



## Public School Inspections

# Key Findings

2010-2011

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**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

Block 8, Academic City, P.O. Box 500008, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971 4 3640000, Fax: +971 4 3640001, Email: [info@khda.gov.ae](mailto:info@khda.gov.ae)

[www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae)

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## Introduction

## Introduction: Our work with schools

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This summary of the outcomes of the inspection of public schools is one of a series of reports published in 2011. Others include similar reports on the inspection of private schools, the inspection of Indian and Pakistani curriculum schools and the full DSIB Annual Report.

This document provides an account of the progress made by public schools since 2008. It describes some of the best practice encountered by inspectors during inspection visits. It also provides direction regarding the way forward. It is our opportunity to identify and celebrate the highlights and work together towards a better future for education in Dubai.

A more detailed version of this summary report will appear in the DSIB Annual Report, 2011.

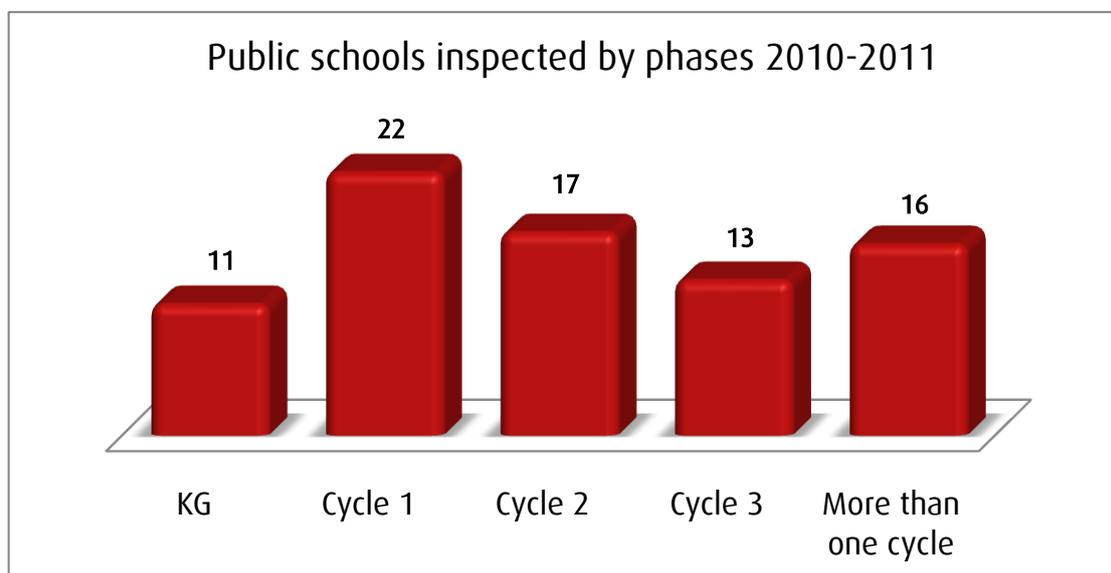
We thank the principals and administrators of public schools for their contributions to the report and most importantly for being our partners in this improvement process.

The Knowledge & Human Development Authority (KHDA) seeks to improve the quality of education for all students in Dubai. Through effective engagement with stakeholders, KHDA aims to improve access to high quality education for all.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) works with schools to identify successful practices and areas for development. This work supports parents by providing accurate, objective and comprehensive information about school performance. In this way parents have better information about the quality of education available for their children.

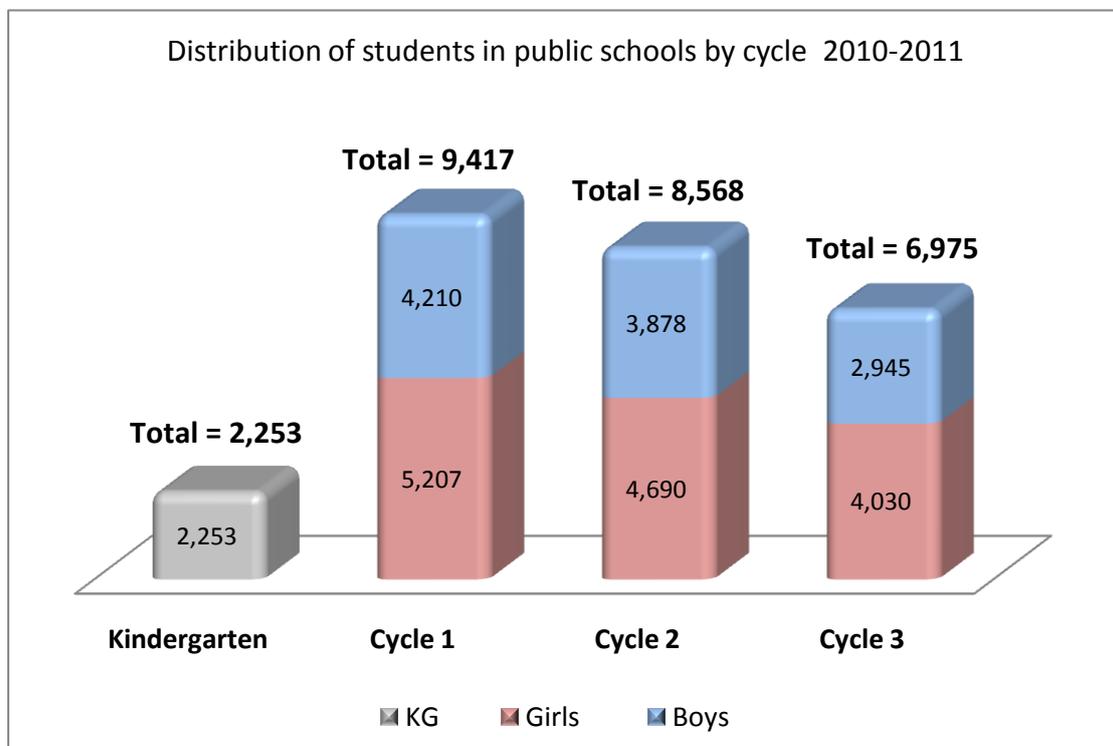
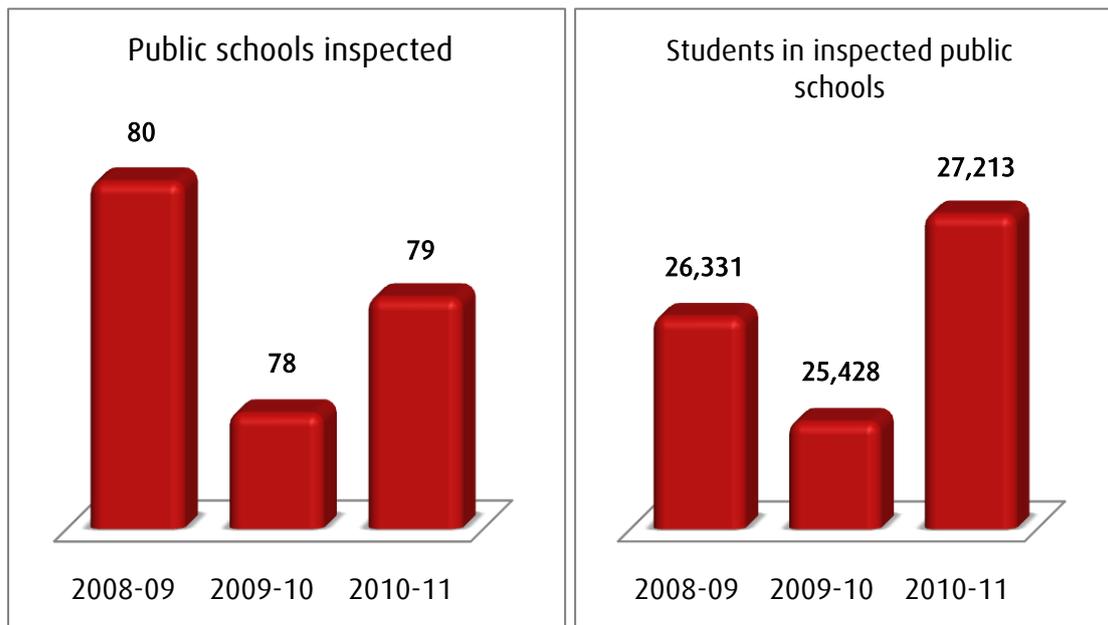
During the period January to April 2011 DSIB inspected all **79** public schools in Dubai.

