

# Pristine Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Year 11

Report published May 2010

## Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report .....	2
Basic information about the school.....	2
How well does the school perform overall?.....	3
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations .....	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects? .....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning? .....	6
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students? .....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	9
Summary of inspection judgements .....	11
Next Steps.....	15
How to contact us.....	15

## 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.

Pristine Private School 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 Nahda, Pristine Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Year 11, aged three to 16 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 899 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable. Attendance, however, in the KG section was unsatisfactory. Most students were not native English speakers, with many learning English as a second language and Arabic as a third language.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all the parents that responded to the questionnaire were very supportive of the school and stated that their children enjoyed coming to school and felt safe and cared for at all times. Almost all reported that their children's progress was at least good in English, mathematics and science, but a significant minority felt that they were unsure or dissatisfied with their children's progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all parents agreed that behaviour was good, that their children worked hard, were expected to do their best and that they were being encouraged to be independent and responsible people. Most parents liked the range of activities available. Almost all parents believed that their children were treated fairly at school and they felt comfortable about approaching the school with a question or complaint. All but a very few reported that the school gave them good information about their children's progress. Only a few parents said that staff members were not good at showing concern for the care and welfare of their children and that they were not well informed about how they might be able to help their children at home with their school work. Most parents

believed that if they raised a matter of concern then the school would do something about it and that the school enjoyed good links with parents. Almost all reported that they felt that the school was well led. Almost half of the parents were unsure about the quality of the school's links with the local community and were unsure about the school's response to the previous inspection report.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Pristine Private School provided an acceptable standard of education for its students. In the KG children's attainment was good in mathematics and science and acceptable in English; however their progress in these subjects was good. In the primary section students' attainment and progress in all the key subjects were at least acceptable, except in Arabic where they were unsatisfactory. In the secondary school students' attainment and progress were good in all key subjects apart from Arabic, which was unsatisfactory and Islamic Education, where attainment was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. Students' results in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in 2009 were mostly above international standards, notably in English. Students' behaviour across the school was excellent, and they showed good understanding and respect for Islam. They had good awareness of the changes and growth in Dubai and its place in the world. They also had good knowledge and understanding of economic and environmental issues.

The quality of teaching was good in the KG and acceptable in the primary and secondary schools. Students were keen and eager to learn, however not all lessons were planned to provide opportunities for independent learning, or took into account the learning needs of the range of students. The majority of teachers talked for too long during lessons. Assessment was good in both the KG and secondary sections but acceptable in the primary school. This was mainly due to the lack of externally benchmarked assessments to inform the school on the progress of students. Across the school information from assessment was not always consistently analysed and used to modify lessons. The quality of teachers' marking varied across the school with little informative written feedback to students on how they could improve. The school had made significant improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection, and the curriculum was good across the school. There had been, for example, changes to the school day to introduce an extra break, a wider range of IGCSE subject choices, in addition to the newly introduced Advanced Level in Year 12. The arrangements for health and safety were good with equally good quality of support provided to the students.

The quality of leadership was acceptable with most departments being well led. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable and the school had made good progress towards meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection report. The school enjoyed good partnerships with parents and its 'open door' policy meant that parents were able to meet with the teachers and the Headmistress often. Although governance was unsatisfactory, the school was in the process of finalising the list of governors and was committed to ensuring that the first meeting would take place in the immediate future. The school buildings and resources for learning were of an acceptable level. However, teachers

were not always deployed well and the poor pronunciation skills of some members of staff hindered the progress of a few students.

## Key features of the school

- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of students and their good personal development;
- Good results of students at the IGCSE level;
- Strong leaders in most subject areas with the capacity to improve;
- The good start to learning provided in the KG and its positive learning environment;
- The lack of strategic overview of the school's strengths and areas for development.

## Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through:
  - systematic monitoring of teaching and learning against agreed criteria,
  - ensuring there are more opportunities for students to lead learning and that the needs of groups and individuals are met,
  - further developing opportunities in all lessons for students to learn through dialogue, research, critical thinking and collaborative learning;
- Develop a whole school assessment, marking and feedback policy and include reference to international benchmarks and ensure that all students know their strengths and areas for development;
- Develop whole-school strategic self-evaluation by:
  - establishing a governing body that includes representation from a range of stakeholders,
  - further developing the evaluative roles of all subject leaders.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the primary school and in the secondary school attainment was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. Across the school the majority of students could recite short chapters from The Holy Qur'an, but most students applied recitation rules poorly and often mispronounced the words. Students' knowledge of Islamic concepts was mostly in line with expectations as most students in Year 4, for example, could talk about expected table manners and recite some Islamic prayers that should be said before and after eating. In Year 6 most students were able to list examples of the major and minor sins. Although students in the secondary grades were progressing well, most were still working at levels below those expected for their ages. For example, the majority of students in Year 11 struggled to list and discuss the Pillars of Islam.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory across the school. Most non-Arab students made limited progress with their listening and reading skills and very limited progress with their speaking and writing skills. The majority of students could read texts but they did not understand their meanings and had poor comprehension skills. Poor writing meant that although most students in Years 3 and 4, for example, could independently write some letters of the alphabet and familiar words, others relied on copying text directly from the board. This was often accompanied by poor spelling and poor handwriting. Most students were unable to construct simple sentences correctly and poor grammatical understanding was evident. Most students were unable to use any Arabic to communicate, to structure simple sentences or to use vocabulary correctly. In the secondary school, students learning Arabic as a first language showed acceptable progress, especially in reading.

