on their lessons on request. The purpose of this is to share the evaluation of lessons, including what went well and what could be done more effectively. Feedback should therefore:

- identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in the teaching observed, illustrating general conclusions with specific examples
- provide clear reasons for what is judged successful or otherwise
- ensure that points for development are explained fully.

Feedback to the Principal and to senior staff should share the significant evidence and judgements about:

- the outcomes achieved by the school, particularly the standards achieved by students
- the most significant factors that account for what is achieved, particularly the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in the school
- the effectiveness of the work done by managers and coordinators
- the issues identified by the inspection as priorities for improving the school.

In public schools, a representative of the Schools Agency will attend the feedback. In private schools, one or more representatives of the governing body may attend if desired.

Staff will have the opportunity to clarify findings and ask for further explanation or examples to illustrate judgements made. It is useful to explore and discuss in some detail the priorities identified for action.

4.4 The Inspection Report

The Inspection Report must be a carefully considered, clearly written and well checked document of high quality. It should:

- give a clear picture of the quality and standards of the school, an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and insights into why the school performs as it does; reasons for judgements should be explained carefully so that readers can understand why the inspection team arrived at its findings

- concentrate on evaluating rather than describing what is seen
- use everyday language, not educational jargon, and be grammatically correct
- be specific in its judgements
- reflect the uniqueness of the school by employing words and phrases that enliven the report and convey its individual character. Its content should be consistent with the oral feedback given to senior managers.

4.5 What happens next

Initial Quality Inspections will produce the following outcomes:

- a report to each school and to KHDA, highlighting key strengths and providing recommendations for improvement; the report will be confidential so that it can be used to set an effective agenda for improvement
- descriptions of highly successful practice for celebration in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report and for dissemination among schools
- a record of the inspection judgements made against each evaluation indicator for each school, to be entered in the central schools database.

Schools where important aspects of work are found to have significant weaknesses will be mandated to implement the inspectors' recommendations for improvement. Working with the Schools Agency in the case of public schools, they will be required to produce an action plan and make the plan available to the Inspection Bureau for comment. The Inspection Bureau will monitor the implementation of these schools' action plans through periodic visits at appropriate intervals (typically one inspector for one day at least every three months) until sign-off. In cases where that is not achieved within a timescale the Inspection Bureau judges reasonable, a recommendation for further action will be made to the appropriate authority.



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Appendix 1

Mission, vision, values and strategic objectives of the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

The Mission of the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau is as follows:

‘To contribute to the improvement of educational outcomes and parental choice by providing independent, comprehensive, authoritative assessment of education quality in Dubai’

Vision

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau will make a major contribution to Dubai’s reputation for educational excellence through:

- identifying strengths and weaknesses and thereby enabling improvement and innovation, in partnership with federal ministries, and authorities
- building on local skills to develop and sustain a high-calibre sustainable inspection organisation over the long term
- empowering parents and others to make informed choices about learning provision
- enabling the development of an outstanding education system that will meet Dubai’s demand for a highly professional and competent workforce, and enhance the global reputation of Dubai as a world centre for social and economic development.

Values

Commitment to Educational Quality and Improvement

We will promote education of the highest quality in schools throughout the Emirate of Dubai in order to improve the learning and life chances for all children. The key contribution of inspection to improving educational provision is to supply well-founded information about the performance of schools that can be used to increase parental choice and bring about positive change.

Excellence in Inspection Delivery

We will provide service users with highly reliable, evaluative judgements underpinned by a secure evidence base and an excellent inspection methodology.

Respect

School inspection will be conducted at all times in accordance with the highest standards of professional conduct, including courtesy to all involved in school inspection and a profound respect for the culture and religions of students, teachers and parents in Dubai.

Impartiality and independence

We will at all times take an objective view of school quality. We will not be unduly influenced by the perceptions of those who disagree with well-founded inspection judgements.

Transparency

We will be open and transparent in our communications, and ultimately school reports and the details of the inspection methodology will be placed in the public domain.

Partnership

We will work in close partnership with appropriate governmental bodies in Dubai, the UAE, and internationally. We will work closely with the other Agencies of the KHDA, particularly the Schools Agency, and a range of other partner organisations. This partnership will be based on a clear definition of the respective roles of the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau and the other Agencies.

Efficiency

We will run the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau efficiently and in way that seeks to maximise educational outcomes. As a result, the Inspection Bureau will be cost effective. We will seek to measure its impact so that judgements can be made about 'value for money'.