Inspectors noted improved performance in a significant number of schools. Only one school was identified in 2010-11 as performing overall, at an unsatisfactory level. 22% of students attended schools where the overall performance of the school had increased between 2009-10 and 2010-11.

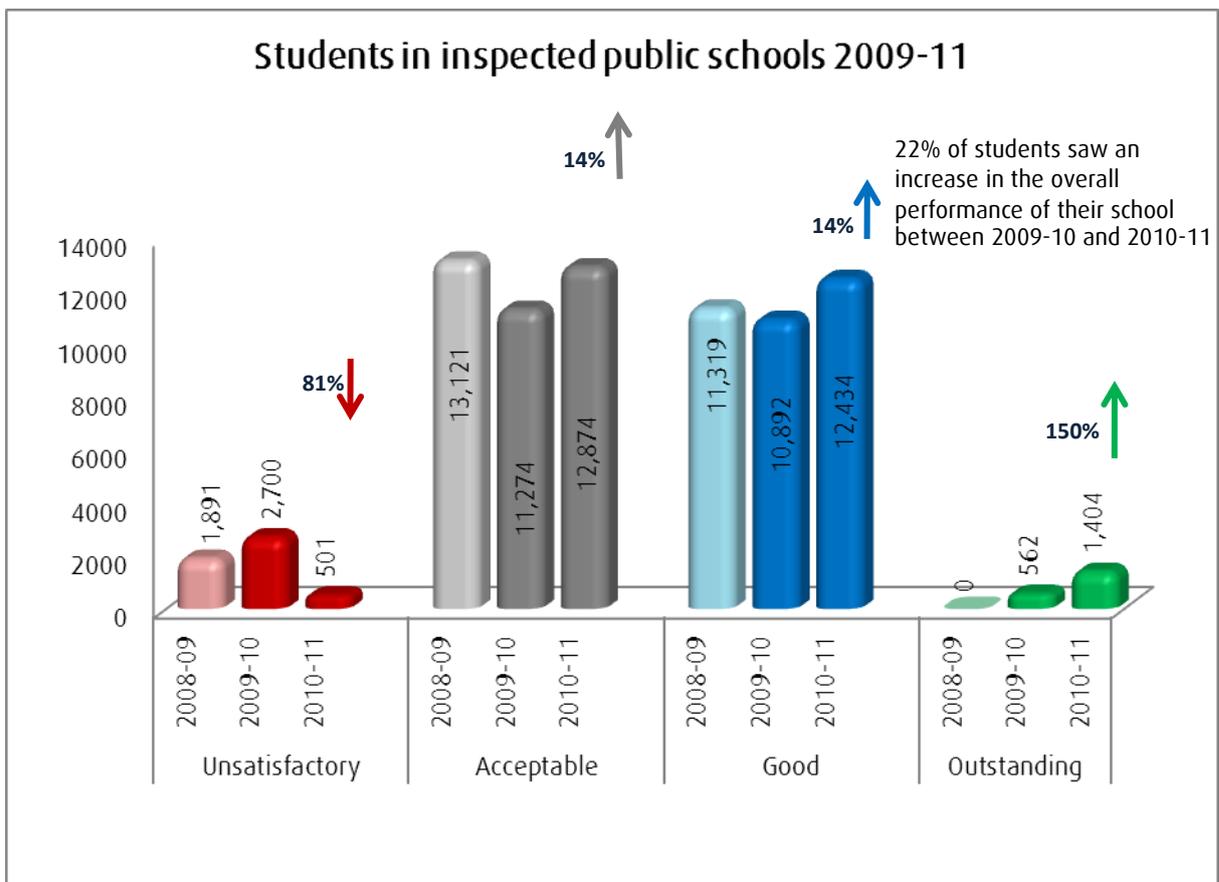
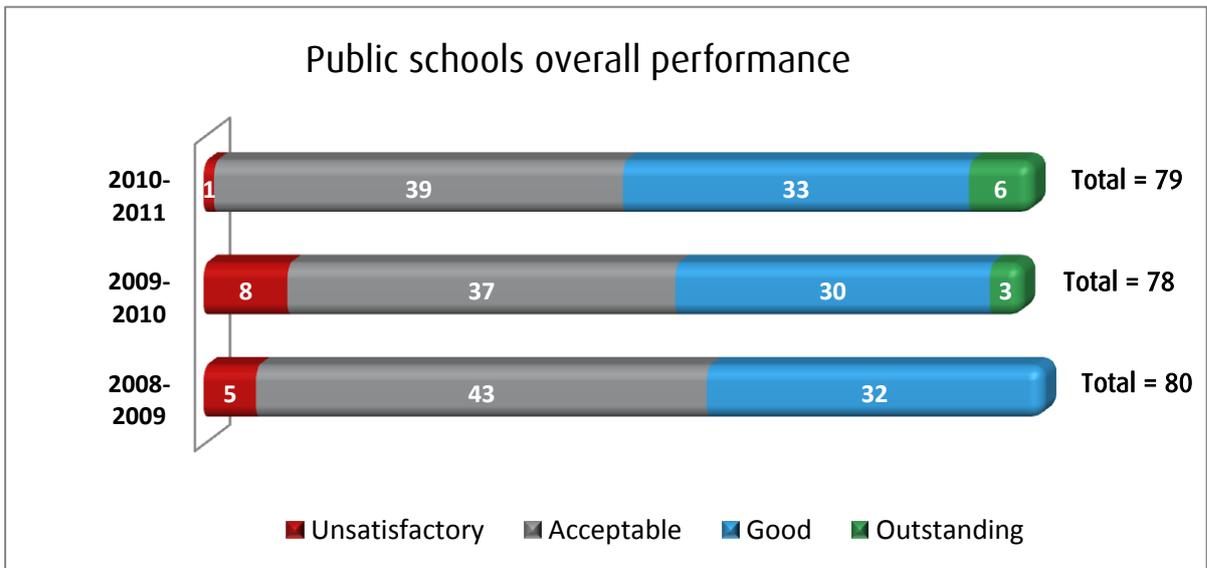


Almost all of these schools have now been inspected three times over three consecutive years.

Eighty public schools were inspected in the first round of inspections in 2008-9. In the subsequent three academic years three public schools have merged and two new schools have opened, giving the current total of 79.



