

# The Private Religious Institute Inspection Report

Cycles 2 and 3  
Boys

Report published May 2010

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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.

The Private Religious Institute was inspected in February 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 Satwa, The Private Religious Institute is a private school providing education for boys from Grade 6 to Grade 12, ages 11 to 18 years. The school follows the Ministry of Education curriculum with extra provision of Islamic Education. The school is located in two buildings approximately 500 metres apart. There are plans to relocate the school to a new and larger campus. At the time of the inspection, there were 94 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents agreed that their sons were making good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science. Similarly, almost all agreed that their sons were safe, healthy and treated fairly at school. Most parents agreed that their sons liked school and that they were encouraged to become independent and responsible. A minority of parents disagreed that there was a good range of activities for the boys to enjoy. Likewise, a minority disagreed that teachers explained how they could help their sons at home with school work. Almost half of parents did not know how the school had responded to the recommendations of the previous inspection.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The Private Religious Institute provided an acceptable quality of education for its students. Attainment and progress in the five key subjects were at least acceptable, with the exception of English. In Islamic Education attainment was good across the school while progress was good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. Attainment in Arabic was good across the school, while progress was good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in Cycle 2 and good in Cycle 3. Attainment and progress in science were good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. However, attainment and progress in English were unsatisfactory across the school. A majority of students lacked the knowledge and skills in English expected at their ages. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good overall and were a key feature of the school. Students' civic awareness and their understandings of Islam were also good overall. Across the whole school, students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable.

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall. A few lessons were of high quality, but a few were unsatisfactory. Generally, teachers often dominated lessons and asked too little of their students. Students' learning in lessons was also acceptable overall. Almost all students were attentive during lessons but they were offered very few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Assessment of learning across the school was acceptable, and was an area for improvement. The quality of the curriculum was unsatisfactory, as it was too narrow. Health, safety and protection of students at the school were of acceptable quality. Students were safe and secure almost all of the time. Support for students was also of acceptable quality. Relations between staff members and the boys were positive and respectful.

The leadership and management at the school were acceptable overall. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory, due to the limited progress on the recommendations given in the previous inspection report. Links with parents and the community were acceptable, as were governance, staffing, facilities and resources. New information and communications technology (ICT) resources had recently been installed but their effects upon learning had not been realised. The Private Religious Institute fulfilled its promise to parents to provide an educational experience rich in Islamic Education and Arabic, yet students' overall learning experience were narrow.

## Key features of the school

- The students' outstanding Qur'an recitation skills;
- The students' good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic in Cycle 2;
- The students' good attitudes and behaviour throughout the school;
- Positive relationships between students and staff members across the school.

## Recommendations

- Raise attainment in English in all grades;
- Review and modify the curriculum to make it suitably broad and balanced to meet the needs of all students;
- Improve health and safety processes and procedures, especially in the science laboratory and establish a written child protection policy;
- Link assessment data to curriculum planning, support of students and overall school improvement planning.

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

In Islamic Education attainment was good across the school while progress was good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. In all grades almost all students had excellent Qur'an recitation skills and memorised a great number of chapters from The Holy Qur'an. In Cycle 2 most students had good knowledge of the meaning of the Hadiths and verses of The Holy Qur'an which they learnt. They also made good progress with understanding the key concepts and values of Islam. In higher grades, students developed detailed knowledge of key Islamic laws and better mastery of Qur'an recitation. However, they made less progress with developing the ability to explore how the values and principles they learnt could be applied to new and unfamiliar contexts, this was apparent in the work of only a few students.

Attainment in Arabic was good across the school while progress was good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. Almost all students could read texts aloud with accurate pronunciation and intonation. They understood the meaning of a good range of vocabulary but were less confident when independently exploring the meaning of unfamiliar texts. Almost all students in all grades had excellent listening skills. They responded to teachers' questions in good classical Arabic although mostly using short phrases or single-word answers. Almost all students in both cycles wrote good sentences in response to direct questions. Across the school, students' ability to speak or write extensively was less developed particularly in Cycle 3.