Strategic objectives

- To ensure that the educational quality of all schools in Dubai has been assessed using an authoritative inspection methodology
- To develop a high-calibre local workforce capable of building and sustaining a world class inspection organisation
- To assist the improvement of all schools through school inspection
- To ensure that effective remedial action is taken when inspection indicates that schools have serious weaknesses
- To give parents useful and reliable information about school quality which will assist informed school choice
- To provide policy-makers and others with an authoritative picture of school quality issues across all the schools of Dubai

Appendix 2

Exemplification of a range of Quality Indicators

Introduction

Quality indicators provide a framework within which inspectors make judgements on the basis of the evidence they collect of observed practice in schools. DSIB inspectors use a four-point scale to evaluate key aspects of the standards students achieve, the quality of the teaching and other aspects of the provision schools make for their students, and the way in which schools are led and managed. The Quality Indicators are set out in full in Section 3 of this Handbook.

This Appendix provides further guidance for inspectors and schools on the interpretation of some of the Quality Indicators:

- 3.1 Teaching methods**
- 3.2 Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them**
- 3.3 Quality of students' learning**
- 3.4 Assessment**
- 4.1 Curriculum quality**
- 5.2 Quality of support**
- 6.1 Leadership and management capacity**
- 6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning**
- 6.5 Staffing, facilities and resources**

Each Quality Indicator is exemplified at Level 4 (Outstanding) and Level 2 (Acceptable). The exemplifications describe practice that would typically be evaluated at either level. They are not intended to be prescriptive, or to be used as checklists, but rather to provide an indication of the type and quality of the evidence that would lead to judgements at these levels.

The exemplification of each Quality Indicator concludes with a list of characteristics, which, if present, would mean that the aspect of the school's work under consideration would be unlikely to be judged as acceptable.

These exemplifications are based on wide experience of school inspection and school self-evaluation in different parts of the world over recent years. They have been influenced in particular by the experience of the pilot inspections undertaken in April 2008, which provided some useful benchmarks on which to base an understanding of standards and quality in the Dubai context.

As DSIB's experience of inspection grows, future editions of this Handbook will contain exemplification of more Quality Indicators.

3.1 Teaching methods

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- the range and suitability of teaching methods
- teacher–student interaction, and the use of questions and dialogue
- management of time in lessons
- matching teaching methods to the range of students’ needs
- effectiveness of lesson planning and the use of available resources.

Level 4 illustration

Quality of teaching broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- Teachers create a stimulating learning environment through the use of skilful teaching methods. Teaching methods motivate students, and are well matched to their needs and preferred styles of learning. Teachers work directly with students in well planned whole-class, group and individual situations. They ensure high challenge and support for all students. Teachers provide opportunities for students to investigate, think creatively, solve problems, cooperate, take responsibility and learn independently. ICT is used effectively. Homework is well planned and very well linked to lessons.
- Teachers share the purposes of lessons with students. Their explanations, expositions and instructions are unambiguous, pitched at the right level and build on previous learning and relevant experiences. Teachers' questioning is skilled and students' responses are listened to and used effectively. Discussions with students and feedback about their performance promote further learning and build confidence. Students' contributions are encouraged and valued. Praise is used effectively.
- Teachers manage time in lessons effectively and purposefully. They provide an effective balance between introductions, interactive teaching approaches including practical student activities, reinforcement and recap of main teaching points. They ensure that lessons are well paced and sustain high levels of student interest and enthusiasm.
- Teachers take care to involve all students in learning. Where there are weaknesses in students' knowledge, understanding and skills, they make efforts to ascertain why difficulties have occurred so that they can be remedied.
- Teaching plans provide concise and clear specifications of what students are expected to learn, and how and when learning is to be undertaken. Learning outcomes and assessment strategies are stated clearly. Plans set out clearly the range of resources that will be used and include textbooks, practical materials and people. Teachers make effective use of assessment information to identify students' needs and plan the next steps in learning. Plans take full account of relevant national and local curriculum guidelines and school policies. Activities, including homework, are planned in ways that make effective use of the students' and teachers' time. Opportunities for planning with colleagues are used well.

Level 2 illustration

Quality of teaching broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Teachers create a satisfactory learning environment through the use of good teaching methods. Teaching methods are matched to students' learning needs and their preferred styles of learning. Teachers work with students in whole-class, group and individual situations. Teachers provide opportunities for students to cooperate, take responsibility and learn independently. Teachers make competent use of ICT in their teaching. Homework is planned and linked to lessons.
- Teachers tell students the purposes of lessons. They provide clear expositions and instructions and build on students' previous learning. Teachers' questioning is good and students' responses are listened to and used. Discussions with students and feedback about their performance support learning. Students are encouraged to contribute to lessons. Praise is used well.
- Teachers manage time in lessons well, ensuring a balance between direct teaching, student activity, reinforcement and recap of teaching points.
- Teachers involve most students satisfactorily. Where there are weaknesses in students' knowledge and understanding teachers take steps to remedy them.
- Teaching plans set out what students are expected to learn and how learning is to be undertaken. Learning outcomes and assessment strategies are stated. Plans include reference to the resources that will be used. Teachers make some use of assessment information to identify what students need to do next. Plans take account of national and local curriculum guidelines and school policies. Activities, including homework, are planned. Opportunities for planning with colleagues are used.