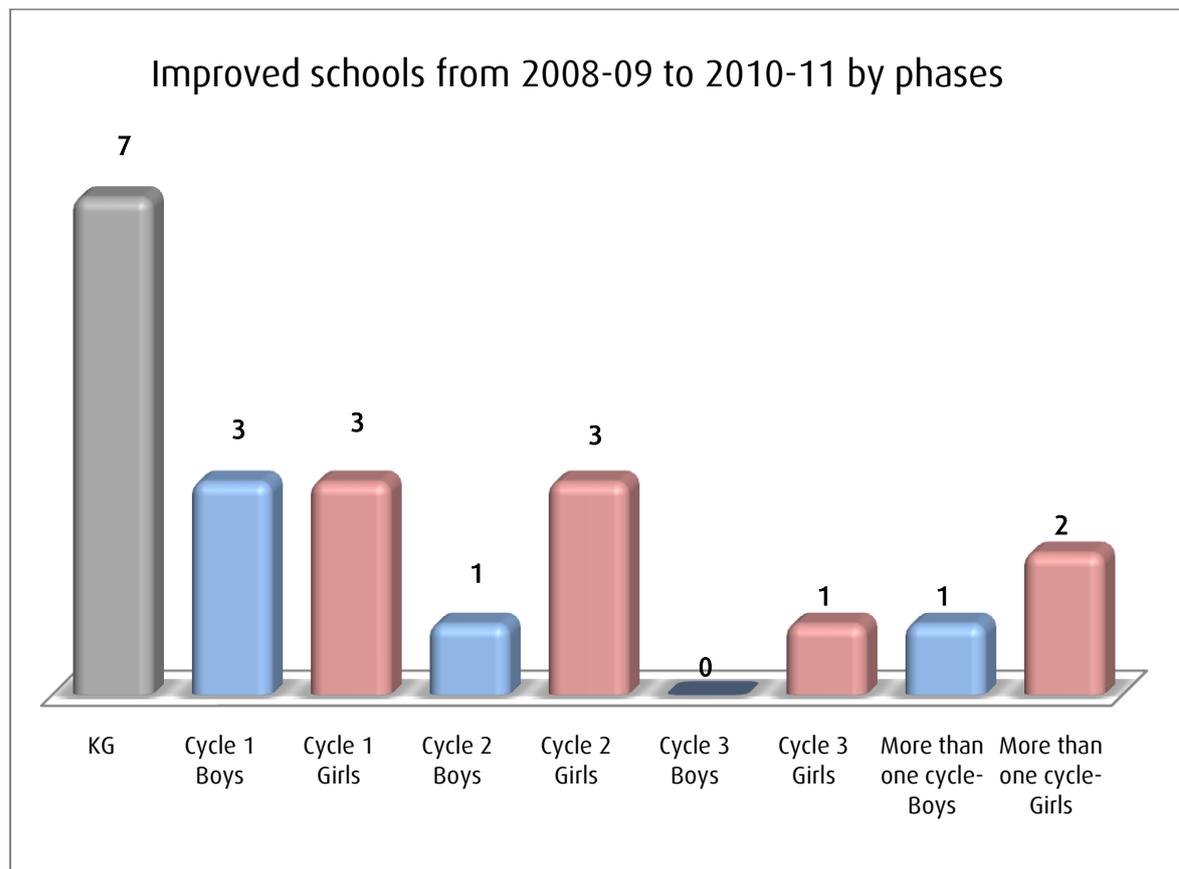
## The overall performance of public schools



Percentages refer to change from 2009-10 to 2010-11

There are now six public schools providing an outstanding quality of education, whereas three years ago there were none. Three of these are Kindergartens, two are Cycle 1 schools and one is a Cycle 2 school for girls. Two of them are model schools. The schools are; Al Bara'ah KG, Al Manhal KG, Childhood Development Centre KG, Al Nokhbah Model School, Al Qeyam Model School and Um Suqaim Girls' School.

A total of 21 schools have improved their rating for overall performance since 2008-9.



The proportion of good and outstanding public schools has increased from 40 per cent to 50 per cent since 2008-9.

There have been significant improvements in Kindergartens. Three quarters of them now provide a good or outstanding quality of education, compared with less than half in 2008-09.

There are now fewer public schools (39 as opposed to 43 in 2008-9) that provide an acceptable quality of education.

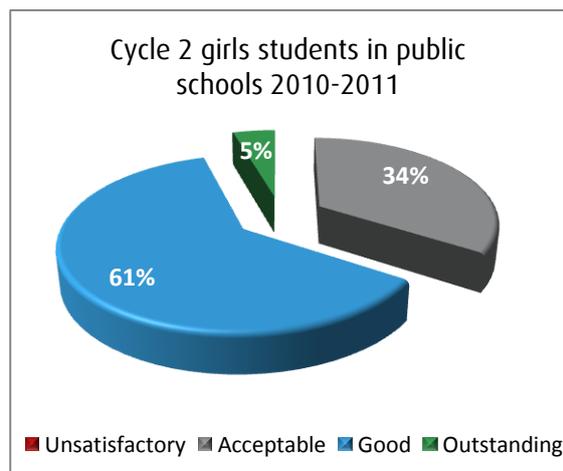
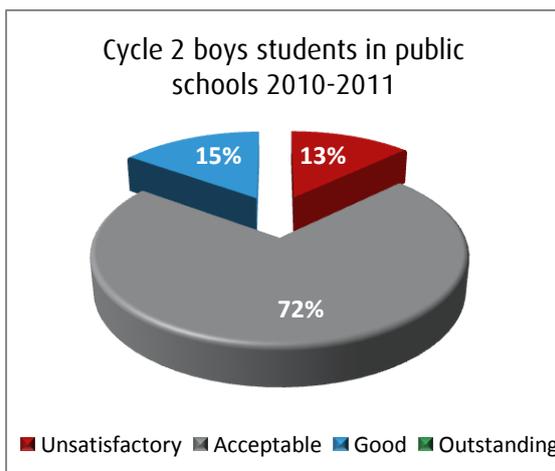
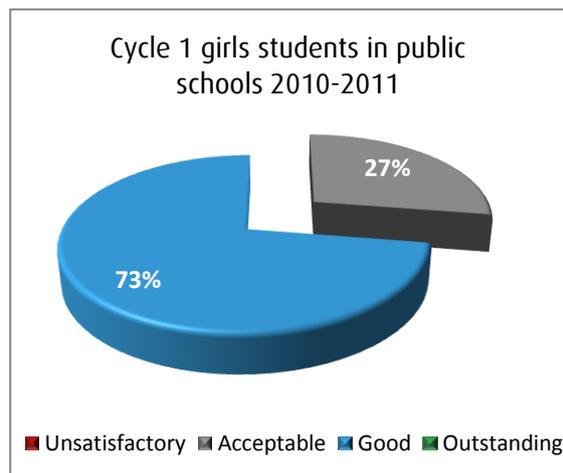
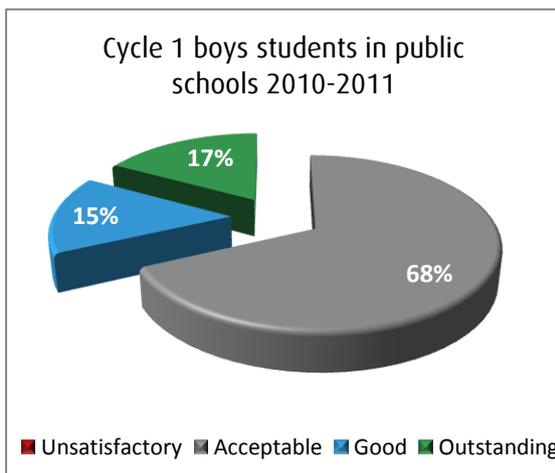
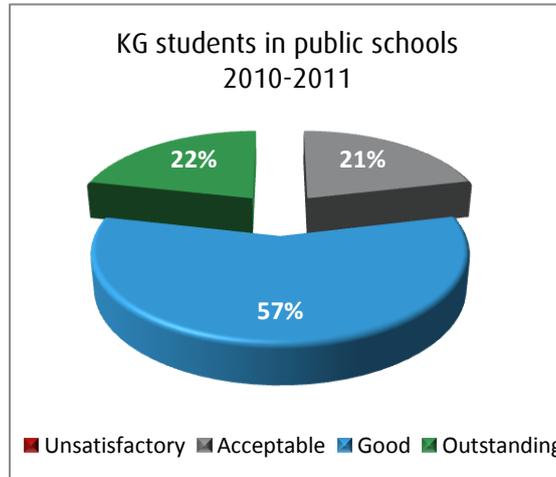
There is now one unsatisfactory public school compared to eight in 2009-10 and five in 2008-9.

