COMMUNITY FIRST

How Dubai's private schools forged a new path forward in the pandemic

DUBAI
Knowledge المعرفـة

Introduction

In March 2020, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, all private schools in Dubai switched to distance learning. They would only welcome students for face-to-face learning again at the beginning of the following academic year in September. While many students opted to return to school at that time, many others also chose to continue with distance learning.

This report covers the period from March 2020 to June 2021. It is designed to be a reference and a guide for what worked well during this time, what could have worked better, and make recommendations for what may work well in future.

Through the height of the pandemic, school leaders, teachers, parents and students had to transform and disrupt the way they understood and experienced education, and they had to do it quickly. The education community learned a great deal in its response to the challenges presented by the pandemic, especially in areas of student and staff wellbeing; the provision of distance and blended learning; and the key role of educators working from home and school. This report will apply these lessons to how we experience teaching and learning in the future, with or without the context of a pandemic.

The majority of findings in this report are based on the outcomes of the April 2021 Reflection and Review. It also refers to the Distance Learning Evaluation (DLE) of all Dubai private schools carried out in May 2020, the annual Dubai Student Wellbeing Census and the annual parents' survey. Each of these was conducted by KHDA. We are grateful to all students, parents and school staff in Dubai, who have shown great commitment and love for each other and their city.

The community's response to Covid-19

ENSURING CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

To protect student and staff safety at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UAE Cabinet announced that all schools in the country should switch to online delivery of education for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year, with the aim of ensuring that students' learning continues throughout.

This announcement served to galvanise the community and bring it together to help all families access distance learning. From the beginning of the pandemic, KHDA has aimed to provide clear communication and ongoing support for the education community.

Through the InThisTogetherDubai initiative, public and private sector organisations came together to provide resources for parents and teachers to support their mental health, as well as help with their children's learning. What Works, the collaborative professional development event for teachers, switched to online delivery. The updated What Worksx format featured teachers and school leaders from all over Dubai, keen to share their best practices and engage with others on similar topics. Online positive parenting workshops helped parents to support their children's at-home education, while still helping them to focus on their own mental and physical health.

Inspectors at the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau contacted schools to learn more about their readiness for distance learning and offer support where needed.

These and other initiatives were aimed at ensuring schools remain supported and connected to KHDA and to other schools and practitioners in Dubai.

Following this period of distance learning, the Government of Dubai announced detailed health and safety protocols that would enable schools to reopen in the new academic year. To do this, each private school in Dubai submitted a 'School Readiness Plan' for KHDA approval. The Readiness Plan was a blueprint for how each school was preparing to comply with protocols and keep its staff and students safe. After opening, regular compliance checks were carried out to advise and support schools, and ensure they were following the guidelines.

TIMELINE

The following timeline outlines the major milestones in the journey of Dubai's private schools during the Covid-19 pandemic until July 2021.

8 March 2020

Schools took spring break holidays two weeks early
followed by two weeks of distance learning.

The UAE Cabinet extended distance learning
in all UAE schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

30 March 2020

May 2020

KHDA launched the online Distance Learning Evaluation,
a joint initiative with other UAE regulatory entities, to evaluate the quality of distance learning in schools and provide educators with a tool to help them improve key aspects of their provision.

Dubai Government announced that private schools will reopen for the 2020-2021 academic year,
provided they met thorough health and safety protocols.

June 2020

July 2020

Distance Learning Evaluation results were published by KHDA.
Over two thirds of Dubai's private schools (including all schools that had been previously been rated as 'very good' or 'outstanding' by the Dubai School Inspection Bureau) were offering a 'developed' level of distance learning when evaluated during May to June 2020.

Schools reopened with all the necessary health and safety protocols in place

and offered face-to-face, distance learning or a blended provision.

30 Aug 2020

November 2020

The fourth consecutive year of the Dubai Student Wellbeing Census and the third year of the Adults@School Wellbeing Survey began.

The surveys were undertaken by more than 102,000 students and 18,000 adults from Dubai's private schools, with the particular aim of assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of students and staff.

KHDA conducted a survey of all parents with children enrolled in Dubai private schools,

to listen to their opinions on their children's education. Nearly 74,000 parents completed the survey between January and May 2021.

January 2021

March 2021

KHDA organised focus group interviews with school owners, principals and parents

to seek their views on how they see the future of schooling in Dubai.

Guided by the outcomes of the focus group meetings, KHDA conducted a 'Reflection and Review' exercise

which comprised of a questionnaire for all 210 Dubai private schools and follow-up discussions with a sample of 50 schools.

April 2021

Community Perspectives

This section summarises the findings of the Reflection and Review Exercise, and includes insights from the Distance Learning Evaluation, the Dubai Student Wellbeing Census and the KHDA parents' survey. Taken together, these present a comprehensive picture of how school communities have responded to the challenges of the pandemic.

The three areas outlined below – wellbeing, provision of distance and blended learning and leadership – reflect KHDA's priorities during the pandemic. These are also the main areas evaluated in the 2020 Distance Learning Evaluation and the 2021 Reflection and Review exercise.

WELLBEING

Improving wellbeing of the school community, a long-time goal of KHDA, came into sharper focus as the pandemic progressed.

Since March 2020, schools have been more proactive in carrying out their own surveys and listening to students to pre-empt and identify issues. They have also continued to use school-level data from the Dubai Student Wellbeing Census as a basis to integrate more wellbeing into their school culture and operations.

Outlined below are the key successes and challenges that schools have identified in the Reflection and Review exercise regarding the wellbeing of their communities.

