

INSPECTION REPORT

Mirdif Private School

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Mirdif Private School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.mirdifprivateschool.ae
Telephone	04-2883303
Address	P.O.Box.79195Mirdif - Dubai
Principal	Randa Ghandour, رندا غندور
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-14 / KG 1-Grade 9
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	749
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	527 (70%)
Date of the inspection	28th October to 30th October 2014

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The context of the school

Mirdif Private School is located in Al Mizhar. It provides education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 9. The school roll has increased from 601 students in the previous year to 749 students at the time of the inspection, mainly through new entrants to the Kindergarten.

Most students were in the Kindergarten or the elementary phase (Grades 1 to 5), with a smaller number in middle phase (Grades 6 to 8) and a few in the high school (Grade 9). Almost three-quarters of the students were Emirati, and most students spoke Arabic as their first language. 43 other nationalities were present in the student body.

The school offered a modified curriculum based on US Common core standards in English and mathematics. Science was based upon the New York state standards. Islamic Education and Arabic followed the UAE Ministry of Education guidelines. The school was using the Iowa Assessments that were aligned to the Common Core Standards to determine its students' strengths and areas for development against international benchmark standards.

In addition to the Principal and Director of Curriculum, there were 46 full-time teachers, all of whom had appropriate teaching qualifications. Eleven teachers, about a quarter, were new to the school this current year.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The welcoming and inviting environment;
- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in all phases;
- The good attainment and progress in Kindergarten mathematics;
- The good progress in English in high school and middle and high science;
- The good or better personal responsibility and social development of students across the school;
- The outstanding provision for health and safety, links with parents and the community and management, including staffing, facilities and resources.

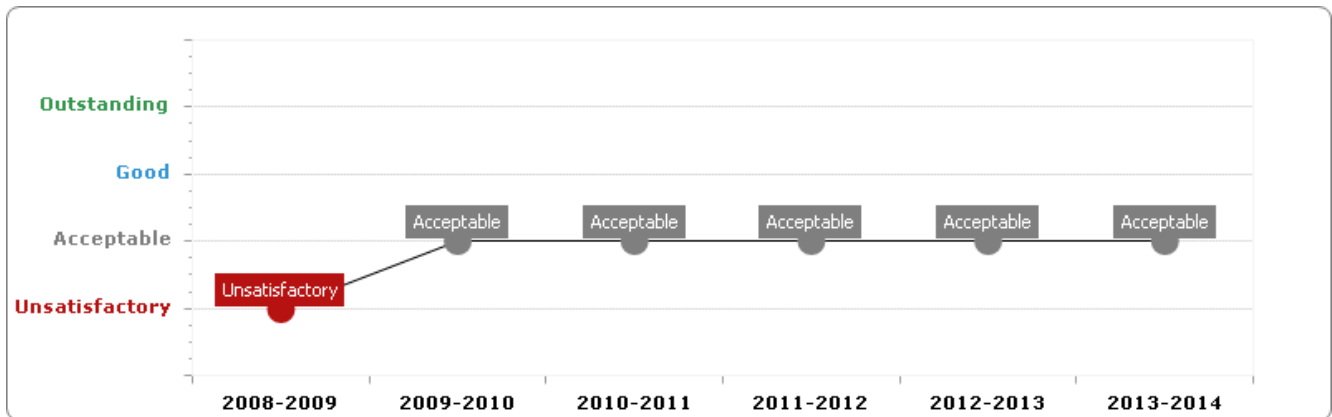
Recommendations

- Improve procedures for self-evaluation so that they are reliable and use the outcomes to create, implement and monitor a programme of school improvement;
- Review the curriculum in Kindergarten 1 to ensure that it better prepares students for the Kindergarten 2 common core curriculum;
- Identify the learning difficulties and talents of students more systematically so that the school can provide individual plans to fully meet their learning needs;
- Ensure that in all lessons there is a focus on the quality of learning so that students gain skills to help them learn with greater independence;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context
- Ensure that provision for Arabic as a first language fully meets Ministry of Education (MoE) time requirements.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school has maintained good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language
- Improved progress in English at high school and in science in the middle school;
- The attainment and progress of Kindergarten children in mathematics has improved;
- Students in High school now have greater personal responsibility;
- An improved assessment programme including individual student tracking and more consistent use by teachers of constructive feedback.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, most students had good knowledge of Islamic concepts. They could explain in detail about the pillars of Iman and the pillars of Islam. Students' recitation and memorisation skills were less well developed. Students' listening, speaking and reading in Arabic as a first language were good. However, writing skills were less secure. Students of Arabic as an additional language listened well to instruction in Arabic. They read and pronounced familiar vocabulary but writing skills, particularly in the higher grades, were weak. Their ability to use what they had learnt to communicate in Arabic was limited. Attainment in English across the school was acceptable. Writing and research skills in the elementary school and extended reading and writing skills in the middle and high schools were not sufficiently developed. Students were secure in mathematical calculations, but in all phases, reasoning, number sense and real life connections were not yet fully established. Science attainment was limited due to too few opportunities for students to explore, inquire and independently investigate.