22 per cent of students enrolled in public schools saw an increase in the overall performance rating of their school between 2009-10 and 2010-11.

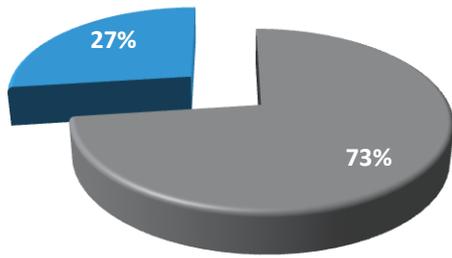
The number of students who attend unsatisfactory public schools has declined from **1,891** in 2008-9 to **501** in 2010-11.

Over the same period the number of students attending good and outstanding public schools has risen from **11,319** to **13,838**.

## Comparing the overall performance of boys' and girls' public schools 2010-11

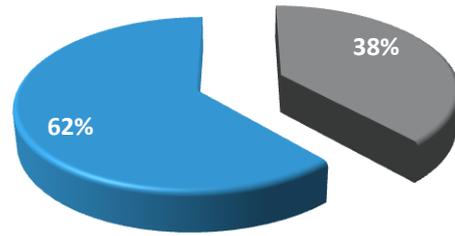


Cycle 3 boys students in public schools 2010-2011



■ Unsatisfactory ■ Acceptable ■ Good ■ Outstanding

Cycle 3 girls students in public schools 2010-2011



■ Unsatisfactory ■ Acceptable ■ Good ■ Outstanding



**Key messages**



## Key messages

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Students' attainment in English, mathematics and science has improved little over the last three years. Students' performance in mathematics and science remains low in relation to international standards. Standards in mathematics and science are good in between only 40 and 45 per cent of public schools. The attainment of girls in English is significantly better than boys. Students' attainment in English, in Cycle 3 boys' schools, is unsatisfactory in around one third of all public schools.

Standards in Arabic are good in relation to the expectations of the Ministry of Education curriculum in at least two thirds of public schools. However, students' performance in reading and writing Arabic, particularly that of boys, is low in relation to international standards.

Standards in all the key subjects are considerably higher in girls' schools than they are in those for boys. In most key subjects the gap in performance between girls and boys is greatest at Cycle 3 level.

The quality of the teaching and learning and the effectiveness of leadership and management are all higher in girls' schools than in those for boys.

There has been a considerable improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes over the last three years. Other aspects of students' personal development remain strong.

Teaching and learning are now of good quality in more than half the public schools and of outstanding quality in one in twenty lessons. They are at only the minimum level of acceptable quality in the remaining schools.

Assessment is good in more than a third of public schools – twice as many as in the last round of inspection. However, a high proportion of assessment practice remains of only acceptable quality.

More than half of public schools now offer a curriculum of good quality and in one school in ten it is outstanding. However, the curriculum is of only acceptable quality in many public schools. Long-standing weaknesses persist, associated with the narrow range of subjects, the relatively short school day and limited choice for older students.

Arrangements to ensure students' health and safety have improved in a large number of public schools. They are now good or outstanding in nearly nine out of ten schools.

Leadership is good or outstanding in around two thirds of public schools. The leadership of boys' schools, particularly in Cycles 2 and 3 is notably weaker than that of girls' schools.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning have improved substantially over the last three years. They are of good quality in 37 of the 79 public schools and outstanding in a further four.

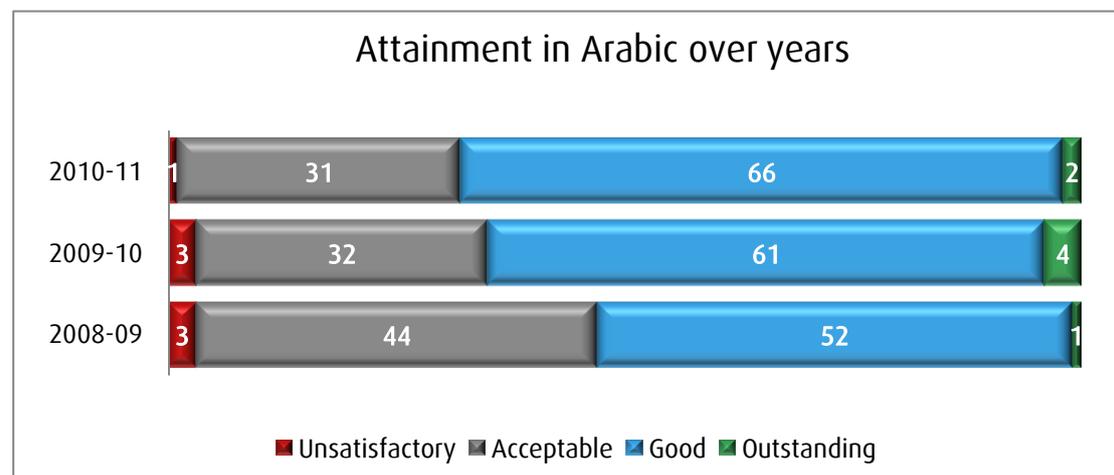
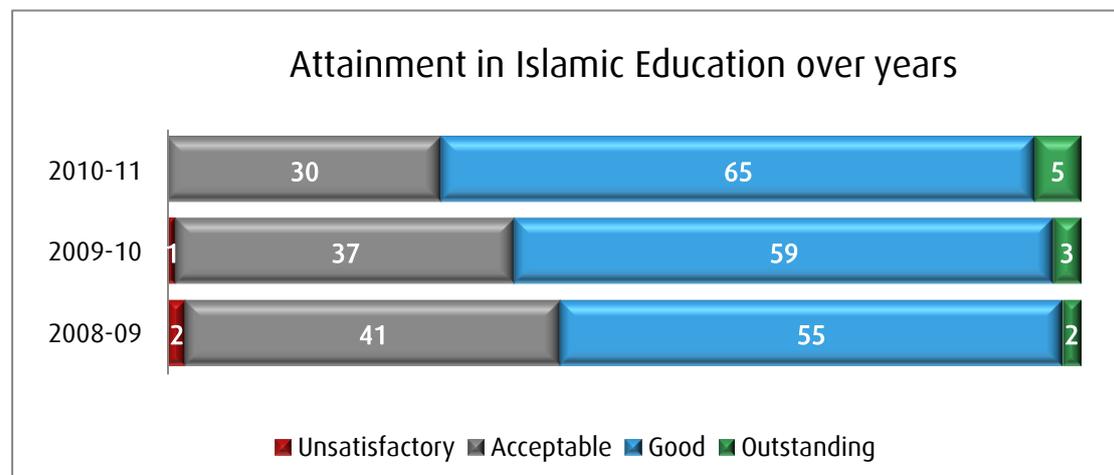
The governance of public schools has improved overall since inspections began, and particularly over the past year. Only a few schools still lack any effective oversight of their work from an advisory group or governing body.