Teaching methods are unlikely to be of acceptable quality if any of the following apply:

- The learning environment is unchallenging and students are not well motivated.
- Lessons are mainly dominated by the teacher, questions are mostly closed and students have few opportunities to interact and contribute.
- Teachers do not differentiate the work according to the range of ability among the students and do not involve students in relevant and suitable follow-up activities.
- Students are not challenged sufficiently and not enough additional help is given to those who need it.
- Lessons are poorly paced.
- Many students are unclear about what they have done well or what they need to do to improve.
- Planning is sketchy and does not build on previous learning.

3.2 Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them

This quality indicator takes account of the extent to which teachers demonstrate through their teaching:

- sound knowledge of the subjects they teach
- sound knowledge of how to teach knowledge and skills, beyond reliance on textbook and media support.

Level 4 illustration

Teaching broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They demonstrate their knowledge effectively through confident expositions, demonstrations and positive interactions with students. They explain difficult topics skilfully and inspire students. Their subject knowledge has depth and range, and they link learning by making appropriate connections across the curriculum. They provide high quality support for students of all abilities. They evaluate their teaching regularly, monitor students' progress, have high expectations of students' attainment and achievement, and regularly review their own knowledge of developments in the subjects they teach.
- Teachers use their expertise and professional knowledge to enhance their teaching of subject content. They are skilled in communicating with students. They are aware of different ways of teaching concepts and skills, appropriate to the subject. They apply them to extend students' knowledge and skills, when appropriate by the innovative use of a range of approaches and resources. Teachers are accomplished in their evaluation and selection of approaches and specific resources to use in teaching students difficult topics, particular aspects of subject knowledge and specific skills.

Level 2 illustration

Teaching broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the subjects they teach. They display this through their teaching and their discussions with students. They explain topics well to students. They have a sufficient range of subject knowledge to enable them to make connections across different areas of the curriculum. They provide suitable support for most students. They evaluate students' progress, attainment and achievement. They occasionally consider their personal and professional effectiveness and undertake updating in the subjects they teach.
- Teachers have some expertise and professional knowledge of teaching techniques, which support their subject teaching. They communicate satisfactorily with students. They are aware of and use a number of approaches within their teaching, and review and modify them from time to time to meet the changing needs of students. They make appropriate use of textbooks and other suitable resources to support their teaching and the students' learning.

Teachers' knowledge is unlikely to be of an acceptable standard if any of the following apply:

- There are significant errors in the subject content of lessons.
- Teachers are not appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach.
- Teachers fail to detect significant weaknesses in students' knowledge and errors in their current and previous work.
- Teaching techniques and approaches are inappropriate for the aspects of the subject being taught, and for the needs and prior knowledge of the students.
- Teachers are not able to explain the rationale for the longer-term structure and content of the work to be undertaken by their classes.

3.3 Quality of students' learning

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- the ability of students to demonstrate what they have learned, and how it relates to previous knowledge and skills
- the ability of students to work without supervision and with others.

Level 4 illustration

Learning broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- The intellectual and creative demands made on students are sufficient to take their learning further at a challenging pace, progressing from simple to more complex thinking and actions. Virtually all students are keen to learn; they enjoy the challenges and relish the success of new learning. They concentrate hard, work well for extended periods of time and follow tasks through to a conclusion. They try to learn from their mistakes and from constructive criticism. The questions they ask show that they are making connections between new learning and what they know and can do already. Students as a matter of routine are capable of selecting successful strategies to help them solve problems and make progress, such as talking aloud, making drawings, maps, notes or diagrams.
- Almost all students are motivated to work well and enthusiastically without close supervision from teachers. They are actively engaged in what they are doing. They ask when they do not understand, but frequently work out what to do next on their own, even when they are stuck or when they have finished. They are used to finding and using books and other resources including ICT independently.
- All students are able to work together successfully in groups of differing composition and sizes. They cooperate well without being instructed to do so, with all members contributing ideas and listening to one another. They understand about taking turns and the need for compromise. They support and help one another.