KEY SUCCESSES

☑ Communication with parents

☑ Strategies to support staff

☑ Wellbeing initiatives and programmes

☑ Support provided for students of determination

☑ Support for students or staff who may have felt that they were struggling

KEY CHALLENGES

⊘ Supporting students' emotional needs

⊘ Improving staff morale and energy

⊘ Supporting students who opted for 100% distance learning

⊘ Maintaining social distancing and safe practices on site

Strategies to Support Students

Most schools were using wellbeing survey findings to adjust their practices. They were also effective in supporting students who were feeling they were struggling. During the early days of distance learning, teachers reported that students were missing out on interactions with their peers and extracurricular activities, and spending too much time in front of the screens. Since then, considerable effort has been made by schools to address these and other matters, through a number of strategies such as:

- developing innovative ways to promote students' engagement in their learning. An example of this is a peer teaching programme in which older students provided support to younger students;

- ensuring that students have access to different types of support. These include peer-led 'first aid' in wellbeing, availability of school counsellors, personal time with teachers, and a variety of wellbeing-based initiatives and programmes;

- providing time for online student interaction outside lessons and offering online programmes that promote physical activity;

- providing students who are struggling with one-to-one academic support or after-school support classes;

- encouraging and following up on attendance and engagement for students doing distance learning; and

- preparing students to reintegrate with each other on their return to the classroom by doing project work and team exercises.

Supporting Students of Determination

Schools have adopted a range of supportive measures to ensure that students of determination receive appropriate wellbeing support while they are learning from home. These include:

- ensuring that the inclusion staff maintain their focus on supporting the wellbeing of students and working closely with their parents;

- recording and sharing lessons with students so that they are able to learn and practise skills at their own pace; and

- providing and enabling the use of online tools such as "immersive reader".

All students of determination are supported and regularly followed up by teachers, members of the inclusion team, counsellors, medical staff and the health and safety team. Personalised support is provided in line with students' individual education plans during lessons or through one-to-one or small-group interventions. The quality of provision is rigorously monitored by the inclusion coordinators and middle leaders.
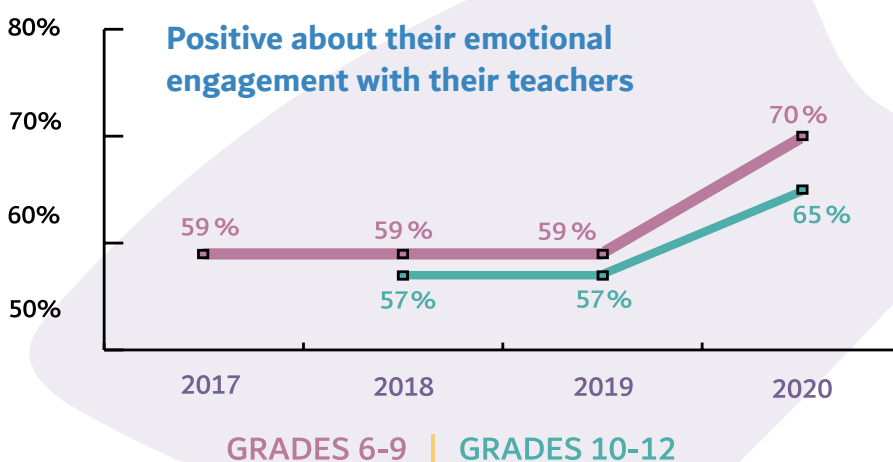
UK curriculum school
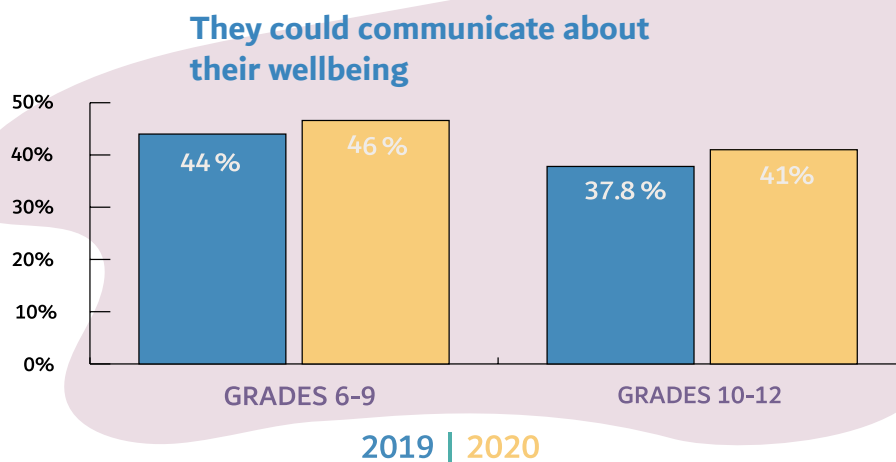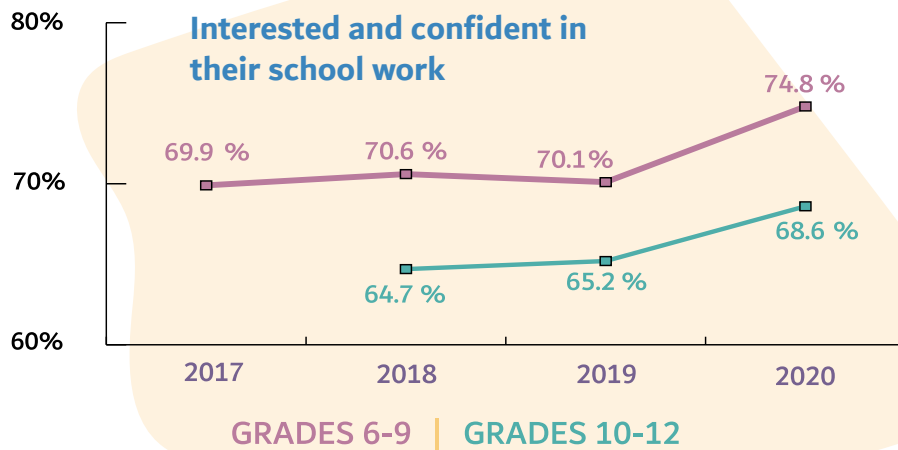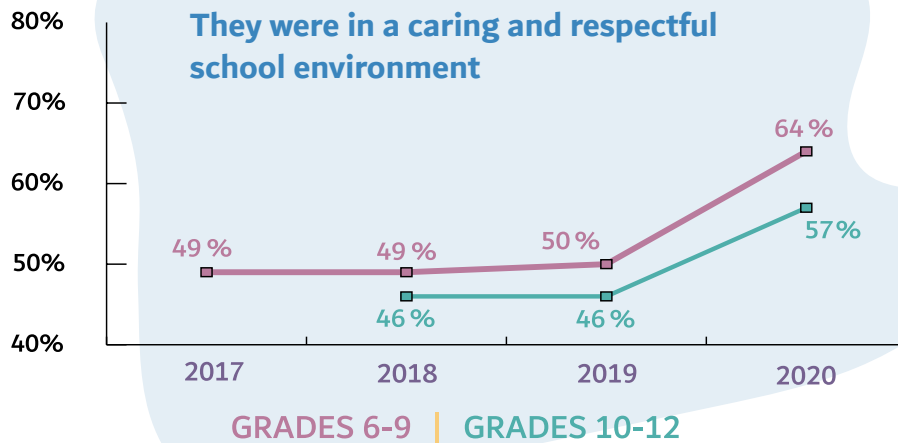
Strategies to Support Staff