Most students made good progress in their understanding of Islamic values. Particularly in the middle and high phases, they were beginning to develop their ability to link what they were learning to real life situations. Students of Arabic as a first language made good progress over time in most aspects of the language except in writing where progress in developing extended writing skills was limited. In Arabic as an additional language, most students made significant progress in listening and speaking. Progress in developing deeper reading skills and writing skills was slower. In English, students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills progressed acceptably as they moved through the phases but students in high school made good progress. Progress in mathematics was good in the Kindergarten, where children developed mathematical skills through a variety of practical activities. Progress was slower, but acceptable, in the other phases of the school. Progress in science in the lower phases was affected by the need for more active learning, while the upper phases where it was stronger students benefited from a greater variety of approaches.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were of an acceptable level in the Kindergarten and elementary phases but good in middle and high school. Students enjoyed learning, and were particularly engaged in those lessons that contained a practical element. They did what teachers asked of them but were often passive learners or undertook tasks that required little thought particularly in Kindergarten and elementary phases. Students generally worked well in groups, although collaborative skills were less developed. Not all students were able to clearly explain what they were learning and the purpose of their learning. Students were mostly reliant on

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the teacher to direct each step in the learning process. However when given an opportunity, students in many classes were able to take on responsibilities and complete tasks on their own. Students were not confident in the use and application of new skills to real life situations. Students' independent use of ICT was limited, and mainly took place in middle and high school when making presentations. They rarely demonstrated critical thinking, reasoning and evaluative skills but tended to rely on adults.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's personal and social responsibility was good across almost all phases, apart from high school where it was outstanding. Students had mature and sensible attitudes and demonstrated self-reliance especially in the higher grades. Behaviour throughout the school was good and outstanding in high school. Relationships between students and with staff were cordial and respectful. Attendance for last term was good however many of the students arrived late to school. Students demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living and followed the school advice on keeping fit and healthy.

Students had a clear understanding of how Islamic values influenced an Islamic society and they appreciated the heritage, culture and traditions of the UAE. Students in middle and high had outstanding awareness and understanding of current events in Dubai such as its bid for EXPO 2020. Students showed good appreciation of their own culture and the variety and range of other cultures in Dubai.

Students understood their responsibilities as members of the school community and enthusiastically volunteered for key roles on the students' council. Most students had a positive work ethic and they occasionally were able to take initiatives and make decisions independently. They took care of their school and took part in activities to improve its environment. For example, students supported schemes to promote sustainability and conservation locally and across the wider world. Their sense of community and responsibility for the environment was good across all phases.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable in the lower phases and good in the higher phases. The quality of teaching was variable. Teacher planning was often well-designed to fit the needs of different learners, but in practice this was rarely seen in lessons. Some teachers involved all students in learning, used different approaches and drew on their strong pedagogical and subject knowledge to convey understanding. This was not consistent especially in Kindergarten and elementary phases. Resources, when used, did not consistently involve all

learners, with many students passively watching others handle and manipulate materials. Time management also lacked consistency, resulting in some lessons either going over time, or ending without a plenary. Questioning skills were developing, with examples of some requiring a more open extended response and others used by teachers to probe understanding. All teachers, at whatever level of proficiency, were dedicated to helping students learn. The quality of teaching in subjects other than the five key subjects was good. Students taking part in Physical Education, for example, were all engaged in the activities, and had resources to help make the learning fun as well as productive.

Assessment was acceptable across all phases. The school had recently introduced new assessment systems and procedures. These were used to monitor student's specific learning related to the standards in English, mathematics and science as well as their overall progress. Some analysis of test results has been undertaken to identify patterns of attainment and a more accurate knowledge of student competencies was now in place. Since last year, more teachers now included constructive comments for students as feedback to their work, and overall there appeared to be more focus on realistic, progressive assessment. Students' evaluations of their own and other students' work was not yet a regular feature of the school's assessment procedures. The analysis and use of data to plan lessons and to adapt the curriculum was inconsistently applied by staff.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in Kindergarten and good across the rest of school. It was based on a clear rationale, US common core standards and selected state standards. Adopted instructional materials were aligned to these standards providing continuity and progression in elementary, middle and high school. However, the Kindergarten 1 curriculum, especially in English, did not align with the Kindergarten 2 curriculum. Students easily transitioned from one phase of the school to another. The curriculum was rigorously reviewed three times per year. It was generally broad and balanced providing lessons in computer education, physical education, music, social studies and economics in addition to the core subjects of English, maths and science. However, there were no elective options in the high school. There were cross-curricular links in a few lessons but this was not a common feature of the school. The curriculum was enriched through field trips and speakers, poets, cultural dancers and other community members visited the school during special theme days. Extra-curricular activities were limited.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable in all phases. In a few classes the curriculum was modified to meet the needs of students especially in formal and informal assessments. Efforts to differentiate the curriculum were in the early stages of implementation. Students participated in competitions providing additional challenge for all students. In a few classes extension

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activities and extra challenge projects were provided for some gifted students. However, a lack of clubs and extra-curricular activities prevented most students from pursuing their interests and talents within the school setting.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety procedures were outstanding across the school. Procedures for bus safety and the movement of students to and from the buses was efficient and effective. Each student had a badge that was electronically monitored as they entered or exited a bus. Policies and procedures were in place that documented safety regulations such as training for fire drills, school emergencies, civil defence as well as visits to clinics. Thorough systems were in place for recording any incidents concerning child safety and the resulting actions taken. Excellent maintenance of the facilities and equipment was of paramount importance. The school consistently and in all respects provided a fully safe, hygienic and secure environment for students.