Level 2 illustration

Learning broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Most students keep up with the work in lessons and complete the tasks they are given in the time available, making expected gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Most apply themselves well to their work but some may do so without enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment, taking the opportunity to disengage as soon as it arises. Students ask questions when they want the teacher to give them more information or to clarify what they have to do. Unless prompted by the teacher, they rarely make connections with what they have learned previously. Most of them have a repertoire of learning strategies, but it is limited and they seldom select new ones without instruction from the teacher.
- While the majority of students work well in the absence of close supervision from the teacher, the attention of some may be easily distracted. Students occasionally decide for themselves what they will do next, but mostly they follow instructions from the teacher. They are passive listeners or watchers for most of the time. Students rarely work in collaborative teams; when they do, some of them lack the skills they need to cooperate and produce good work.

Students' learning is unlikely to be of acceptable quality if any of the following apply:

- A significant minority of students is not engaged in lessons.
- Many students are unable to explain what they are doing.
- Students are not making the progress that should be expected of them.

3.4 Assessment

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- assessment as part of the teaching and learning processes
- assessment methods and arrangements for recording, including school policy and its implementation
- use of assessment information by teachers and students: quality of feedback and use of assessment data to inform learning and teaching
- quality of reporting on students' progress and achievement
- level of teachers' knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses.

Level 4 illustration

Quality of assessment practice broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- Teachers throughout the school place strong emphasis on assessing the achievements of individual students, tracking their progress and identifying the next steps in their learning. Teachers share learning intentions with students as a matter of routine and make sure that they understand them. Teachers make clear to students the standards they should aim for and help them recognise what a good job looks like. Learning objectives are used diagnostically in the course of everyday teaching to assess the students' understanding and the progress they are making. Teachers are responsive to the needs of the students, providing support and challenge to help them overcome difficulties as they encounter them.
- There is a clear understanding among the teachers of the purposes of assessment and they use a range of formal and informal assessment methods that are well matched to them. There are effective means of recording and summarising assessment information. There are systematic and effective arrangements to moderate assessments made by different teachers so that a common understanding of standards at different levels is shared widely among them.
- Teachers make full use of assessment information to evaluate how well the students have learned what they have been taught. They use it to make adjustments to the development of lessons and the way they teach. Teachers regularly give students accurate information, orally and in writing, about their progress and what they need to do next to improve further. Teachers and students frequently reflect together on the quality of the work produced, which equips the students to take full advantage of the frequent opportunities they have to assess their own work and that of others.
- Summaries and records of assessment are used regularly to inform students of their progress, to provide a basis for reporting to parents and to foster continuity of learning from stage to stage.
- Teachers throughout the school are knowledgeable about the students they teach and constantly seek to find out how individuals are dealing with key learning aims and tasks, how successful they are and what difficulties they are encountering.

Level 2 illustration

Quality of assessment practice broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Teachers across the school track and assess the achievements of individual students but the next steps in their learning may not be clearly identified. The importance of sharing learning intentions with students may be acknowledged but some teachers may do so only rarely and seldom make clear to students the standards they should aim for. Although teachers respond to the needs of the students, support and challenge to help them overcome difficulties are not often provided as soon as they arise.
- The school employs a limited range of assessment procedures and some of them may not be fully appropriate for their purposes. Assessment information is recorded but it may not be fully accurate, complete and helpful. There is a process for moderating different teachers' assessment, but it may not be fully effective and may result in an uncertain shared understanding of standards.
- Teachers make some use of assessment information to evaluate how well the students have learned what they have been taught, but they may only rarely use it to make adjustments to the development of lessons and the way they teach. Students occasionally discuss their progress with the teacher but such feedback is irregular and takes little account of the need to identify next steps in learning. While some of the teachers' marking is analytical, most written feedback tends to be encouraging without specifying the respects in which the work could be developed and improved and how that could be achieved. Students have opportunities to assess their own work and that of others, but may be ill equipped to do so productively.
- Assessment records are kept but may not cover all key aspects of performance. They provide an adequate basis for reporting to parents but may not be used systematically to inform students of their progress.
- Teachers' knowledge of the students is uneven. Key strengths and weaknesses may be occasionally overlooked and some teachers' everyday assessments of student attainment are superficial.

Assessment is unlikely to be of acceptable quality if:

- assessment is not sufficiently frequent or accurate to give teachers a clear understanding of the standards students attain or their rate of progress
- many students do not know how well they are doing or how to improve the quality of their work.

4.1 Curriculum quality

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- the breadth, balance and level of challenge in the curriculum
- the continuity of the curriculum from year to year
- the quality of processes of review and updating of the curriculum
- the relevance of the curriculum to the range of needs of the students.