**Summary of findings and  
areas for further improvement**

## Attainment and progress in key subjects

### Islamic Education and Arabic



The performance of students in public schools in Islamic Education has improved over the period in which it has been inspected. A greater proportion of students now attain and make progress at a good or outstanding level compared to a little over half three years ago.

There has been little overall change over the last two years in the performance of students in public schools in Arabic. The proportion of students attaining good standards in relation to the expectations of the Ministry of Education curriculum has risen steadily and two thirds of students now reach good or outstanding levels in relation to their ages.

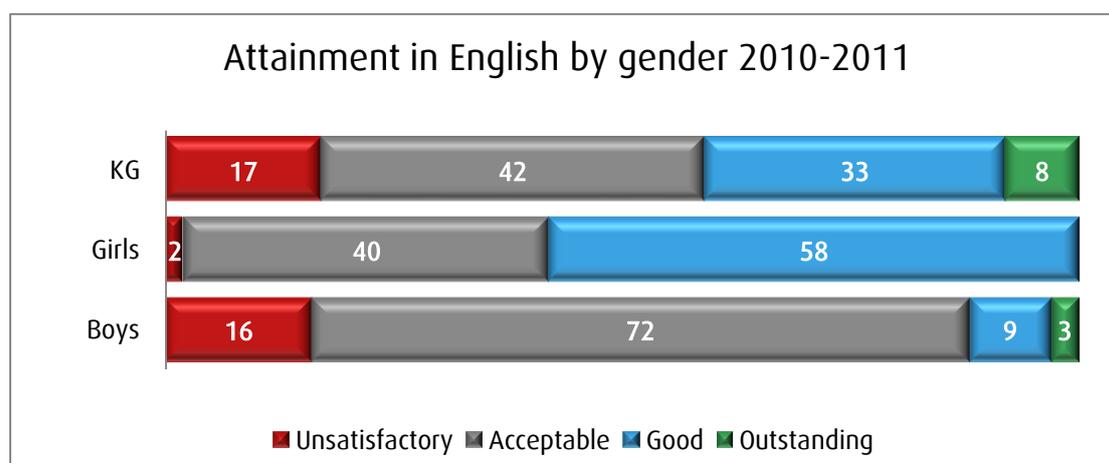
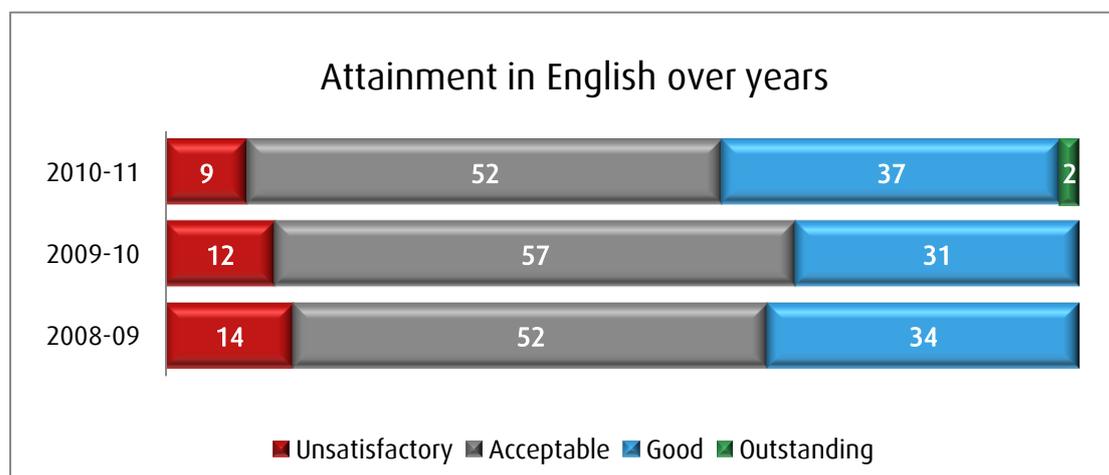
#### **Areas for further improvement**

Reading and writing Arabic are weaker than speaking and listening. Boys achieve less well than girls and notably so in the later years of their education in public schools. Girls outperform boys in reading to a greater extent than in other types of school and to a far greater degree than in most other countries. The gap in performance in reading between girls and boys was particularly marked among lower attaining students. This inspection

information is corroborated by the performance of students aged 15 in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009.

The weakness in reading and writing Arabic and the very wide gap in performance between girls and boys are issues that require urgent attention at both individual school and system levels.

## English



Students' attainment in English in public schools has shown no significant improvement over the last three years. The proportion of schools in which attainment and progress are good has risen slightly, however, and the incidence of unsatisfactory attainment has declined similarly.

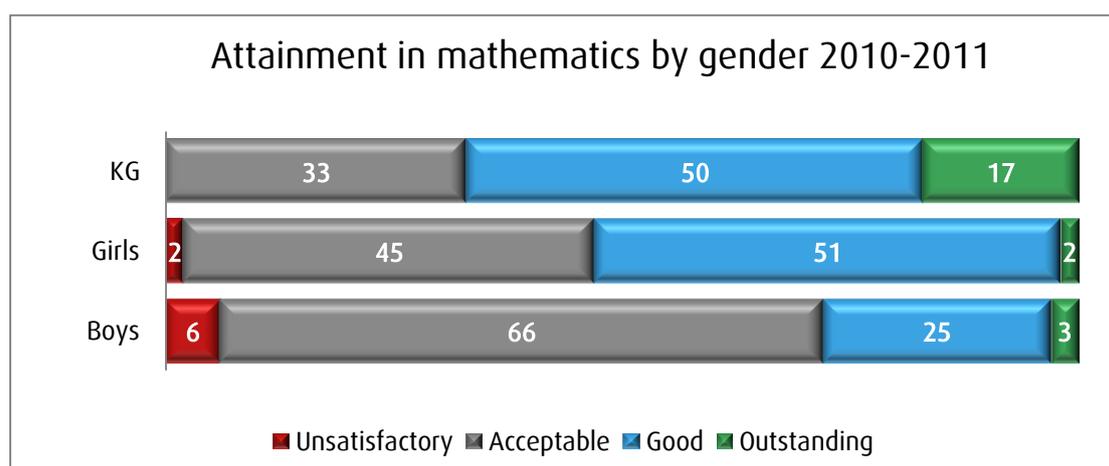
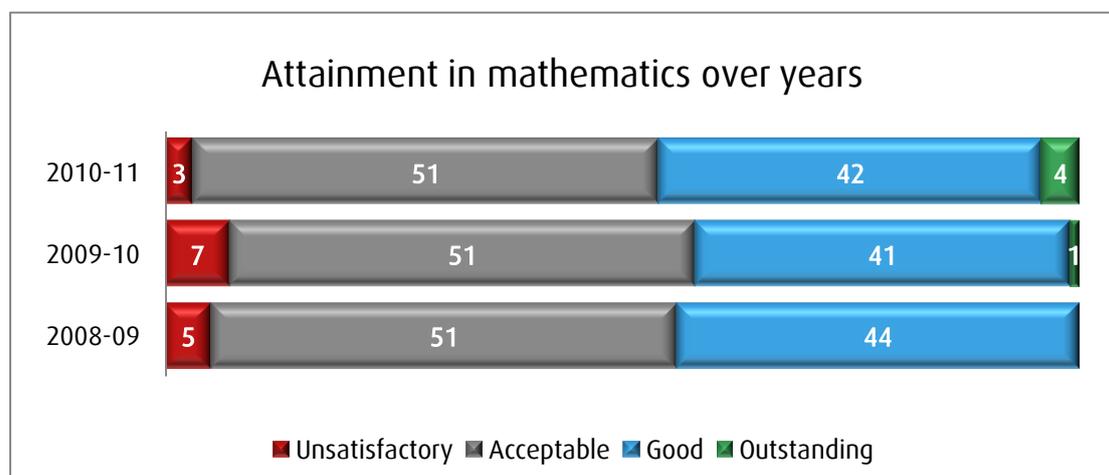
Girls' overall attainment in English is considerably stronger than that of boys at all stages of education. Students' attainment in English in Cycle 3 boys' schools is unsatisfactory in around one third of all public schools.

