

# Mirdif Private School Inspection Report

## Kindergarten to Grade 6

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.

Mirdif 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 Mirdif, Mirdif Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 6, ages three to eleven years. The school follows a US curriculum. The Mirdif Private School moved into a totally new facility in October, 2009. At the time of the inspection, there were 167 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. The parents reported a high degree of satisfaction with leadership and the school in general. Most parents reported that communication with them was consistent and appropriate. Partnerships were in place with municipal organisations to engage the school with the community at large. The parents liked the school because they thought the school's focus on their children's health and safety, as well their academic growth, was appropriate. Overall, in both the survey and during interviews, the parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Mirdif Private School was judged to be an acceptable school. Attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Progress over time was good in Islamic Education, Arabic, English and science. In mathematics progress was good in the KG and acceptable in the elementary grades. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good at all stages. They were polite and welcoming to visitors. Students demonstrated tolerance and respect for one another. Their attitudes towards learning were good. They were aware of their responsibilities and showed an understanding of and respect for the Islamic faith. Their economic and environmental understanding was acceptable overall. They took great pride in their new school building and they were pleased to share it with the inspectors. There was no evidence of any litter and the students participated in a recycling program.

Teaching was good in the KG and acceptable in the elementary classes and there were a few outstanding lessons at all levels. Teachers were developing into reflective professionals and were supportive of the school's vision for excellence. Learning was good in the KG and acceptable in the elementary classes. Students participated in lessons and were open and communicative. Assessment of students' work was good in KG and acceptable in the elementary grades. The school had taken steps towards closer analysis of examination performance to identify trends and to track individual students' performance. Analysis of available external assessments was providing evidence of improvement in students' attainment compared to their peers in similar curricula. Arrangements for health and safety were good. The Principal and governing body had acted positively in improving the quality of the school premises, which had been unsatisfactory in the previous inspection. All staff members were attentive to the care and welfare of the students. The new buildings and facilities were attractively maintained, clean and secure. The school effectively promoted healthy eating in the canteen, offering a wide variety of foods and snacks. Child protection procedures were appropriate and well understood.

The quality of leadership and management of the school was good. The Principal had a clear vision for and a strong commitment to instructional and facilities improvement. Subject co-ordinators were beginning to form an effective layer of middle management. Self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous report. Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Regular and effective communication systems were in place. Governance was acceptable. A governing body had been established but had not yet had a significant impact on the operation of the school. Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding.

## Key features of the school

- The physical facility utilised the latest design for school safety and effective instructional practices;
- Improvements to the Islamic Education and Arabic programmes helped students to make good progress in their learning;
- The vision and passion of school leaders had resulted in significant progress achieved since the last inspection report;
- A very high priority was placed upon students' health, safety and welfare.

## Recommendations

- Use international benchmarks for student achievement to make comparisons with students of similar ages in similar schools;
- Raise the standards of attainment in all subjects by continuing to focus on the improvement of teaching and learning;
- Include a wider range of stakeholder representation on governing board.

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

Overall, students' attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable and students made good progress. Most students had good basic knowledge about Islam such as the Pillars of Islam and the prayers. Most students could memorise and recite the chapters they studied from Holy Qur'an with good pronunciation, although with limited use of recitation rules Tajweed. Most students knew about the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and had memorised the Prophet's sayings. They understood how Islam impacted on a few aspects of their daily lives and most of them could give practical examples of how they applied Islamic concepts to daily life and the civic and moral responsibilities of a good Muslim.

Students' attainment in Arabic was acceptable and the students made good progress. Most students were able to express themselves in Classical Arabic, using adequate vocabulary and enriching phrases. Most students in all grades had good extended writing skills on different topics. Almost all students were able to understand the teachers' instruction and followed it. Most students demonstrated good understanding of grammar rules. However, only a few students could apply the grammar rules to new sentences. For the small minority of non-Arab students, writing and speaking skills were underdeveloped.

Attainment in English was acceptable across the school and progress was good. In the KG, children could form letters neatly and read simple words. In Grade 1, students made simple conversations asking, for example, 'what does your pet eat?' By Grade 6 students used adventurous wider vocabulary, supporting their own creative ideas. Most students could read aloud accurately and select the most important phrases to show they understood what they had read. Many students enjoyed reading and took part in the school's reading programme. In their creative writing and journals, older students were able to construct more complex sentences, using for example, personification and alliteration. However, throughout the school, students made common errors in speaking and writing by incorrect use of prepositions and articles.