Staff wellbeing has also been an area of strong focus for a majority of schools. Leaders have recognised that teachers are dealing with a changed and more complex workload. These include being in school and working from home in the same week, balancing the needs of students doing distance and face-to-face learning, and other personal and Covid-related issues. Schools have put into practice a number of strategies to support staff during this period, including:

• setting up wellness committees to support staff and gauge how they are feeling through regular surveys;

• providing mentors and coaches to support teachers professionally with IT skills related to distance learning;

• adopting an open-door policy to ensure staff can raise concerns and have them addressed; and

• organising informal virtual events for staff to get together socially.

Students' Perspectives

Data from the annual Dubai Student Wellbeing Census provides a comprehensive picture of how schools, students and parents have responded to the pandemic. The 2020 census results indicated that students from grades 6 to 12 felt more positive about certain aspects of their wellbeing, than they had indicated in the census taken the year before. For instance, they felt:

Positive about their emotional engagement with their teachers

GRADES 6-9 | GRADES 10-12

They were in a caring and respectful school environment

80%
70%
60%
50%
40%

49 %   49 %   50 %
                                          64 %
                                          57%
46 %   46 %

2017   2018   2019   2020

GRADES 6-9 | GRADES 10-12

Interested and confident in their school work

80%

70%

60%

69.9 %   70.6 %   70.1 %
                                          74.8 %
                                          68.6 %
64.7 %   65.2 %

2017   2018   2019   2020

GRADES 6-9 | GRADES 10-12

They could communicate about their wellbeing

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

44 %   46 %   37.8 %   41%

GRADES 6-9   GRADES 10-12

2019 | 2020

It is encouraging to see that the significant efforts of schools to improve students' wellbeing has had a positive impact on the way students feel about their experiences.

Parents' Perspectives

The majority of parents who took part in the 2021 parental survey stated that they were satisfied with the way schools were caring for their children and promoting their wellbeing, with the majority of parents feeling that schools prioritised wellbeing more than they did prior to the pandemic.
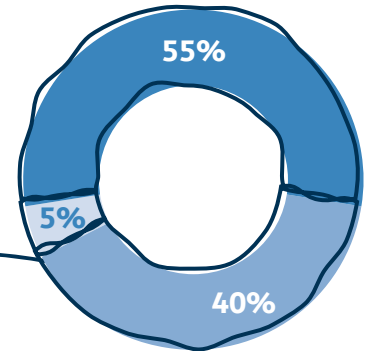
My child's school prioritises wellbeing more than it used to:

● Prioritised wellbeing more   ● No difference/do not know   ● Prioritised wellbeing less

55%
5%
40%

Distance learning brought the majority of parents closer to their children's education than they had ever been before. Many parents could observe their children's lessons first-hand, giving them a deeper appreciation for teachers and their work during the pandemic. More than ever before, parents became valuable partners in their children's education.
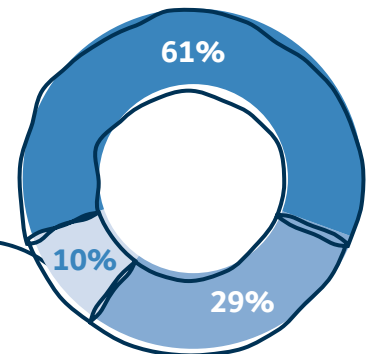
With the pandemic, my role in my children's education has been:

● Much more involved   ● About the same   ● Less involved

61%
10%
29%

Most parents stated that they were confident with the safety measures put in place since their children's school reopened. In addition, almost all parents were satisfied with the way KHDA and the Dubai Government were managing the pandemic.
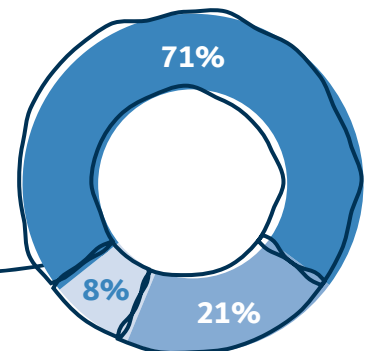
When my child's school re-opened, I was confident in the safety measures that were put into place:

● Agree or strongly agree   ● Not sure   ● Disagree or strongly disagree

71%
8%
21%

Overall, how satisfied are you with how KHDA and the Government of Dubai have handled the Coronavirus pandemic in schools?

● Satisfied or very satisfied   ● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   ● Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

90%
7%
3%
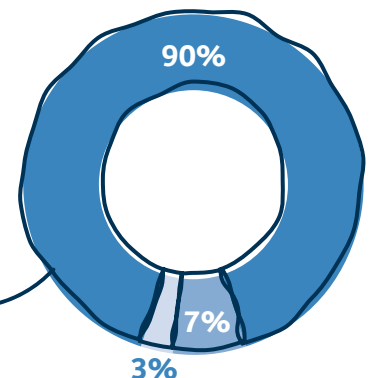
The majority of parents stated that their children learn better at school rather than through distance learning, while a minority indicated a preference for continuing their children's education through distance learning once the pandemic is over.
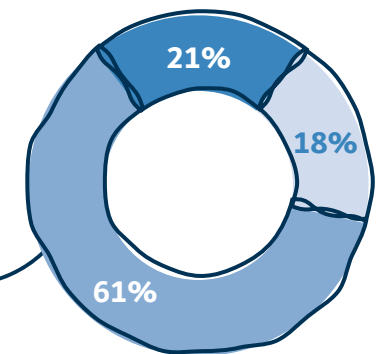
My child learns better:

- ● On site (at school)
- ● Remotely (online)
- ● No difference

57%

17%

26%
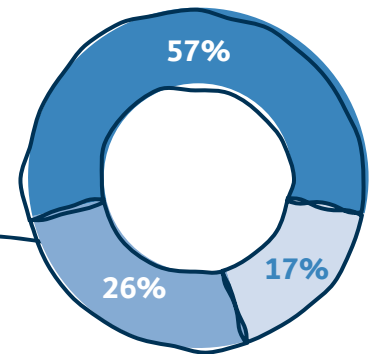
**I'd prefer if my child could continue his/her education through distance (online) methods once the pandemic is over.**

- ● Agree or strongly disagree
- ● Not sure
- ● Disagree or strongly disagree

21%

18%

61%

At the same time, almost half the parents surveyed indicated that they were interested in exploring an alternative to traditional schooling for their child.

I am interested in exploring an alternative to traditional schooling for my child

- ● Yes
- ● Don't know
- ● No

44%

17%

39%
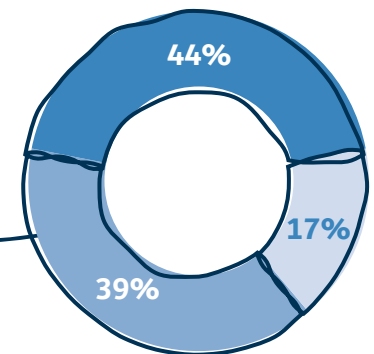
Communication with Parents

The pandemic has fostered a greater sense of solidarity between parents, teachers, students, and the community. Almost all schools report that they have been able to consult with parents on a regular basis and respond to issues with agility as they arose. Communication on health and safety matters, distance learning and supporting students' emotional wellbeing has been significantly enhanced through the use of surveys, dedicated hotlines, email, social media, virtual meetings and coffee mornings, in addition to planned face-to-face meetings.

Schools further improved their communication with parents as the year progressed, through the use of regular surveys and online meetings. This improvement in communication was valued by parents, as indicated in the 2021 KHDA Parental Survey which showed that:

- most parents agreed that their children's school kept them well-informed about their children's academic progress;

- almost all felt they knew who to contact if they had a concern about their children's schooling;

- parental satisfaction across all schools was high, with most stating they were satisfied with the quality of education their children were receiving at school; and
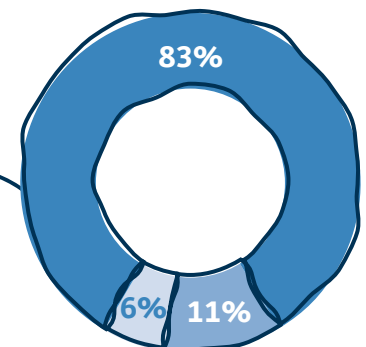
The school keeps me informed about my child's academic progress

● Agree or strongly agree   ● Not sure   ● Disagree or strongly disagree
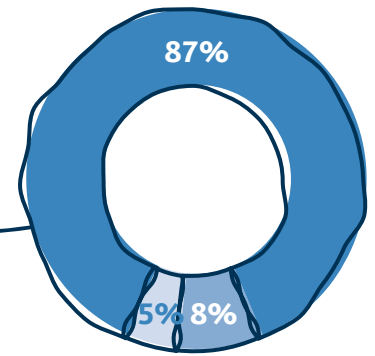
87%