Attainment in English in the KG and the primary school was acceptable and at the secondary school it was good. Progress was good in the KG and secondary school and acceptable in the primary section. Students in the primary section made less rapid progress in Years 1 to 3 but good progress in Years 4 to 6. Children in the KG made rapid progress in all aspects of language acquisition. Older students spoke confidently on a range of topics, often giving mature presentations as well as conversational skills. Independent writing was well developed from Year 1 to Year 11 and students wrote in a range of styles and genres for good purpose; boys wrote more creatively than girls in the upper years but girls used more convincing techniques in their writing.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were good in the KG and in the secondary school and acceptable in the primary school. Students were developing good levels of broad mathematical knowledge, skills and problem solving strategies. They made a good start to their mathematics learning in the KG through active learning, followed by acceptable progress in Years 1 to 3 when, overall, students were insufficiently challenged. From Year 4 onwards, most students demonstrated confidence in a range of number work, much of it set in practical contexts. From Years 9 to 11, students showed proficiency in a range of progressively advanced topics, exhibited high levels of problem-solving skills and could use mathematical

strategies flexibly. In the last two years, mathematics results in IGCSE were good, with most achieving a grade in the A to C range in 2009.

Progress in science at all levels was good and continued to improve each year, as did attainment which was good as measured against age-related expectations. Across all years students exhibited knowledge and understanding of key concepts, theories and ideas in science. Students were able to employ reason, observation and investigation in their science lessons from KG1 to Year 11. Students enjoyed science and even the youngest learners were able to follow all the safety rules in a laboratory setting. Almost all students were confident using microscopes and other equipment, although they lacked experience with the use and application of the scientific method. Students performed well in the IGCSE examinations in physics, chemistry and biology.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Students across the school were polite, courteous and caring towards each other and respectful to their teachers. Students were keen and eager to learn and had positive attitudes towards their studies. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable, with a minority of Islamic Education and Arabic lessons not starting on time as a few students were not sure in which rooms the lessons were held. Attendance levels in the KG section were well below that of the rest of the school.

Students' Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was good. They showed good understanding and knowledge of Dubai's recent history and how it had developed. Students were respectful of Islam and were able to talk about how they could demonstrate this respect. Most students could talk about the value of living in a multi-cultural city, and could express well what value this had in their own lives.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good, with most students demonstrating a good understanding of the place of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and in the Arab world. They were aware of the current economic climate in Dubai and could link this to their lives and the impact it had on them as individuals. They had good knowledge of environmental issues, such as recycling, pollution and the need for desalination of water in Dubai.

### How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning were acceptable overall, with a few examples of good teaching across all phases but particularly in KG and Years 7 to 11. Most teachers had good subject knowledge although a few lacked language proficiency in English and Arabic and this led to poor pronunciation by students. The range of teaching strategies had developed since the previous inspection and there were a few examples of good student-led learning. However, strategies were still too teacher-directed in many lessons, especially Islamic Education and Arabic, and this inhibited progress and led to students becoming passive learners. Where teachers planned collaborative learning activities and used skilled questioning, students excelled so that dialogue, and therefore learning, was good. Where teaching was good, resources were well

used and students were challenged and made good progress. In the KG the children experienced a range of appropriate and stimulating learning activities guided by the teacher and using effective resources. However, in too many lessons, resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) were not used effectively by students to support or develop their learning

The quality of students' learning was acceptable overall. Students were always engaged in their learning but were rarely encouraged to take responsibility. For example, in the KG activities centre, adults were over directive and did not allow children to make choices and explore the range of resources available. When given opportunities students collaborated very well, often engaging in high levels of dialogue to improve understanding. Good teachers made effective connections between learning and the real world and encouraged students to make similar links with prior learning. There were some very good examples of collaborative learning in science where students carried out investigations, discussed their findings and drew appropriate conclusions. Nevertheless, enquiry and research skills were mostly under-developed and critical and higher order thinking was not a feature of many lessons. This led to a lack of challenge in learning for most students.

