

Al Eman Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 9

Report published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

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.

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.

Al Eman Private School was inspected in November 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Rashidiah, Al Eman Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 15 years from Kindergarten to Cycle 2. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 567 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Most parents were very supportive of the school. There was a strong belief that good progress was made by the students in all subjects except in English, where only a majority of the parents felt that progress was good enough. Although most parents said they were satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning, a minority considered teaching as an area for improvement. Only a small majority of parents were happy with the range and relevance of the extra-curricular activities available. Most parents reported satisfaction with the behaviour of the students and said that their children were treated fairly. A large minority considered that the resources were insufficient to meet learning needs and most parents were unhappy with the provision for students with special education needs. Most were satisfied with the amount and quality of the homework assigned. A minority of parents felt that the guidance on future career choices could be better but most parents were generally happy with the communication with school and its response to concerns. Parents felt that the school was well led and that it had responded well to the last inspection.

How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of Al Eman Private School was acceptable. The school had responded positively to almost all of the recommendations of the previous report with improvements in outcomes for Kindergarten and Cycle 2 students in Arabic. Students had improved in Islamic, cultural and civic understanding, and in economic and environmental understanding. The school demonstrated a sound capacity to continue improving.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in Kindergarten and acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2. Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good in Kindergarten and acceptable in Cycle 1. Although attainment remained acceptable in Cycle 2, students made good progress. In English, mathematics and science, attainment and progress were acceptable in all age groups. Students had good attitudes and displayed good behaviour. They worked hard and were respectful to everyone in the school community. Students' knowledge and understanding of Islam and of cultural, civic, economic and environmental issues were acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1, and good in Cycle 2. There were examples of good teaching and learning throughout the school but overall, teaching and learning were acceptable. The curriculum was also acceptable. Most students acquired subject knowledge by memory and the application of their learning to the real world was generally weak. Assessment of learning was of acceptable quality. Most students knew how well they were doing in each subject. The provision for health and safety was good throughout the school, and the quality of support for students was acceptable. Leadership and management were acceptable. A strength of the school was the good partnership with parents. Governance was acceptable. Although there have been improvements, there was still no formal role for a wide range of stakeholders on the board. Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable.

Key features of the school

- The positive relationships between staff and students, and all members of the school community;
- The good attitudes and behaviour of the students across all phases of the school;
- The good progress made by the school in dealing with some of the recommendations from the last report;
- The improved learning environment in the school.

Recommendations

- Develop a strategy to determine the students' achievements relative to national and international standards;
- Improve students' competences in extended writing, investigative skills and independent learning;

- Continue to enhance the quality of the accommodation, facilities and resources for learning;
- Improve the curriculum by including more skills-based learning, cross-curricular links and real-life applications.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in the Kindergarten, and acceptable in the other phases. Most children could memorise short chapters from the Holy Qur'an correctly. They understood the role of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as a role model for all Muslims. They learned a good range of Islamic supplications to be said in various situations such as etiquettes of eating. In other phases of the school, most students could recite short chapters from the Holy Qur'an but made a few errors in recitation rules. The majority of students in Grade 4 could describe ways of showing gratefulness to Allah. The majority of students in Grade 9 understood the significance of Hajj, its different types and the impact it should have on their lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in Cycle 1. In Cycle 2, attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Most children in Kindergarten could write letters and use them to make words. The majority of children were able to identify colours and the sounds of the letters. Most students across all phases developed their listening skills well and understood instructions. Students' speaking skills were acceptable overall; most responded to questions using full sentences. In Cycle 1, the majority of students could read aloud clearly and expressively. Upper grade students could read age-appropriate texts and could read poetry correctly. In Cycle 1, most students relied upon copying straight from the board which limited the development of creative writing skills. In Cycle 2, students made a few spelling errors in their independent writing but their handwriting was clear and legible. Only a very small number of students studied Arabic as an additional language. As these students were identifiable, attainment and progress for Arabic as an additional language is not included in this published report.