Attainment in mathematics was acceptable at all levels. Progress was good in KG and acceptable in Grades 1 to 6. Students in KG demonstrated good progress in developing number skills, counting by ones and by tens and most could create simple graphs. Students in a Grade 1 lesson were able to recognise halves of a whole and to put together halves of a geometric figure. Students in Grade 2 confidently completed a survey using student preferences and were able to compile and analyse the data, with teacher guidance. In Grade 3 they could identify and label equilateral, isosceles, and scalene triangles. By Grade 4 they could identify features of three-dimensional geometric shapes and could construct two types of pyramids. Students in Grade 5 were able to use simple algebraic expressions. Grade 6 students could identify the lowest common multiples and the highest common factors of various integers.

Attainment in science at all grade levels was acceptable and progress was good. Students in KG through to Grade 6 enjoyed science and were able to demonstrate an understanding of its key concepts, theories and ideas and apply them in the real world. All students, even the youngest ones, could handle investigations in the classroom or the laboratory and follow safety procedures. Older students were confident in using laboratory equipment such as microscopes and the Internet for interactive lessons. Students at all grade levels conducted age-appropriate research but it was not in-depth or rigorous and they lacked experience in the application of the scientific method.

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

Good behaviour and relationships prevailed throughout the school, with some restless, not disruptive, behaviour in Grade 1 being the only exception. Students' attitudes towards their work and others were good. Students reported that they felt safe, valued, and protected. Students enjoyed excellent relationships with their teachers. The school was orderly and safe. Almost all students arrived on time for lessons and at the start of the day. Attendance for the first term was acceptable.

Students' understanding of Islam was good. Almost all students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islam's values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. They could give good examples of how Dubai and the UAE has changed and developed. Almost all students were able to talk about the role of Islam in Dubai's culture. Most students were able to talk about local heritage, for example, pearl diving and the traditional art of 'Al Youla'. Almost all students performed well when given responsibilities inside or outside the classes.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Students understood the multi-cultural aspects of life in Dubai, its economic place in the world and their potential future contribution to Dubai's progress, but at a rather basic level. Although students could talk about environmental concerns like global warming, pollution and the need for conservation, they did not connect them enough to their own lives and how they could make a personal difference through regular and on-going efforts to practise conservation.

### How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was good in KG and acceptable in the elementary phase. All teachers knew their subjects well and were able to explain new ideas to students. Most lessons were planned in order to allow students to engage in a range of activities, particularly in KG. Lesson topics were shared with students, but intended learning outcomes were not stated by all teachers. When teachers used additional resources and supported learning with visual images, students' understanding was improved. However, in a few lessons, teachers followed the text book strictly. Although this resulted in the completion of the task, students did not always learn the concepts thoroughly. A common result was that a few students, particularly younger ones, became disengaged from their learning. Teachers treated this as unacceptable behaviour rather than finding ways to help them understand more clearly. When teachers questioned students, too often, they accepted the first answer offered without exploring what students were thinking and allowing them to learn from mistakes. The more able students were not given sufficient challenge to achieve their full potential. For example, the main method for extending students' learning was to provide extra worksheets practising the same skill. Students requiring additional help with their learning were given good support, both by assistance in their lessons and from additional resources provided by teachers.

Learning was good in KG and acceptable throughout the rest of the school. All students enjoyed their learning and were involved and actively participated most of the time. This was particularly good in KG where many lessons involved children in practical activities. Students, with the help of teachers, set their own personal academic objectives. While this helped them to take responsibility for their learning, it was at an early stage of development and not yet fully embedded in their routines. Students did not carry out independent research in order to develop their enquiry and evaluation skills. However, through their educational visits, students learned in different ways and presented what they had learned in displays around the school.



Assessment was good in KG and acceptable throughout the rest of the school. In KG teachers kept children under constant review and modified their learning programmes. Throughout the school there was a comprehensive programme of assessment at many levels; from work completed in class to formal end-of-session examinations. Although the school had collected extensive test data showing that students had made good progress since the start of the new school year, there had not been a full analysis of this information. Through their marking of work teachers knew the relative strengths and weaknesses of students. However, the practice of giving students guidance on their next steps was not a feature of all teachers' work and comments from staff were not well linked to students' personal academic objectives.