Assessment was good in the KG and Years 7 to 11 but only acceptable in the primary section, where there was a lack of consistent summative assessment to track progress and plan the next stages of learning. Assessment practices were inconsistent across the school and this led to variable quality of assessment data. Procedures for marking and providing feedback were uneven and often lacked rigour. Students were unaware of their strengths and weaknesses and did not know how to improve. In the KG, systematic observations of children led to informative assessment which in turn enabled teachers to focus upon individual children. This information also led to effective reporting to parents. Most teachers knew their students well and individual subject departments collected a great deal of data on attainment. However, the school lacked a general policy for assessing and analysing the data to inform teaching, learning and planning. Subject leaders' skills in analysis were under-developed.

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

The quality of the curriculum was good at all stages. The school had addressed all the specific curricular issues raised during the last inspection. The KG programme was broad and balanced and offered young children a stimulating start to their education. It included a sound emphasis on literacy and numeracy and exposure to a range of activities which developed personal and social skills, creativity and a knowledge about the world. However, it did not consistently offer children enough opportunities to explore and experience independently. The primary school curriculum was broad and balanced, with the expected key subjects enriched by creative arts and a modern foreign language. The secondary school courses offered clear continuity of learning and a broadly appropriate range of subjects for students to choose from. The school had also developed the current good range of subjects at Advanced Level. Review of the curriculum was ongoing and had led to modification of programmes at subject level. The school organised enjoyable learning events, such as the Mathematics Olympiad, Science Fair and English Fun Day, which enhanced students' learning. An appropriate range of extra-curricular experiences allowed students to develop personal and social skills, although links with the world of work and the community required improvement. Although most areas of the curriculum provided opportunities for the development of range of important skills, such as critical thinking, research and ICT, this was still under development and not always consistent across all subjects. Insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that the curriculum met the needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties.

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

The quality of protection was good. Measures were in place to ensure the safety of students in and around the school. For example, security guards were highly visible and monitored the school gates at all times. The facilities were attractive, well maintained and safe. For example, all medicines and laboratory supplies were locked. The school held regular fire drills and all students and staff were familiar with the exit routes. However, evacuation routes and assembly points were not clearly posted around the school. Healthy life styles were promoted by teachers, counsellors, the medical team and other staff. The school canteen provided a limited range of healthy food for the students to choose from. Child protection was handled in an appropriate manner with follow-up and monitoring in place. All safety rules were observed on the buses, in the classrooms and laboratories and on other parts of the campus.

The quality of support for students was good. Relationships between staff and students were respectful. The students reported that they felt safe, secure and cared for by their teachers. They knew that counsellors and other trusted adults were available to help them should any problems arise. College and career counselling was available for older students and was ongoing and regular. Incidents of misbehaviour were dealt with swiftly and good records were kept of all occurrences. The overall tracking of student progress was not consistent across the school and the school was aware that this was an area requiring attention. The management of attendance was good with policies and procedures in place to handle latecomers and those

absent. Support for children with communication and specific learning disabilities was not widespread or effective.

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

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. The school was well led on a day to day basis and the Headmistress and senior leaders of the school were committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the students. Although all staff members were aware of the school's vision, mission and aims, these were rarely reviewed at a whole school level by all stakeholders. The heads of department and teachers were clear on their roles and responsibilities and most departments were well led. Staff appraisals were conducted regularly by heads of departments. However, approaches were not consistent and not linked to an agreed whole-school set of criteria. Consequently, the senior leadership team did not always have an accurate view of the strengths and weakness in teaching and learning across the school. Although the school's executive committee met regularly, there were few opportunities for cross department meetings, as most departments functioned as independent units within the school.

Systems for self-evaluation and development planning were acceptable. Although the leadership team informally knew their school well, there were few measures to ensure that the school's performance was formally captured, analysed and used at a strategic level to drive the school toward improvement. For example, the school's action plan and systems were not based on a whole-school self-analysis that involved input from all stakeholders and covered a range of evidence sources. Most heads of department had conducted departmental self-evaluations though there was an inconsistency in the standards used. The school had responded well to the recommendations of the previous inspection report; for example, the curriculum review led to better provision for students.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. The school used a range of methods to communicate with the parents, such as the website, newsletters, student diaries and the school's annual year book. Parents were kept informed on a regular basis about the progress of their children and appreciated the 'open door' policy of the school. The school had productive links with the community that provided opportunities for the students to engage with their surroundings.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The school did not benefit from a governing body with a wide representation of stakeholders. However, the school was in the process of finalising the members of a governing body and was committed to holding its first meeting in the coming weeks.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There were sufficiently qualified teachers to deliver the curriculum. However, a few had poor Arabic or English language skills that had an adverse impact on students' learning. The school's policy on staff deployment was not yet thoroughly reviewed at a strategic level to ensure that students across the school had the appropriate support. The students benefited from a clean, well maintained learning environment. Most classrooms were colourful with displays of students work notably in the KG

and primary school. There were a range of resource rooms that were mostly used well to promote learning, such as the science labs, ICT rooms and libraries. However, not all of the facilities were available to the students, such as the swimming pool, which had rarely been used during the current academic year.

## 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:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Unsatisfactory
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).

Copyright 2010

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.