### Areas for further improvement

Among students of all ages in public schools, reading and writing in English are significantly less well developed than listening to and speaking the language. There is too little reading for pleasure and the range of texts used is too narrow. Too few

students have the capacity to develop an argument by writing effectively at length. These important aspects of English require considerable improvement in most public schools.

## Mathematics



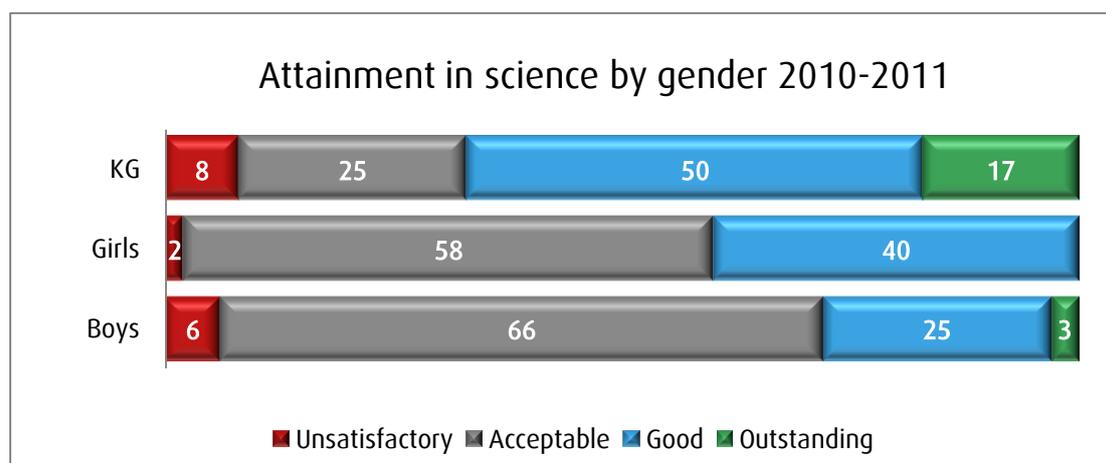
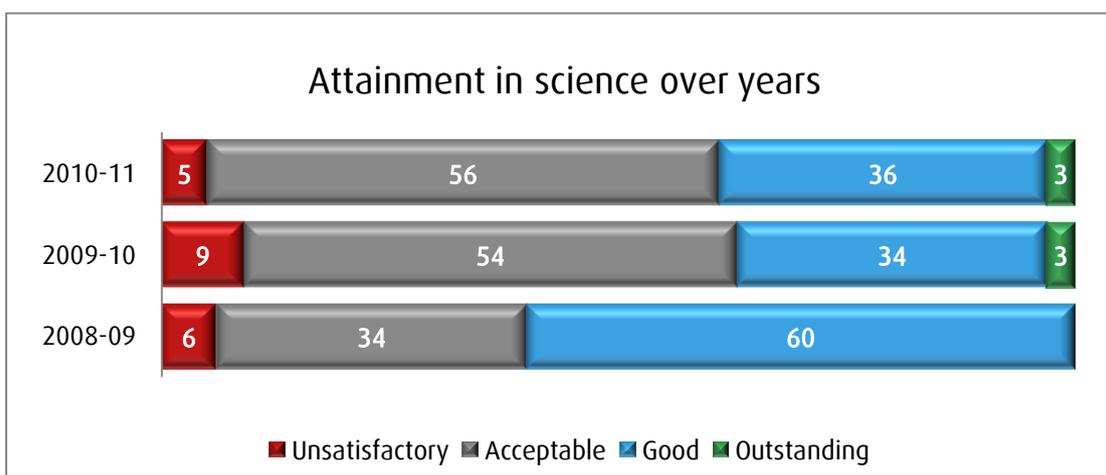
There have been only relatively insignificant changes over the last three years in the attainment and progress in mathematics of students in public schools. The proportion of outstanding attainment and progress in the subject has increased but remains very small, and there has been a decline of similar size in the incidence of unsatisfactory performance.

Girls' overall attainment in mathematics is stronger than that of boys at all stages of education. However, across all public schools, more than half of all students demonstrated acceptable level of skills in mathematics. The performance of students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 matched inspection findings. Students in public schools scored below those in most private schools and well below the international average. About 40 per cent of the public school students who took the PISA tests in mathematics were at or below the lowest international proficiency level.

### Areas for further improvement

Few students develop their problem solving, statistical and graphical skills to more than an acceptable level. They have too few opportunities to investigate and solve mathematical problems independently. There is little evidence of students being challenged to extend or apply their knowledge and skills to the real world.

### Science



There was an abrupt and apparently steep decline in students' attainment in science between the first and second rounds of inspection. This is explained by two significant alterations to the framework employed for the inspection of science that were introduced in 2009-10.

The first of these was the inclusion of the evaluation of attainment and progress in science of students below Grade 7. Inspection in the previous year had concentrated solely on standards in secondary science.

The second significant change was the greater attention paid to the evaluation of students' attainment and progress in science against 'international standards'. These place considerable emphasis on students' practical and experimental skills, aspects of learning in science not traditionally accorded much prominence in public schools. The

stress on these components of the subject contributed substantially to the lower ratings in science, particularly in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 schools.

It is noteworthy that the evaluation of students' progress in science has remained far more constant through successive inspections. Progress was rated as good in 60 per cent of schools in 2011. Because this is a measure of the gains that students make in learning, taking into account their abilities and starting points, the relatively strong evaluation might indicate improved levels of attainment in science in the future.

It is also worth noting that the proportion of schools with unsatisfactory standards in science has reduced considerably in the last year.

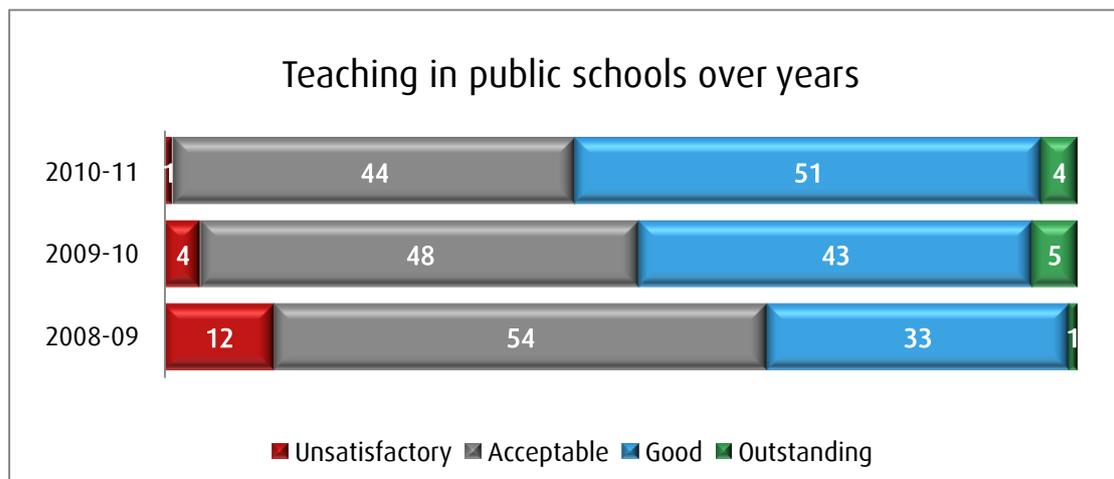
Except at Cycle 1, girls' overall attainment in science is better than that of boys. About 30 per cent of the public school students who took the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 tests in science were at or below the lowest international proficiency level.