Attainment and progress in English were unsatisfactory across the school. While there were a few students who performed at expected levels, the majority had yet to develop the knowledge and skills appropriate to their years of study of English as an additional language. In Cycle 2 classes most boys had good listening skills but their speaking skills were just acceptable. Reading was limited to sentence-length tasks in most cases and there was little sustained reading done whereby students could read a paragraph. Writing skills were very limited, as most boys could not write simple sentences with correct spelling and grammar. Cycle 3 students' listening and speaking skills were better, but their reading and writing skills were similarly under-developed.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable in Cycle 2 and good in Cycle 3. Lessons were age-appropriate and linked to the prescribed syllabus. In Cycle 2 all students were coping with the topics covered which included numeracy and scale. Most students in Grade 6 successfully added and subtracted fractions. However, problem-solving strategies using fractions were insufficiently developed and students' abilities in this area did not meet international standards. Many students had an inadequate knowledge of multiplication facts. Attainment and progress of students in the senior cycle were good. During lessons most students demonstrated a good capacity for engaging in logical thinking.

Attainment and progress in science were good in Cycle 2 and acceptable in Cycle 3. Students made good progress in developing their understanding of physics and chemistry through practical activities. For example, in Grade 6 they completed tests on different substances and were able to classify them as acids or alkalis. Older students carried out investigations to find densities of different materials and developed a good theoretical understanding of work and power. Grade 8 students knew the constituent gases of the air and could talk about some causes of air pollution. In Cycle 3, students were developing their understanding of human physiology, for example through examining kidneys and through discussions about the causes of diseases.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good overall. Students behaved well in and around the school and on school transportation. They showed great respect for their teachers and courtesy towards visitors. They had excellent relationships with their teachers and with each other. Attendance was good and almost all students arrived in good time for their lessons during the school day. However, a significant minority of students did not arrive in time for the morning assemblies.

Students' civic awareness and their understanding of Islam was good overall. Most students had a good understanding of how a Muslim should behave and most of them recalled some of the examples they had learnt about everyday Muslim practice. A few of them offered intelligent ideas about how this behaviour could be applied in new and unfamiliar contexts in today's world. Most students also had excellent knowledge about Dubai and the other emirates; they also had understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. Only a few of the boys could give clear ideas about how their country could further develop and what they could do to help others.

Across the whole school, students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Most students had acceptable knowledge of Dubai's sources of income and the nature of its development. In the higher grades, a few students gave examples of the impact of the current economic crisis on people in Dubai, but most students did not have more than a basic knowledge and understanding of the causes of the crisis. Most students had a basic knowledge of the main global environmental issues and a few of the local issues, such as air pollution, noise and litter in some parts of the Emirate. Most of the students recognised the need to conserve water and energy as priorities for Dubai. However, too few of them could suggest effective ways of addressing these issues.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall. A few lessons were of high quality, and a few were unsatisfactory. There was some good teaching in Arabic, mathematics and science lessons. Overall the majority of lessons were of acceptable quality. Most lessons across the school were appropriately planned with objectives clearly stated. Most teachers knew their subjects well. There was some good use of ICT and other resources during lessons and all teachers used materials in addition to the text books in their lessons. Classrooms lacked displays to assist students in the presentation and consolidation of learning. Some teachers used strategies to engage students in active learning with varying degrees of success but the majority did not use a wide enough range of strategies to address the varied needs of students. Teacher-student interactions were always positive but many teachers dominated lessons, which limited the development of students' independent learning skills. Teachers' questioning of students usually promoted short, factual answers rather than developing independent and analytical thinking.

Students' learning in lessons was acceptable overall. Almost all students were attentive during most lessons. However students were offered very few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers often provided too much information, and consequently students were dependent, passive recipients of knowledge. Most students interacted well and collaborated on tasks when such opportunities were presented to them. Students' application of their learning to the real world was generally weak. They acquired large amounts of subject knowledge but they had difficulty in applying it to different contexts. The development of students' enquiry and research skills was limited, due in part to the low provision of integration opportunities across the curriculum. Students' higher order and critical thinking skills were being developed in only a few lessons.