Level 4 illustration

Quality of provision broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- The curriculum has an explicit rationale that is clearly focused on achieving the school's aims and delivering its promise to parents. Any elements required by authorities external to the school are interpreted in creative and stimulating ways, encouraging high achievement. The curriculum has breadth and balance across and within each of its various elements. It gives appropriate time and emphasis to each subject and aspect, producing an effective integration of knowledge, skills and understanding in the programme followed by every student.
- The curriculum is deliberately planned to promote progression and continuity in students' learning. The content of courses is taught in sequences that effectively satisfy the range of needs, interests, abilities and aspirations of all students. Productive links are made between subjects and aspects so that the curriculum offered to every student develops knowledge, understanding and skills in a coherent fashion.
- In developing the curriculum, the school fully considers available accounts of local, national and international best practice. Teachers receive comprehensive guidance on how to deliver the curriculum effectively: on course content, teaching methods and the assessment of students' work and progress. The school systematically gathers and responds to the views of parents and students on the quality of the curriculum. It uses resources from within and outside the school very effectively to enrich the curriculum, offering a wealth of opportunities that match the interests and capabilities of the students.
- The curriculum is securely based on an accurate and sensitive awareness of the educational needs of the students. There are appropriate opportunities for individual students to choose components of the curricular programme they follow. High priority is given to students' personal development, giving them opportunities to take the initiative and, when appropriate, to take responsibility, enabling them to make a strong contribution to the school and the wider community. Because it is relevant to their needs, the curriculum successfully promotes a continuing interest in learning and self-development among the students as a whole.

Level 2 illustration

Quality of provision broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- The curriculum is based on a sound rationale, but it may not be fully consistent with meeting the school's aims in some respects. While it complies with the requirements of any authorities external to the school, it may lack breadth and balance across or within its various elements in some important respects. The time allocated and the emphasis given to each subject and aspect may result in some students following a programme that lacks balance or breadth.
- While most courses are well planned and comprise a coherent sequence of elements and activities, more could be done to promote progression and continuity in students' learning from year to year. Opportunities are not always taken to make useful connection between subjects and aspects that would promote greater coherence in the curriculum offered to each student.
- Some account is taken of best practice encountered elsewhere, such as in locally available guidance. Teachers receive only limited guidance on course content, teaching methods and the assessment of students' work and progress. Some consideration is given to parents' and students' views of the quality of the curriculum, although they are neither gathered nor acted upon systematically. Reasonable use is made of resources within the community; visits and other activities are planned to contribute to students' learning. Some additional enrichment activities are provided which are suitable for students of different ages and with different needs.
- Students have some choice of what they study, but it may be offered only to certain groups. Some opportunities are provided for students to exercise responsibility and initiative and to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. However the development of students' personal and social capabilities is given only limited emphasis and may be incidental to the way the curriculum is planned and structured. Although the curriculum is broadly relevant to the educational needs of the students, some groups or a significant number of individuals fail to develop a continuing interest in learning and self-development.

The curriculum is unlikely to be of acceptable quality if:

- any of its stated key requirements are not provided
- it fails to cater adequately for the educational needs of particular groups of students
- opportunities for promoting essential knowledge, understanding or skills are neglected
- it is unduly narrow in the opportunities it offers for personal development.

5.2 Quality of support

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- staff–student relationships
- student advice and guidance
- staff handling of behaviour issues
- tracking and supporting students' overall well-being and progress
- managing students' attendance and punctuality.

Level 4 illustration

Quality of support broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at

Level 4 – outstanding.

- Teachers know all their students well, including those who find learning difficult, and are fully aware of their individual social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Teachers have very good relationships with students and respond to them in supportive ways. Mutual respect, trust and confidence characterise interactions between and among staff and students. All members of the school community demonstrate care and concern for the needs of others at all times.
- All students have ready access to known and trusted members of staff who provide well-informed advice and guidance about a range of important matters, including their academic progress, health and future career. Students' questions, needs and concerns are handled sympathetically and, when appropriate, in confidence. Students have recourse to an effective complaints procedure. High quality advice and guidance results in actions that bring about improvements in student performance.
- The school's approach to managing behaviour is clearly defined and well understood by the students and the whole staff, who implement the policies wisely and are supported fully by the senior management team. Students are involved in discussions about the effectiveness of the approaches used and contribute their views constructively. Although the behaviour of almost all students is exemplary, firm action is taken when necessary. Parents receive comprehensive information about the school's expectations of standards of behaviour and of how staff will deal with any instances of misbehaviour. External agencies provide effective specialised support to individual students and their families when required.
- The school maintains highly effective processes for checking the academic and personal development of all students. The teachers monitor and record students' progress efficiently by regularly assessing their written, oral and practical work. They frequently discuss with students the rate of their progress and how they can achieve key targets. Action is taken as necessary to ensure improvement. Reports to parents are expressed in positive language and set out clearly what the students are doing well and the respects in which their work needs to improve. Students and parents comment on these reports and respond well to them.
- Records show very good rates of attendance and punctuality across the school. Monitoring is comprehensive and efficient and successfully ensures the safety and well-being of all students. Parents are contacted immediately when students fail to arrive when expected and effective links with support agencies are made when necessary. Parents receive feedback about improvements in attendance and punctuality. They understand and actively support further action when it is required.