### **Areas for further improvement**

Practical investigation receives too little attention in the majority of public schools. Most students acquire scientific knowledge but lack the investigative skills to enable them to critically explore the scientific world. Many students receive little foundation in scientific method: prediction, observation, hypothesis and testing. Relatively few are able to discuss scientific issues and engage in critical and higher order thinking in science. Only in the best schools is emphasis placed on developing enquiry skills and testing hypotheses.

The weakness in scientific skills and the very wide gap in performance between girls and boys are issues that require urgent attention at both individual school and system levels.

## Teaching, learning, and assessment



In 2010-11, inspectors found around half of all lessons observed in public schools to be good or outstanding. There are now far fewer unsatisfactory lessons than three years ago.

The most notable improvements were observed in Kindergartens and Cycle 1 schools, where activities are now better matched to the children's stages of intellectual and physical development.

More teachers now use a broader range of methods to engage the interest and participation of students in lessons, including group and paired work. It is now more common for students to be asked to find things out for themselves, sometimes using ICT independently of the teacher. In more lessons students are able to draw their own conclusions from the work they have done and present them confidently to the teacher and to the rest of the class.

Whereas, in 2008-9, assessment practices were evaluated as unsatisfactory in over a quarter of all schools, arrangements are now at least acceptable in almost all schools. The number of schools where assessment was judged to be good has doubled in three years.

These improvements are the result of more teachers using informal assessment methods in lessons to check students' understanding and when necessary modifying their teaching in response.

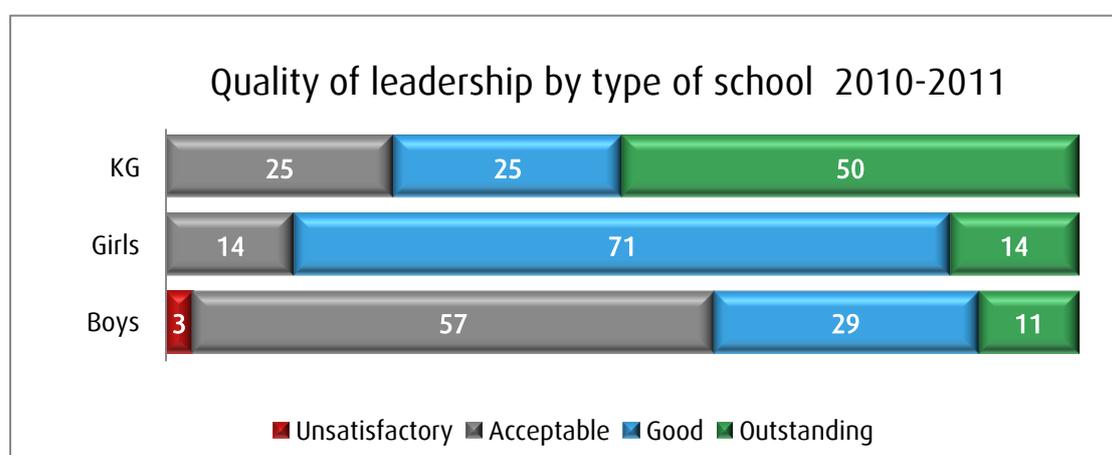
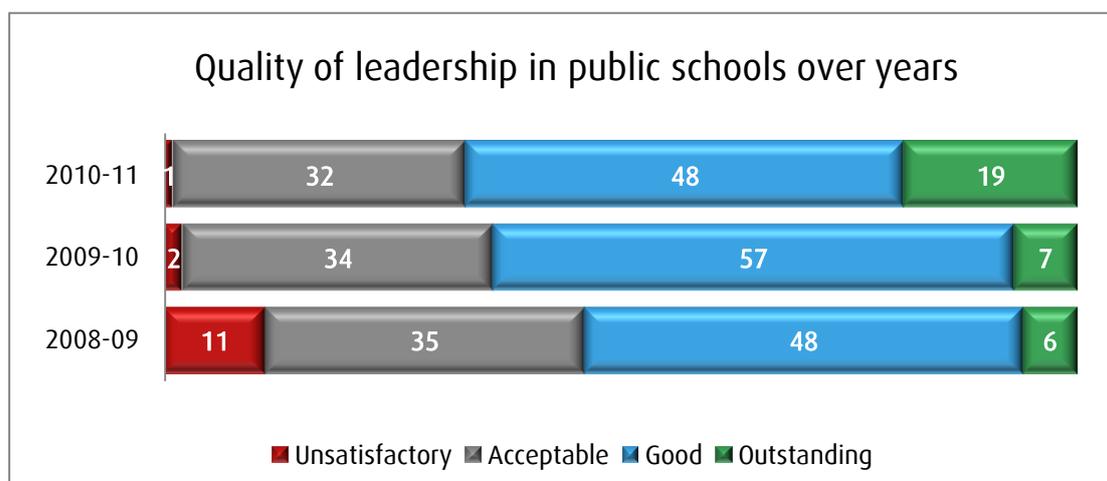
### **Areas for further improvement**

Despite the overall improvements in teaching and assessment, much remains to be done. The proportion of teaching of only acceptable quality remains high (over 40 per cent) in public schools. There are still far too many lessons in which the textbook is the only resource, the teacher talks for too long and in which students remain inactive and under-challenged.

The quality of assessment practice remains below the expected good level in well over half the public schools. There is still too little assessment against clear objectives and the quality of the feedback that students receive from teachers remains poor in many schools.

It is highly unlikely that standards of attainment in the key subjects will be raised substantially until much of the teaching and assessment practice that is currently of only acceptable quality has been improved to 'good'.

## Leadership and management



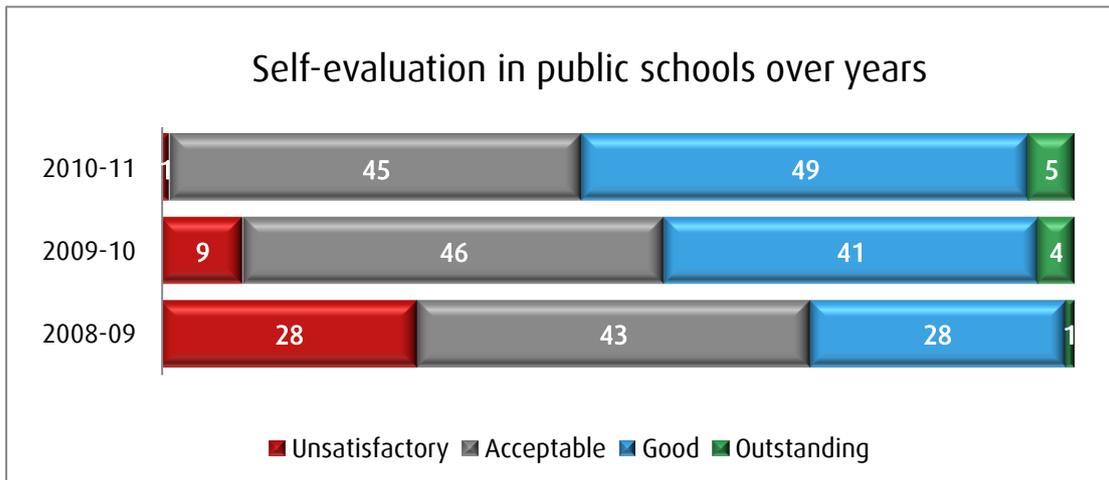
From 2008-9, inspection has indicated that the quality of school leadership and management in the public schools has steadily improved, year on year.