The quality of support was acceptable across the school. The school had an effective system in place to manage attendance and punctuality. Teachers knew their students well and learning plans were in place for those with a special educational need. , who were admitted to the school. The school counsellor served as the Special educational needs coordinator. Although the counsellor conducted interviews and observations of students in order to identify these students, there were no diagnostic tests being used for identification and therefore any support given was not as well focused as it might have been.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good from the point of view of setting a clear direction and vision for the school. The Principal and Director of Curriculum delegated responsibilities to subject leaders and teams. This led to effective communication within the school and a commitment from all staff to the schools ethos and values. Leaders had been successful in communicating and meeting the school promise to parents. They had some success in improving key aspects of the school, including the good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. However there was a lack of understanding about what contributed to an appropriate curriculum for Kindergarten 1 and the correct identification of students with special educational needs.

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Self-evaluation was acceptable. The school had a wide range of self -evaluation arrangements. They regularly survey parents and students which helped to gather different views about the work of the school. However the outcomes were not reliable enough to create, implement and monitor a successful programme of school improvement. Consequently development strategies were not all fully informed. Performance management strategies were in place but they did not sufficiently inform professional development. There has been some progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents were regularly informed about both the academic and personal development of their children. Parents were extremely positive about the quality of education provided by the school in the questionnaires and discussions. Links with local businesses and the community were purposeful and varied. They had a positive impact on students' learning and personal development.

Governance was good. The Governing Body included representation from parents, teachers and owners. Two parents' groups contributed to governance with one focussed on school activities and the other on academic aspects. They met regularly and reviewed important aspects of the school's work, including the development plan and recent examination results.

Management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. The daily routines ran smoothly and the organisation of activities ensured that little time was lost during the day. However, the time allocated to Arabic as a first language over a week was less than required. Individual members of staff were well qualified and overall had the skills and training relevant to their responsibilities. The premises and facilities provided a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment well suited to supporting the curriculum. There were suitable work areas for teachers and students. Storage provision and facilities for display were plentiful. Accommodation was very well maintained. Fixtures, fittings and furniture matched educational needs and were of high quality and in very good condition. Effective use was made of all resources across the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had a designated special educational needs coordinator and students were identified using the KHDA categories. An entrance test was given to all new students to determine their ability levels in relation to attainment levels of the common core standards. Student observations and interviews were also used to identify these students. However, additional diagnostic tests were not administered by the school and as a result teachers, students and parents did not fully understand why the students were attaining below expected levels or what needed to be done to improve. All identified students had learning plans but the plans did not guide teachers in how to modify their curriculum and what teaching strategies would be most effective to address the needs of students. Although continuous professional development (CPD) on SEN provision had been provided for teachers, the impact was yet to be seen in classrooms. Differentiation was seen in only a few lessons. The school counsellor tracked the progress of SEN students but there was no formal system in place. Limited activities were offered to support the interests of the gifted and talented.

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

Teaching in Arabic as a first language in most lessons was effective but stronger in middle and high. Teachers' subject knowledge was generally strong but, in a few lessons, learning objectives were not clear and the planned activities did not always ensure that sufficient opportunities were provided for developing all four linguistic skills. Questions to students were varied with some use of open-ended questions especially in the high school, although teachers often relied on a few volunteering students to answer on behalf of all students. A key area for improvement was the quality of differentiation. A significant proportion of teachers did not always succeed in planning work that would enable students, with their varying needs, to move to the next stage of learning. In the majority of lessons students were given opportunities for group discussions.

The curriculum followed the MoE expectations although the time allocated for a few grades was slightly shorter than required. It generally prepared students appropriately for transition from one phase to another. The planning of the curriculum though did not always ensure that good opportunities were consistently provided for the progression in all linguistic skills particularly higher level reading and writing skills.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	141	30%
	Last year	43	11%
Teachers	37		79%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A minority of parents responded to their survey this year, more than double the number responding in the previous year. Almost all parents responding were satisfied with the quality of education and agreed that their child was making good or better progress in all subjects. Almost all parents believed that their child enjoyed school. They believed that the teacher's comments on their child's work helped them improve. A majority believed that the school offered a good range of subjects and that work across subjects was interesting and challenging. They believed that their children were well prepared for the next stage of their education, that they were safe in school and on the buses. Almost all parents believed that school welcomed students with special educational needs and monitored their progress. The majority of parents were not aware of international assessments and many had concerns about the frequency of teachers leaving or joining the school. No students were of an age to participate in a student survey.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

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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:
inspection@khda.gov.ae

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