Level 2 illustration

Quality of support broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Teachers know most of their students well and are aware of their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. They have good relationships with students and respond positively to them. Teachers and students respect one another and generally show care and concern for the needs of others.
- Students receive advice and guidance from staff on a range of matters, including their educational progress, health and future career, and most feel confident to ask adults for help. Students' questions, needs and concerns are usually dealt with efficiently and, when appropriate, in confidence.
- The school has an effective approach to managing the behaviour of its students. The staff know how to implement the policies and are supported in doing so by the senior management team. Most students respect the rules and behave well. Parents receive information about how staff will deal with any instances of misbehaviour. External agencies are involved in supporting individual students and their families as necessary.
- There are satisfactory processes for checking the students' academic and personal development. Teachers monitor the rate of students' progress by assessing their work, but they may not always do so regularly or systematically. Reports to parents set out the student's strengths and areas for development.
- Records show good rates of attendance and punctuality across the school. Monitoring procedures are known to students, staff and parents and are intended to ensure the safety and well-being of the students. Parents receive feedback about improved attendance and punctuality and understand the action the school takes when it is required.

Support for students is unlikely to be of acceptable quality if any of the following apply:

- A significant incidence of poor relationships between students and staff disrupts the working of the school.
- There are significant inadequacies in the quality or range of the advice and guidance students receive.
- The behaviour, attendance or punctuality of students is poor and parents have little or no up-to-date information about the school's policies and procedures for improving them.
- The school does not have satisfactory arrangements for tracking and taking action to raise students' achievement in the subjects they study and to promote their personal development.

6.1 Leadership and management capacity

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- leadership qualities
- professional competence and commitment
- vision, direction and guidance
- development of relationships, teams and leaders at all levels.

Level 4 illustration

Leadership and management capacity broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- The Principal has a wide range of excellent and relevant personal qualities and interpersonal skills. She/he is a positive influence, with the ability to evaluate objectively the staff and their contributions to teamwork. She/he communicates highly effectively and promptly, is responsive and actively seeks feedback. She/he provides an excellent role model and promotes the school very effectively. She/he leads the management team purposefully, delegating and sharing leadership effectively.
- The management team, led by the Principal, demonstrates a high level of professional competence and commitment, including the ability to communicate with, direct and manage staff and their development effectively. Individually, they have personal integrity and credibility and work together efficiently as a close and coherent team. They initiate and manage change very well. The management team is committed to putting students' learning and achievement at the centre of management and improvement activities, by making visits to classes, modelling good practice, giving feedback, sharing insights and stimulating self-evaluation.
- The Principal and management team provide a clear strategic direction based on a shared vision, which takes into account the views and needs of all those with a stake in the life of the school or team. They identify, guide, monitor and evaluate school improvement and involve a wide range of staff effectively in these processes.
- The Principal and management team seek out and develop productive partnerships and teams, and have very good relationships with students, parents, staff and external agencies. Individual members of the senior management team have clearly defined remits, which are understood by the school community and which they fulfil highly successfully. They have a consistent approach to ensuring the involvement of all staff in policy development, quality assurance and planning. They identify and develop leaders at all levels across the school.

Level 2 illustration

Leadership and management capacity broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- The Principal provides an appropriate strategic direction for the school. She/he demonstrates satisfactory leadership and staff respond well to her/his management style. The management team provides satisfactory support.
- The management team and the Principal demonstrate sound personal qualities and professional competence, and individually encourage staff to accept and embrace necessary changes. Senior members of staff have some involvement in improving classroom practice, and make some impact on improving the students' attainment, attendance and behaviour, and the quality of the teaching.
- The management team is able to provide general direction to the school policies and development, which takes into account the views of others. They identify and guide school improvement by involving some of the key staff. There is some evaluation of changes made and of their impact.
- The Principal and management team have good relationships with staff and students, and working relationships with most parents and a range of members of the wider community of the school. The remits of the staff with additional responsibilities allow them some opportunities to take a lead in planned school developments.

Leadership and management capacity is unlikely to be acceptable if the Principal and/or the management team:

- have no explicit vision for the school and do not provide direction to its work; or the vision and direction are having no significant impact on the way the school works
- have significant difficulties in their individual and/or collective relationships with students, staff or parents
- do not communicate well about the work of the school within the school or to its stakeholders
- have difficulties in creating a team approach, in delegating and sharing leadership and responsibilities, and do not involve staff in policy development, quality assurance or planning
- do not focus on improving students' learning, attitudes and achievements
- tend to be defensive when faced with criticism or concerns, and fail to address significant issues

or if

- standards of students' attainment, behaviour and attitudes in the school are significantly lower than they should be
- there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching
- self-evaluation and planning for improvement are ineffective.