6% 7%
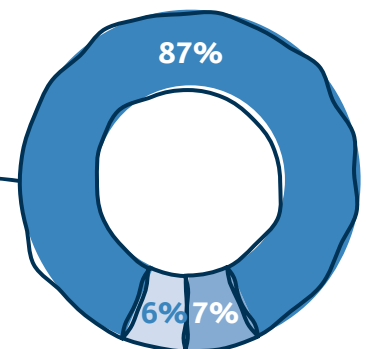
If I have concerns about the school, the staff respond quickly to my feedback and let me know what action they can take

● Agree or strongly agree   ● Not sure   ● Disagree or strongly disagree

83%

6% 11%

Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education at my child's school

● Agree or strongly agree   ● Not sure   ● Disagree or strongly disagree

Schools have also noted that:

- virtual parent-teacher conferencing has resulted in much higher attendance, and many schools intend to maintain this option after the pandemic; and

- parents have become more involved in their children's learning (e.g., by attending live lessons to support their children) and in their emotional health, and have developed a stronger bond with the school.

When some parents shared concerns about sending their children to school, schools conducted one-to-one meetings, taking them through their concerns and showing them what is actually happening at the school. Some schools have posted on social media to let parents know what the school looks like with social distancing, hygiene, layout and sanitation, among others.

Reflections on the Next Steps

1   *What strategies implemented during the pandemic can be used and/or built upon to increase students' resilience as we move forward into the post-pandemic landscape?*

2   *How can the increased engagement with parents, as evidenced during the pandemic, be maintained and built upon so that they feel their wellbeing and that of their family is important to the school and that they are part of the school community?*

3   *How can staff wellbeing be fully integrated into a whole school approach to wellbeing and happiness, moving forward?*

PROVISION OF LEARNING

From the moment schools were required to switch to distance learning in March 2020, school leaders and teaching staff have prioritised the adaptation of the curriculum, i.e., what students would have learnt in a face-to-face classroom, to better suit online delivery of learning (and later, a blended learning approach).

This modification required reprioritising parts of the curriculum, changing the sequence of delivery, and modifying teaching and assessment methods.

A range of digital platforms were introduced to support teaching, learning and assessment, with some platforms used to provide individualised feedback and personalised learning. In the space of less than 18 months, schools have made many years of progress with regards to their capacity to enable students' learning through distance and blended learning approaches. Both teachers and students have become more confident in using digital platforms. Outlined below are some of the key successes and challenges identified by schools in making these adaptations.

KEY SUCCESSES

☑ The introduction and use of a variety of digital learning platforms and tools, including online quizzes and assessments

☑ Modifying the curriculum to ensure continuity of learning through distance and blended modalities

☑ Training of teachers in delivering learning using digital and blended approaches

KEY CHALLENGES

⊘ Ensuring student engagement and learning when teaching distance and face-to-face at the same time

⊘ Being unable to use all the school facilities such as laboratories, library, swimming pool etc.

⊘ Maintaining the quality of teaching, assessment and learning

Adapting to Distance and Blended Learning

School leaders reported that since March 2020, teachers have been able to use an increasing range of approaches to support their students' learning skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. They also stated that their schools have adopted innovative approaches in the way they have used technology to enable teaching and learning. Moreover:

- Schools reported that the focus on innovation and use of technology during the inspections process had enabled them to adapt quickly to distance and blended learning provision.

- Schools increased the range of platforms and tools to enable better student engagement, interaction and collaboration, such as through the use of break-out rooms.

- A number of professional development initiatives have been put into place to help teachers become more confident in using digital platforms. These have included training, coaching, mentoring, buddying arrangements and co-teaching. Heads of department, middle leaders and staff who are more adept in the use of these platforms have enhanced their roles to support teachers and monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

- Schools that had well-resourced and well-developed student-centred methods of teaching and learning prior to the pandemic were able to adapt more quickly to distance and blended learning provision.

- With the sudden move to distance learning in March 2020, some schools reported encountering a number of technical challenges, including the demand on the school network and technology infrastructure to support the effective implementation of the curriculum.

- With the move towards blended learning in September 2020, schools identified challenges in teaching students on site and remotely at the same time and switching between modes of learning. Differences in the pace of learning between remote and on-site learners have also been noted.

Modifying the Curriculum

Almost all schools stated they had modified the curriculum, some more extensively than others. The modification was undertaken to accommodate the shift to distance and blended learning, and address any losses in students' learning, identified through the use of standardised tests, formative assessment and teacher feedback. The following are some of the ways in which schools have made modifications to the curriculum.

- Emphasis was placed on ensuring the core elements of the curriculum (both knowledge and skills) were taught, especially those required to ensure progress in learning.

- Timetabling changes were implemented and additional staff were used to support students in small groups, while they transitioned to distance and blended learning.

- Other examples of modification included:

  - placing a greater emphasis on project and research-based work with more independent learning;

  - focusing more on theory in practical subjects. In the absence of laboratory access, some schools have used simulated experiments (imitating the classroom-based experiment, in a digital format);

  - in primary /elementary phases, pre-recorded phonics lessons and videos of letter formation have been developed and made available to students; and

  - some schools put a recovery curriculum in place at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year to ensure continuity of learning.

The main challenges for us have been: redesigning the curriculum for 2020-2021 to address gaps in curriculum coverage from the previous academic year; prioritising essential knowledge; making the most of instructional time (whether in-school or remote); focusing on student transition into the school environment; and ensuring that students' and teachers' emotional and pastoral needs are met.