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

The curriculum was revised before the school year started and was of good quality. Teachers and school leaders included ideas from International Baccalaureate and the US textbook series used. The curriculum had breadth and balance and was comparable with United States curriculum standards. Progression was planned to prepare students for the next stage of their education. From the broader curriculum, teachers and school leaders developed a list of benchmark standards, upon which students were assessed. Although cross-curricular links were not well specified in the written curriculum, in practice lessons often bridged the subjects. Writing and mathematics, for example, were commonly parts of science lessons. Additionally, a number of special events combined subjects, for example, Nature Appreciation Day and Pet Day. There were regular planned opportunities for students to learn within the community and the local environment. For example, visits to a Guggenheim Exhibition for Grades 5 and 6, 'Kidzania,' Insects Study, Caring for Animals and the Dubai Zoo. The curriculum as implemented had not ensured that all students were well prepared for the next stages of education. A new curriculum director had started to develop the scope and sequence of the curriculum to ensure continuity.



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

The school building was new and provided a safe and healthy environment for students, teachers and other staff members. The health and safety aspects of it were outstanding. The facility was clean, attractive and well maintained with colourful classrooms and a great deal of students' work on display. There were no visible safety hazards and all chemicals and medicines were under lock and key. There was very effective supervision at all times and a security guard at the front gate to control access. Regular fire drills were held and well documented. Student transport was well managed and all buses, drivers and nannies were RTA compliant. All safety rules were followed on the buses, in the buildings and on the grounds. Knowledge of child protection requirements was widespread and all incidents were investigated and monitored. Record keeping across all areas was accurate and timely. Students reported that they felt safe, secure and cared for and knew they could go to adults with any problems that might arise. Relationships between staff members and students were respectful. Students had the opportunity to learn about healthy lifestyles and were able to purchase healthy snacks in the canteen.

The quality of support for students was good. A full-time nurse and part-time doctor provided medical services including immunizations and health screenings. The counsellor provided a number of services to students, parents and staff including classroom observations, teaching personal development and working with outside service providers. There were procedures in place to handle absent students and latecomers in an efficient manner. Incidents of misbehaviour were dealt with swiftly and a system of progressive discipline was working well. Although record keeping was good, there was no student information management system in place which would allow for oversight of a student's progress to inform decisions.

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

The leadership of Mirdif Private School was good. Leaders provided a clear sense of direction for the school. The leadership team displayed knowledge and understanding of methods to improve teaching and learning and were well-informed on current trends and theories of education. The leadership team was focused on raising student attainment and improving the curriculum. New personnel and improved facilities had assisted in achieving significant progress in this direction. A distributive model of leadership was practised permitting individual styles to flourish. Membership of an international curriculum development association provided current and timely information for the improvement of curriculum and methods of instruction. Senior leaders worked closely with teachers and other support staff to define the vision and objectives needed to achieve the vision.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Professional development needs were identified by utilising external standards, as well as surveying the staff to determine their perceived needs. Self-evaluation arrangements included input from staff, parents and students. Significant progress had been made in addressing the findings of the previous inspection.

Links with parents and the community were good. Parents reported effective communications with the school through meetings and written correspondence. The DSIB parent survey and interviews revealed a high degree of satisfaction with the school, its leadership and teachers. Parents felt comfortable in contacting the school regarding issues relating to their children. They worked with the school to create opportunities for learning experiences in the greater school community.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The governing body was committed to improving the quality of education for their students. However, although consulting parent committees had been established for academic matters and activities, their participation in the governance structure was not yet evident. Nevertheless, the governing body held the school leadership accountable for programme improvement.

Staffing, facilities and resources at the school were outstanding. Eleven new teachers had been appointed and intensive professional development had been provided prior to the opening of school. The new school buildings enhanced the teaching and learning environment. A bright, well supplied library was used well by the students, as was evidenced by the reading awards presented to them. Information and Communication Technology was provided in each classroom.

## 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	Elementary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Elementary
Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not applicable	Good

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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