6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- processes of self-evaluation
- monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, including teaching and learning
- the processes and impact of school improvement planning.

Level 4 illustration

Self-evaluation and improvement planning broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- The staff are fully involved in systematic self-evaluation, which has the explicit purpose of improving the quality of students' experiences and their standards of attainment. Self-evaluation is rigorous and generates valid and reliable evidence, which contributes significantly to procedures for assuring quality. Its results are used effectively to identify a realistic and achievable number of priority areas for action. Performance measurement and review take appropriate account of best practice as embodied in local and national guidance. Positive steps are taken to gather the views of parents, students and others about the quality of service provided by the school, and effective action is taken in response. Parents, students and others help to identify the school's strengths, development needs and planning priorities. Information from staff review and other sources is used to inform the school's self-evaluation and planning process.
- Promoted staff monitor teachers' plans, evaluate students' classroom experiences, track students' attainment and evaluate their progress towards meeting agreed targets. Senior managers systematically monitor the effectiveness of staff teams. Staff rigorously monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the improvement plan and in meeting agreed targets.
- Self-evaluation provides valid, comprehensive and reliable evidence for identifying key priorities for the preparation of the improvement plan and involves staff, parents and students as appropriate. The strategies adopted in the plan are fit for purpose, implemented thoroughly and intelligently and result in genuine improvement. Arrangements for reporting on the standards and quality of the school always include a focus on the impact of developments. Reports are based on concise and accurate evaluations of performance in key areas, and clearly convey strengths and areas for improvement.

Level 2 illustration

Self-evaluation and improvement planning broadly equivalent in quality to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Evidence is gathered from a range of sources, is analysed and provides a workable basis for procedures for assuring quality. Information from staff review and other sources feeds into the planning process.
- Performance measurement and review take account of best practice. The school receives feedback and takes formal steps to find out what parents, students and others feel about the quality of service, and engages them in consultation. The outcomes of feedback received are visible in subsequent action. Promoted staff evaluate the school's work and use a range of methods, which include a focus on the quality of students' experiences and their attainment. Senior managers have an overview of the work of staff teams and evaluate their effectiveness by focusing on the outcomes of their work. Progress towards meeting targets in the improvement plan is evaluated.
- The school prepares an improvement plan on the basis of a limited range of suitable evidence. There is evidence that recent plans have brought about intended improvements. Reports on the standards and quality achieved by the school are mainly descriptive, but include evaluations of some developments, and refer to areas for improvement as well as strengths.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning are unlikely to be acceptable if:

- self-evaluation is regarded as the responsibility of senior managers and does not involve a significant number of staff
- the evidence gathered is too narrowly focused and does not include any outcomes of staff review
- self-evaluation lacks rigour and is not systematic; some areas receive frequent attention while other key areas are neglected
- the school does not consult or act on any feedback it receives
- evaluation methods are limited in scope and do not focus on the quality of students' experiences and standards of attainment, or on improving these
- targets in improvement planning are too many, unrealistic and unachievable
- progress towards meeting agreed targets for improvement is not evaluated, and there is little evidence of the impact of the improvement plan
- reports on the standards and quality of the working of the school do not accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement, and are descriptive rather than evaluative.

6.5 Staffing, facilities and resources

This quality indicator takes account of these key aspects:

- appropriateness of the accommodation and the overall learning environment, including off-site facilities
- the use of the space and resources for effective teaching and learning
- sufficiency of suitably qualified staff and their effective deployment.

Level 4 illustration

Staffing, facilities and resources broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 4 – outstanding.

- The accommodation and facilities provide a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment, well suited to supporting the curricular and extra-curricular activities of students, the work of staff, and social and leisure activities, where applicable. Appropriate space is available for the size of classes involved. There are suitable work areas for teachers and adequate social provision for students. Storage provision and facilities for display are plentiful and convenient. Accommodation is very well maintained. Fixtures, fittings and furniture match educational needs, are of high quality and are in very good condition. Access is suitable to the needs of all users.
- Timetabling of available areas is efficient and ensures the best use of space. The school is extremely well equipped with all necessary and relevant, up-to-date resources including textbooks, practical materials and equipment, and information and communication technology. Resources are carefully matched to the range of abilities and needs of the students, are in very good condition, catalogued and accessed easily by staff and students. Very good use is made across the school of all appropriate resources to meet the needs of students. Use of resources is effective and monitored; improvement in the overall provision is planned carefully.
- There are sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers to provide a curriculum of high quality for all students, including provision of support from specialist agencies for those with additional learning needs. Teachers are complemented in their work by the provision of sufficient support staff and other professionals, as appropriate. Teachers' skills and experience are used effectively. The school has ready access to appropriately qualified supply staff and has good arrangements for ensuring that they are able to operate effectively when they are in the school. There is a very good balance of experience among staff. Individual members of staff are well qualified and, taken as a whole, they have qualifications, skills and training relevant to their responsibilities and the needs of the school and its students. Teachers are knowledgeable about the processes of child development and learning. Teachers and support staff are deployed effectively.