Attainment in English was acceptable in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1. It was acceptable, with good features, in Cycle 2. Progress was acceptable across the school. Across all stages, students understood familiar words and basic phrases. They could recognise and write numbers, name parts of the body and identify colours. Students could describe their homes in simple sentences. They carried out simple role play, for example ordering food in a restaurant. They read without hesitation from course books. By Year 9, most students could write legibly and respond confidently to simple oral and written questions. All students made acceptable progress in listening, reading and speaking. Pronunciation also improved. Progress in writing was below expected standards and written work tended to be limited to one-word answers or simple sentences.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable throughout the school. Kindergarten children could recognise written numbers and count up to ten. By Grade 6, students could do basic calculations with numbers up to four digits and could apply appropriate mathematical rules to solve simple problems. By Grade 9, students could solve algebraic equations involving exponents. Students throughout the school were working at about the age-appropriate levels to solve basic computational questions. Their ability to work independently or co-operatively to solve extended problems was underdeveloped, as was their ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) in mathematics. Few students demonstrated work beyond the average grade level.

Attainment in science throughout the school was acceptable. At the end of Cycle 2, students knew many facts. For example, they were able to recall the names of the major organs of the digestive system and explain their functions. At the end of Cycle 1, students recognised and named food plants and explained how they are grown. They also knew how vegetables and fruit contribute to a healthy diet. Students had fewer skills in scientific enquiry gained through investigation work. Acceptable progress was made as the students moved from grade to grade. At times, progress was good. For example, students in Grade 8 went beyond identifying the differences between viruses and bacteria to understanding how the viruses multiply within the cell.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across all phases of the school. Students had excellent relationships with their teachers and were courteous and respectful to adults in the school community. They were friendly and supportive of each other. Students were self-disciplined, well-organised and motivated and generally participated with confidence and enthusiasm. They interacted well in the playground and younger children played happily together. At the time of the inspection, attendance was satisfactory and students were punctual to classes. They understood healthy living with regard to personal hygiene, diet and physical exercise. Some students were members of the school doctor's "Health Team" to promote healthy lifestyles.

Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycle 2. Students accepted responsibilities in school and in the wider community. Older students had roles in the student council, through which they brought about positive changes at the school, for example around the playground and in prompting science trips. Students demonstrated a good understanding of Islam and its impact on Dubai and the world. Students appreciated their national identity and older students were able to talk about the leadership of Sheikh Zayed in developing the UAE.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and good in Cycle 2. Students of all ages expressed their enjoyment of living in Dubai and pride in the development and prosperity of the UAE. Younger students knew that tourists enjoyed visiting the beaches, the shopping malls and landmarks like the Burj Khalifa and the Palm. However, they were unaware of environmental issues or the need to recycle.

Nevertheless, all students knew not to drop litter and some helped to keep the school litter-free. Older students acknowledged the transformation of Dubai, and the ongoing business and commercial developments.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of the teaching was acceptable. Many of the lessons were dominated by the teacher and the methods of teaching were simplistic and inflexible. Teaching was good in mathematics when students were invited to explain how they had solved a problem. In English, good teaching was seen when the students were talking to the class about what they were learning and asked the other students to construct sentences using the principles they had explained. When teaching was at its best, students were encouraged to think further about what they were learning. Teachers made appropriate plans for students with special educational needs, for example for those of higher ability who needed greater challenge and for students experiencing difficulty in their learning.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable. Examples of good learning were seen in most subjects. Where learning was best, the students were engaged in discussion and, for example in Arabic, when they had to produce an extended piece of writing. However, students did not learn enough of the skills needed for evaluation, analysis and scientific enquiry. This was often a consequence of over-reliance on textbooks. Learning was also less effective when teachers asked students for one-word answers and required repetitive chanting.