US curriculum school

In our primary school, we have increased the number of guided reading lessons per week to replace 'Library Lessons'. The school has a mobile library that delivers books to students weekly. In their guided reading classes, the teachers read with small groups of students reading at a similar level.

UK curriculum school

Managing Assessment

Some of the adaptations that schools made to assessments are listed below:

- Many schools have adapted existing continuous and terminal assessments to a digital format. In some cases, when students are formally assessed using digital tools, they are expected to have their cameras on and are monitored by invigilators.

- In the early years, children are mainly assessed through observation and formative assessments during online sessions.

- In many cases, students come onto campus to use the laboratories and do assessments on a rotational basis.

- Some schools have reported that the move to distance learning has generated a greater emphasis on assessment for learning (using teacher feedback to improve and develop student performance), which provides both teachers and students with a rich source of information about students' understanding, performance and progress.

When asked whether they thought that students in their schools had experienced unexpected gains or losses in their learning because of the pandemic, schools responded in different ways; for instance:

- while some schools reported potential gaps in learning, others felt that they could see more gains than losses;

- others have identified some losses in learning skills such as collaboration and teamwork, rather than knowledge and understanding;

- a few schools highlighted issues with the accuracy of the data showing any gaps in academic attainment where students are learning remotely; these might actually turn out to be greater when students come back into school.

- most schools reported that where losses have been identified, they were addressing them through curriculum modifications, additional classes and personalised learning.

Learning and assessment in the early years have been particularly hampered by restrictions on practical and play-based learning in both remote learning and when on-site, following Covid social distancing restrictions in the school. Schools also report some regression in fine motor skills and handwriting for this age group due to the increased use of digital devices.

The students are assessed through diagnostic tests, ongoing assessments, and other tasks such as preparation of e-portfolios, presentations, projects, research, and participation in debates. Self-assessment, peer assessment and reflection are continuous practices. The school also runs end of topic assessments and students in grades 6 to 12 take mid/end of-semester assessments. The assessments are conducted online using the assessment tools on the learning management system.

US curriculum school

Reflections on the Next Steps

1 *How can the use of distance learning be developed further so that a blended learning approach is normalised with a seamless transition from face-to-face to online learning?*

2 *How can the digital literacy of teachers and pupils be enhanced further to develop capable, confident and competent users, building on the momentum gained during the pandemic?*

3 *Schools reacted quickly to developing online assessment as a result of the implementation of remote learning. How can online assessment be further enhanced and developed moving forward?*
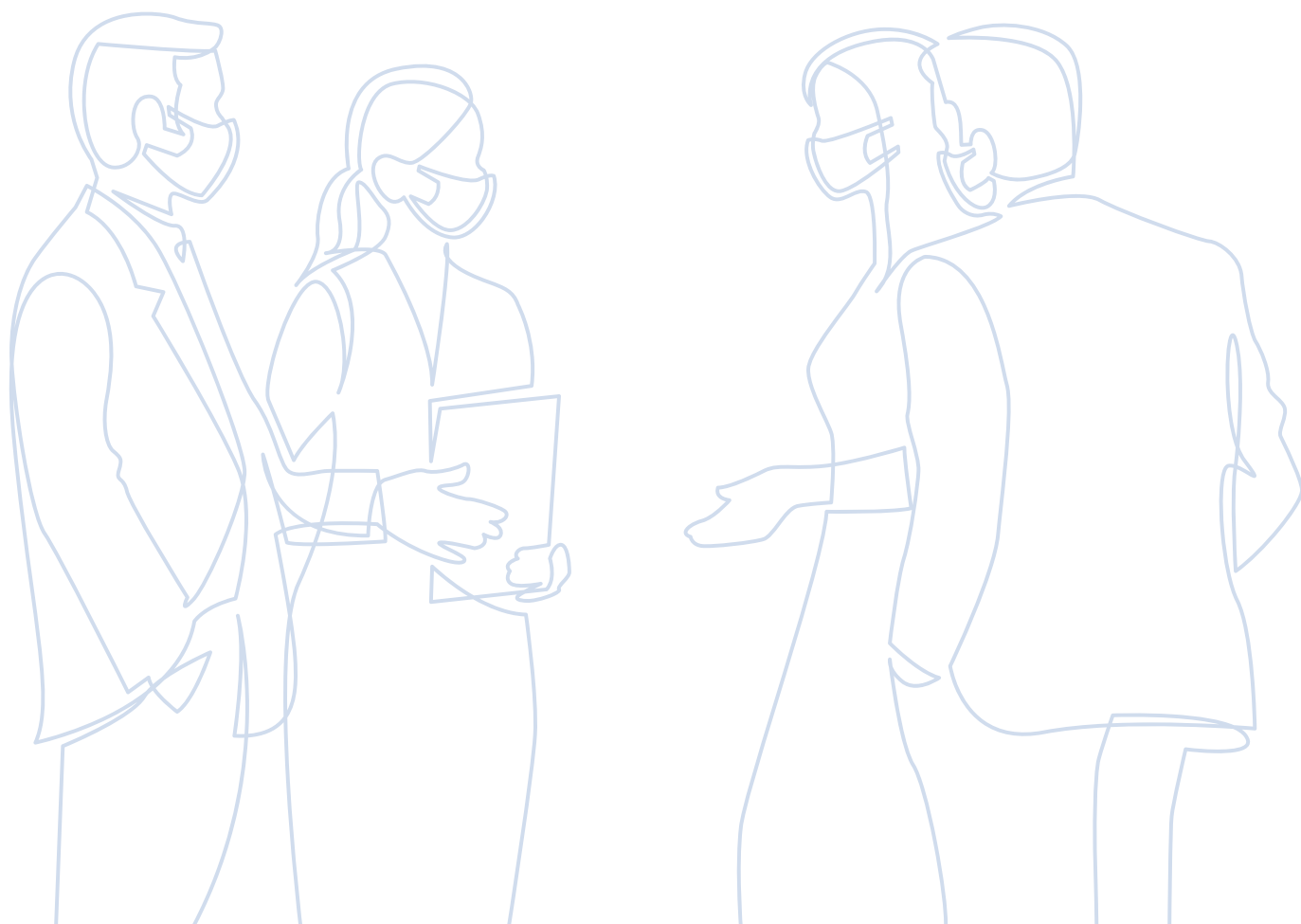
LEADERSHIP