Level 2 illustration

Staffing, facilities and resources broadly equivalent to that illustrated below would be evaluated at Level 2 – acceptable.

- The accommodation and facilities provide a clean, safe environment to support learning and teaching, and extra-curricular activities. The teaching areas are of an acceptable size to support the range of learning and teaching strategies employed. Furniture and fittings are well maintained. Storage and display facilities are in good order. Playing fields/games areas are regularly used.
- Timetabling makes satisfactory use of all available areas to meet the needs of students and staff. The school is equipped with good, modern resources including textbooks, practical materials and equipment, and information and communication technology. Resources are matched to the learning needs of the students, are well looked after and stored efficiently. Resources are updated or replaced as funds allow.
- There are sufficient, qualified teachers to provide a broad and appropriate curriculum for all students, including provision of support from specialist agencies for students with additional learning needs. Teachers are deployed appropriately and are assisted by enough support staff and other professionals. The school has a list of appropriately qualified supply staff and has suitable arrangements for ensuring that they are supported in the school. There is a satisfactory balance of experience among staff. Teachers and support staff are deployed across the school appropriately.

Staffing, facilities and resources are unlikely to be of acceptable quality if:

- the accommodation is not clean, safe and in good order, or is in need of significant maintenance
- fixtures, fittings and furniture do not fully match educational needs or are in poor condition, or storage is inadequate
- there is restricted space in some areas, which significantly limits the range of learning and teaching strategies used
- playing fields/games areas are inadequate or in unsatisfactory condition
- timetabling is ineffective
- resources are inadequate in quality and quantity, narrow in range, do not meet the needs of the students or are in poor condition
- there are too few teachers, a significant number of them do not hold suitable qualifications, there are gaps in teachers' skill base or arrangements are inadequate to manage teaching when absence is high
- there are too few suitable support staff to meet the essential needs of students.

Appendix 3

Glossary

This glossary is intended to ensure that users all mean the same thing when speaking about a particular aspect of education. The meanings given here should not be regarded as definitive in all circumstances. However, for purposes of school inspections, we recommend that words and terms should be used according to the definitions given below.

The list is not exhaustive and DSIB welcomes suggestions for further words to be included, with their suggested definitions.

Accreditation: The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and, if deemed as having achieved the standards required, is provided with some form of certification. Accreditation usually demonstrates the competence and performance capability of privately owned schools.

Achievement: Progress made by a student taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

Assessment: The process of finding out how well students have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

Assessment for learning: Assessment that goes beyond just marking a student's work and giving a mark/grade. It is aimed at enhancing learning by telling students exactly what they need to do next to improve their work, consistently revisiting their progress in making the improvements suggested and getting them to understand the assessment process by evaluating their own and one another's work.

Attainment: The level students reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

Curriculum: Everything a school deliberately teaches, including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extracurricular enrichment programmes.

Faculty: A division within a school which usually includes one or more subjects, for example, a Faculty of Communications may include languages, information technology, art, library studies, literature and other similar subjects.

Foundation Stage: In the English system this term applies to education for children before Key Stage 1, i.e. children aged below the compulsory school age, which in England is five years.

Graduation: Commonly used as the process which ends a university student's studies and awards him/her a degree. Graduation may include a ceremony but can also be used simply to mean that the student has completed his/her university studies. Graduation is also used similarly in many high schools to designate the end of that stage of education. It is even used to mean the end of each stage of education, e.g. primary school, secondary school.

Groups: Significant categories of students, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, girls, boys, high attainers, gifted and talented students.

Kindergarten: Pre-school provision for children under the statutory school age.

Leadership: Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors/board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from those required for management.

Learning: Students' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

Management: The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of the school's work in an efficient and useful way. This term is often wrongly used interchangeably with leadership.

Progress: The gains in learning made between two points in time. A student can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

School self-evaluation: The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school's work on outcomes for students. It takes into account evidence from an appropriate range of sources, including the views of those who use the school's services. The findings from self-evaluation should be used to determine the school's future priorities, particularly for the improvement of teaching, learning, leadership and management.

Staff: A reference to any person working within a school including senior leaders, teachers, office staff, bursar/business manager, social workers.

Standards: The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that students demonstrate at a particular point in time.

Teaching: All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing students' learning.