Assessment and the tracking of students' progress had improved since the last inspection, and were acceptable. There was frequent testing of each student's progress and regular reports were sent to parents. Records were kept to track the progress of every student. However, attainment was not measured against recognised international standards and therefore did not allow comparison with other schools or international standards. Work was marked regularly but there were few comments to enable students to learn from their mistakes.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable throughout the school. There was an appropriate range of subjects, although it was restricted in parts, for example in music and ICT. The curriculum had been planned against a set of learning outcomes for individual subjects at each grade level. These outcomes reflected age-appropriate progression in basic subject content. The breadth of coverage was adequate, and was enriched by a few inter-school sporting activities and field trips. School leaders and staff undertook regular reviews of the curriculum, but this had limited effect on the quality it provided. The curriculum plans did not specify the development of key skills across the curriculum. Extended writing in English was limited and there was little chance for students to practise research or presentation skills. However, there was some extended writing in Arabic. There was a lack of opportunity for students to solve practical problems in mathematics and science or to connect concepts to real-life situations.

The curriculum in Islamic Education was broad in scope and promoted understanding of Islamic principles. Cross-curricular links with ICT and other subjects were not well developed. Although students participated in field trips and the school brought in visitors and specialists, not enough was done to establish community links or to increase students' involvement with local environmental issues. .

How well does the school protect and support students?

Overall, the provision for the health and safety of students was good across all phases. Effective systems were in place to protect students and keep them safe. Procedures for child protection were well communicated. Buildings, though old, were in a satisfactory, clean condition. Fire and evacuation procedures were practised and recorded by the Civil Defence Department. Gates to the campus were generally kept locked during the school day. Play areas were shaded and break times were overseen by staff and prefects. Students were efficiently supervised on school buses. Students knew about healthy eating and the importance of keeping clean and fit, although some unhealthy snacks were available in the tuck shop. The doctor and nurse supervised medical matters in the clinic and records were kept up-to-date. Medicines were locked away. Effective air-conditioning ensured a comfortable working environment.

The quality of student support was acceptable. Students had very good relationships with their teachers. Staff were caring and supportive of all students and were concerned for their well-being. Students' academic and social progress was tracked and regularly reported to parents. Behavioural issues were dealt with promptly and fairly. All incidents and complaints were carefully recorded. Since the last inspection, provision for students with special educational needs had improved but strategies to support these students in classroom practice were not yet implemented. The development of a programme for careers guidance was ongoing. Year 9 students received regular advice and students in Grades 7 to 9 attended lectures by visiting speakers about their professions. Attendance and punctuality were rigorously monitored.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The senior leadership team was positive about moving the school forward and utilising the DSIB process as a means of tackling the school improvement issues. There were heads of department, each with clear job descriptions, for all key subject areas. Changes to teaching methodologies as a result of in-house professional development activities had yet to have impact. Most planning documents were appropriately detailed but most were descriptive rather than evaluative. The quantity of documentation was not being matched by an increase in standards in teaching and learning, attainment and progress.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. There was a Development Council comprising the Principal and key members of the teaching and support staff. The Principal and

middle managers monitored the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Comprehensive feedback was given to teachers about their performances. However, the impact of such activities had yet to be reflected in improvements to attainment and progress in most key subjects.

The partnership with parents was good. There were strong communication links with the parents and most parents were very supportive of the school and eager to see their children improve. Communication with some parents was on a daily basis as they dropped off and collected their children. With others, it was through SMS messages, letters, weekly plan learning booklets and students' diaries. A Parents' Council had been formed. The members were proactive and supportive of what the school was trying to achieve for their children. Parents knew that they could express their views, that these would be acknowledged and some would be acted upon by the school's management and the Board of Trustees.

Governance was acceptable. A Board of Trustees continued to oversee the school, providing the Principal with advice, and reviewing the school development plan and its implementation. The Board responded to requests from parents for school improvements. However, there was no direct parent or community representation on the Board.

The quality of the staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Staffing levels were adequate to cover the requirements of all sections of the school. Teachers were appropriately qualified and the majority were adequately trained to deliver the Ministry curriculum. There was an acceptable balance of experience across the teaching staff. There were enough teaching areas to accommodate the school population but space was limited in some classes, particularly Kindergarten. The school had specialist rooms including a Kindergarten activity room, computer suite, science laboratory, library and a mosque. There was a new artificially grassed soccer pitch and adjacent small basketball court. Thirty new computers with ceiling projectors had been purchased, five of which had been installed. The school premises were well maintained and clean. The library had a limited stock of appropriate books and other learning resources.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
98% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Good	Acceptable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

Next steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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