School leaders have responded to the pandemic with great levels of agility, creativity and resilience.

With support from their governing bodies, they have led their communities through uncertainty to ensure that student learning continued and wellbeing was prioritised.

School leaders have valued the support and guidance of UAE and Dubai Government entities regarding the protection of the health and safety of students and staff while still delivering high-quality teaching and learning.

KEY SUCCESSES

☑ School community support (staff, parents and students)

☑ Staff continuing professional development

☑ Implementation of different modes of learning

☑ Adherence to health and safety requirements

KEY CHALLENGES

⊘ Staff wellbeing, particularly addressing teacher fatigue

⊘ In some situations, strict adherence to health and safety regulations while striving to ensure continuity of learning

⊘ Ensuring assessment reliability and validity

⊘ Maintaining curriculum pace and delivery of practical subjects

Agile and Responsive Leadership

Findings from the Review and Reflection exercise and the Distance Learning Evaluation indicate that leaders in many schools have demonstrated inspiring and determined leadership throughout the pandemic, instilling a culture of high expectations while focusing on the wellbeing of all members of the community, especially students. Many leaders have ensured that communication and partnerships with parents are effective, students are engaged in their learning and teachers are supported through professional development and a high-quality IT infrastructure for distance learning. Furthermore:

- School leaders have demonstrated agility in the way they have implemented the different modes of learning and have made significant strides in adapting between face-to-face, distance and blended learning while still adhering to health and safety protocols.

- Leaders and staff have implemented creative, imaginative and innovative solutions to challenges in social distancing in school, wellbeing, communicating with and involving parents, and nurturing a collaborative community spirit.

- School leaders have valued collaboration with other schools, with many quoting examples of how they have benefited from sharing experiences and good practice. A positive outcome of this collaboration is that networks have been created for ongoing future cooperation.

- Most schools have restructured their leadership teams, with many more middle managers taking on specific responsibilities related to teaching and learning, digital skills and health and safety. Many schools have moved to a more distributed style of leadership.

The thing we are most proud of is the way in which we have pulled the community together in bringing the children back into school. Although incredibly challenging logistically, we welcomed all students back to school at the beginning of the academic year and have continued to enjoy incredible support and gratitude from our parent body.

UK curriculum school

Governors' Support

- In many schools, owners and governors have been very supportive, often with the provision of additional resources, including IT equipment, platforms and infrastructure, and staff to support student and staff wellbeing and health and safety protocols.

- Governors have moved quickly to approve contingency plans, ensuring these meet KHDA and MoE requirements, and are in line with the vision of the school. Many schools report that governors have acted as critical friends and have continued to support leaders and staff throughout the pandemic.

Challenges Along the Way

- The move to distance learning highlighted the fact that some families needed support with devices or connectivity. These parents were helped by schools, KHDA and the Dubai Government to ensure that students could access distance learning at home. Many schools loaned laptops to students who needed them in order to improve equity of access.

- Teaching in bubbles (sometimes with two bubbles in a classroom) and maintaining health and safety protocols for those attending, while catering for the needs of those learning from home are amongst the main challenges school leaders have identified.

- School leaders have shared their concerns about assessment reliability and validity and have worked hard to redesign assessments for distance and blended learning.

- Some schools have faced financial challenges. These are due to changes in fee payments to support some families during the pandemic, loss of income from ancillary activities such as canteens and transport fees, and the increased cost of meeting health and safety protocols.

- Overall, school leaders report relatively low staff turnover. Where it has been greatest, this has been due to the relocation or loss of jobs of other members of the families. In some cases, schools have released staff from their contracts so that they could return to their home countries and families.

In one school, governors supported the following initiatives:

Covid related financial relief for parents loaning devices to students

Participating in lesson observations and giving feedback

Sending motivational emails to the community

Offering free PCR tests for staff

Promoting and supporting a staff vaccination drive

*Upgrading the school infrastructure (smartboards in all rooms, distribution of Bluetooth devices)*

Ensuring all resources are available for covid readiness (thermal scanners, isolation rooms, holding rooms, contactless sanitizer dispensers, masks, gloves, face shields, extra signage to highlight covid protocols etc.)

Increased overseas recruitment to ensure stability, wellbeing support, and ensuring no staff or pay cuts.