More than half of all public schools in 2010-11 now enjoy good or outstanding leadership. Whereas in 2008-9 one in ten schools had unsatisfactory leadership, in 2010-11 it was at least acceptable in almost all schools.

The quality of leadership in Kindergarten and girls' schools is significantly better than that observed in boys' schools.

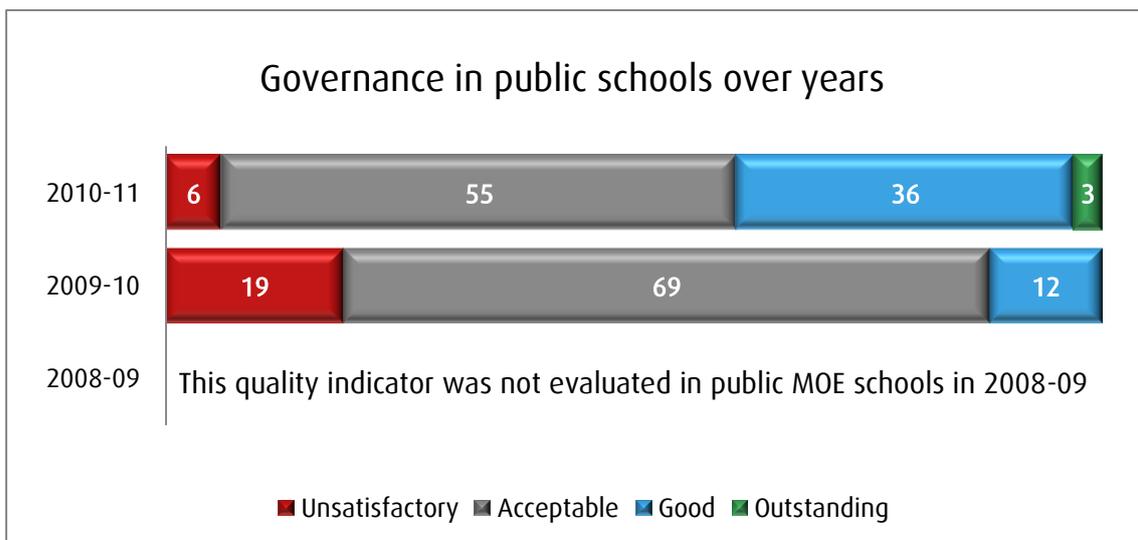
In most public schools, the appointment of subject leaders has led to better monitoring of standards, improved planning and the more regular and effective review of the curriculum in key subjects. However, in the majority of schools their roles do not carry sufficient status to permit them to contribute strongly to strategies for whole school improvement.

Many public schools still lack a well developed management structure. There is often no senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the academic progress and personal development of students within a range of grades.



The public schools have developed better arrangements for self-evaluation. From this very low starting point in 2008-09, there has been significant improvement, more so in girls' schools than in those for boys.

Almost all schools now have a more accurate view of their performance than they did three years ago, and an increasing awareness of best international practice. This has helped to quicken the rate of other improvements and has helped focus development plans and actions more securely upon identified priorities.



A majority of public schools now have functioning boards that provide a degree of oversight of school performance. A few of them work highly effectively to monitor key aspects of the work of their schools, but a few schools still lack any effective overview of their work from 'critical friends.'

#### **Areas for further improvement**

The quality of leadership in 25 public schools remains below the good standard expected in Dubai. It is highly unlikely that the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment essential to raise standards in the key subjects will be possible unless the effectiveness of leadership is improved further in these schools.

Most public schools still need to improve the effectiveness with which they monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Most now make attempts to do this, but in many cases they are irregular, too informal and lacking in rigour.

A significant minority of schools' improvement plans still fail to concentrate sufficiently on how the academic progress and personal development of students will be enhanced. They often fail to specify the responsibilities of different members of staff and frequently lack a clear indication of the time scale within which improvements are to be made.



What do parents think?

## What do parents think?

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### Parent survey participation

| Year   | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of responses received from parents      | 6,763     | 6,742     | 10,371    |
| Proportion of students whose parents responded | 36%       | 37%       | 60%       |

A very large number of parents completed a questionnaire seeking their views on the schools their children attend. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their children's academic progress and personal development and the quality of the education the schools provide.

In their responses to the questionnaire the parents expressed overwhelming approval for the work of the public schools that their children attend.

Well over 90 percent of parents stated that their children were making good progress in all the key subjects. Approval was highest for progress in Arabic and lowest for progress in English.

There was very strong approval for the extent to which schools cared for students' personal development. More than 90 percent agreed that the school was helping their children to become independent and responsible, and a similar proportion agreed that the school cared well for their welfare, health and safety. More than 90 percent too agreed that the behaviour of students was good in their child's school. More than 90 per cent agreed too that the school offered their children a range of enjoyable and stimulating extra-curricular activities.

More than 90 percent of parents agreed that they were well informed about their child's progress, that they felt confident in approaching the school with a concern and that the school would do something about it if they did. The same proportion felt that the school was good at consulting them about decisions that affected their children. A slightly smaller proportion agreed that the school explained how parents could help their child with school work.

Well over 90 per cent of respondents agreed that the teaching in the schools their children attended was of good quality and about the same proportion felt that the schools were led well.

## Examples of comments from a sample of parents submitted in questionnaires

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### Inspection

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to participate. This reflects KHDA's vision. We know that KHDA, the parents and the school share the same goal; which is our children's future. We are sure that our children are in safe hands.

We thank everyone working in school inspection, because of the positive impact it has made upon education in the UAE.

We would like to thank you for this survey, which made us feel that education in our schools is developing in the right way.

### Our schools

I would like to thank the school for improving my child's achievement and for their careful attention to students' behaviour; this shows they care.

My daughter is a student with special educational needs. She needs special care. The school has provided her with psychological support and other kinds of assistance. My daughter was encouraged by the kind treatment she received and this has made her love the school.

The school has improved the children's skills in Arabic language. The students now speak fluently.

Thank you for my daughter's education, she has learnt a lot and now knows how to play some sports such as volleyball and basketball. She has learned how to respect people. Teachers are always supportive and very helpful.

The teacher's communication with parents through e-mails is a good, quick and simple. It helps the parents know about their child's strengths and weaknesses.

When I see my daughter I realize that the school is improving and is up-to-date with education. The school has improved the students' skills and is preparing them for the future. The teachers in the school are very good.

My child's school is excellent, overall. Teachers are highly qualified; they care for the students, and engage them in a positive way.

### The future

We need Emirati teachers to help reinforce our children's language and their understanding of social and national culture.

The school's environment and leadership are good. I hope that they will put more effort into teaching Arabic language and Islamic Education and strengthening the children's sense of Emirati culture and values. Also, they need to teach English at an earlier age.

Greater attention needs to be given to teaching English as a second language, because it is the biggest obstacle for high school graduates and this sometimes limits their choices in their later educational careers.

More attention is needed on physical education. There is a need for more physical education sessions and art to improve students' physical and creative skills.

We need a modern curriculum which includes studying our past but also other cultures.