Assessment of learning across the school was acceptable. Most teachers assessed the progress of students daily in lessons. A few teachers did not notice students who were falling behind during lessons. Records of students' attainment and progress were kept but the majority of teachers did not use assessment information effectively to plan next steps for each student. There was little information available to teachers to plan for students with specific learning needs. Assessment to promote learning was superficial and marking rarely included specific written comments. Students were informed orally if they were not doing well but no records of these interventions were maintained. Marking of homework was regular but did not include information on how the students could improve.

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

The quality of the curriculum provided by the school was unsatisfactory. The school modelled its curriculum along Ministry of Education guidelines. However in Islamic Education and Arabic the school provided additional lessons in line with its mission. Lessons in these areas constituted 60 percent of weekly class time. This allocation constrained the time available for all other subjects, especially physical education and the arts, and to a lesser extent English and science. This resulted in the school offering too narrow a curriculum. There was no curriculum committee in place to enable the school to review and develop, on a whole school basis, the curriculum on offer. Instead, each subject department reviewed its syllabi twice yearly and teachers within these departments consulted regularly to ensure that there was continuity and progression between the grades. The textbooks provided a framework for lessons and the majority of teachers attempted to go beyond the prescribed texts. Cross-curricular links were under-developed although a few initiatives had taken place, including projects on junk food, global warming and water conservation. The school had engaged in a limited number of extra-curricular activities spread throughout the school year. These included visits by the students to other emirates and to the financial district of Dubai. A number of clubs were also available to the students and these were linked to clear learning outcomes.



## How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for health, safety and protection of students at the school were acceptable. Students were safe and secure almost all of the time. Supervision of the boys was adequate. The outdoor playing area was small, and, although the science laboratory lacked the proper equipment, the procedures to be safe. Although there was no nurse on site, the school had a certified first-aider, and had an agreement with a nearby hospital to provide care for the students. Evacuation drills had been conducted regularly. Buses were well organised and monitored. The food provided to the boys was healthy and available each morning at break time. The school kept personal files on each student which included family and health information. Although support staff members knew the boys well, there was no written child protection policy in place.

Support for students was also acceptable. Relationships between staff members and the boys were positive and respectful. Advice and guidance was provided by social workers for each cycle, including guidance regarding post-secondary destinations. Although students' attendance was monitored closely, significant numbers of them were often late to morning assemblies without consequences. The school had behaviour policies which were clearly understood by all, and they were enforced as necessary. The school's monitoring of students' performance did not include an organised way of using assessment information to identify and support students attaining below expected levels, or those with learning needs. As a result, at least a few students were not provided with enough support in their learning and those who were achieving well were often not challenged to reach their potential.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management at the school were acceptable overall. The school's mission was shared by all and was realised in the academic, personal and social growth of the boys as they progressed through the grades. There were good relations amongst teachers and leaders, which had a beneficial effect on the students. Although there were subject leaders in place, the school had not consolidated monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. This meant that quality of each varied considerably.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning systems were unsatisfactory, due largely to the limited progress on the recommendations of the previous inspection team. The majority of those recommendations had not been successfully addressed. The school's improvement planning was not based upon close analysis of learning outcomes, in order to establish priorities for the future. Although there were written plans for school improvement and development, these lacked the necessary details to be truly effective.

Links with parents and the community were acceptable. Almost all parents indicated that they had good relations with the school and felt comfortable raising a complaint when necessary. Parents were supportive of the school, but none had taken a formal role to participate in school life. Reporting to parents took place quarterly but the amount of information shared with parents was limited. Other means of communication kept parents informed about school events and important dates. The school had links with the community for the purpose of field trips but no established links to broaden the opportunities of its students.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The school governors included representatives from the Government of Dubai and they had oversight of the school's operations. Annual meetings were held to report on the overall operation of the school. There were plans for a new local board of governors but it had yet to meet; thus, it had no effect upon students' experiences at the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources at the school were acceptable. Almost all teachers were qualified and competent in their subjects and were effectively deployed. The buildings, although small, were not over-crowded. They were not entirely suitable for all learning activities. For example, in science classes students were encouraged to take part in experiments but this practice was hampered by the physical constraints of the laboratory. Most teachers used resources well but the new ICT and language laboratories were not fully utilised to enhance students' learning.

## 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:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
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: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

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