Indian curriculum school

Reflections on the Next Steps

1 *Reflecting on the significant work done during the pandemic, what would you (the leadership team and governors) have done differently if you had time to plan? Consider actions, contingencies or plans that could be put in place to deal with a crisis.*

2 *Consider your leadership style and approach during the pandemic (all senior leaders and governors). What worked well and less well? Are there any aspects of personal leadership that would benefit from development to help you deal with the unexpected, and be even more resilient and innovative?*

3 *A move to distributed leadership was evident and effective in many schools during the pandemic. Is this model in place in your school? If so, how can it be strengthened and used as a catalyst for change, creativity and innovation? Similarly, if it is not in place, is it something you have considered as a leadership team?*
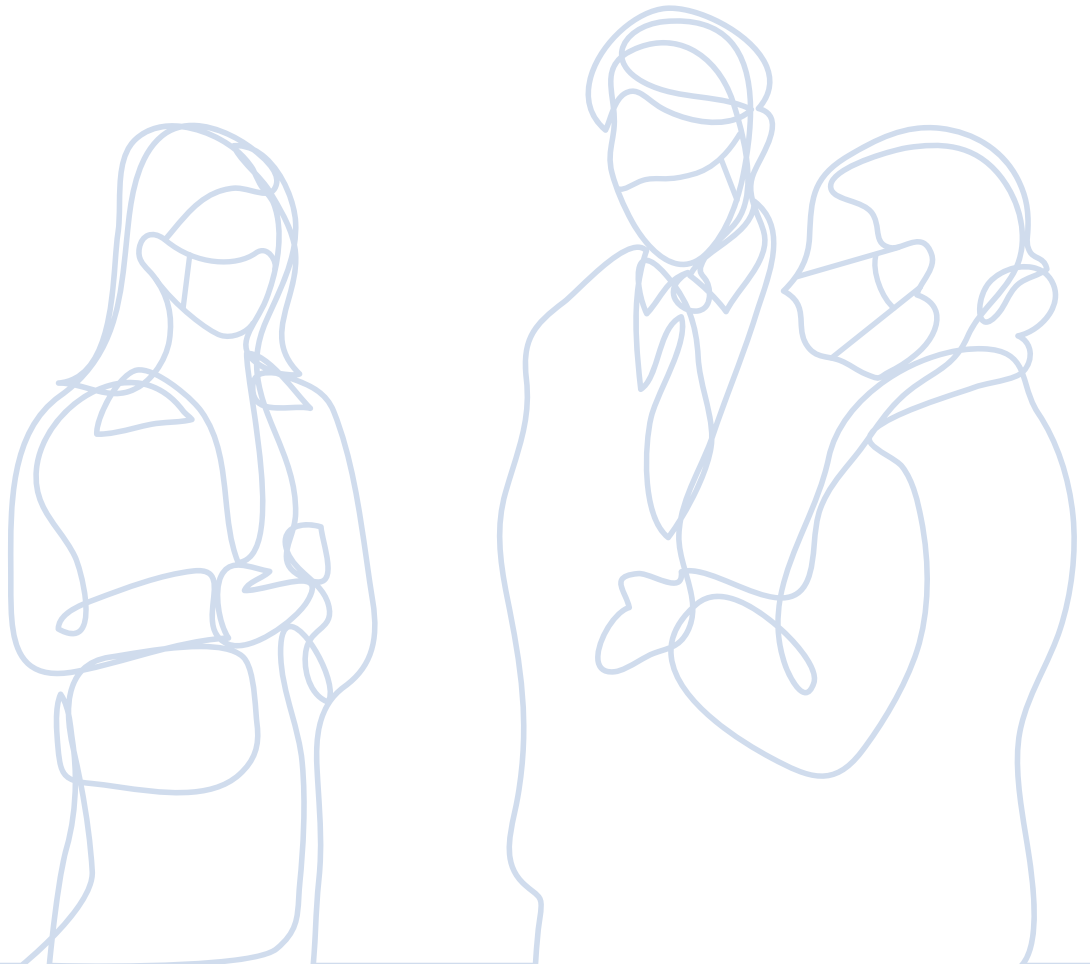
Looking Back, Building Forward

A number of insights and opportunities clearly emerge as we look back on the experiences of schools from March 2020 to April 2021.

Schools have become even more central to their communities of learning, and to the wider community, especially in the ways they have promoted and enhanced the wellbeing of students, staff and parents. As we have seen in recent months, schools have focused on reintegrating students into school to socialise with peers and teachers.

- Going forward, schools could envision how some of the wellbeing practices that have developed during the pandemic can be woven into the daily fabric of school life, regardless of the modality of learning chosen. A wellbeing-enabled learning community is more likely to be a resilient and happy community.

- Parents are now more involved in students' learning. Schools could find ways to ensure that this positive involvement is maintained and developed to support further their children's progress and development.

- The wider educational community needs to reflect on the structures and practices that have supported school leaders' and teachers' wellbeing during the pandemic, in order to maintain and develop further opportunities in this regard.

The significant innovative steps taken by schools in the use of distance learning have accelerated progress in this field by a factor of many years. In many cases, professional development was provided to teachers in a 'just in time' mode to cope with the rapidly changed expectations. Teachers responded positively to the challenges, and they are now far more confident in their ability to use distance learning.

- Schools now have an opportunity to further develop and refine the use of distance and blended learning to enable students to make greater progress in all areas of the curriculum.

- Schools could reflect and build on the significant learning acquired during the pandemic to (a) provide more equitable access to students who might not normally be in a position to access the quality of learning provided by the school, and (b) to enhance further the financial resilience of schools in the coming years.

- There is an opportunity for schools to maintain the momentum and positive energy experienced with regard to teachers' professional development and the innovative ways in which leadership is distributed across the school.

- There are opportunities for schools to consider how distance learning can be planned from the outset as a bespoke practice, with the use of artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies, to support teachers' work and ensure a more engaging learning experience.

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