

INSPECTION REPORT

Pristine Private School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Pristine Private School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.pristineschool.com
Telephone	04-2674299, 04-2675822
Address	PO Box 60830, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Mr. Peter Winder
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,221
Number of Emirati students	9 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 9th to Thursday 12th January 2012

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The context of the school

The Pristine Private School, opened in 1992, is situated in Al Nahda. The school enrolment had increased significantly from 899 students in February 2010 to 1,221 at the time of the inspection.

The school followed a UK curriculum from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to the Cambridge International Curriculum for students aged three to 17 years. Students' attainment and progress was measured from the Foundation Stage to Grade 9 through continuous internal assessments and formal examinations from Grade 4 onwards. Students from Grade 10 sat IGCSE examination in the key subjects inspected plus accountancy and business studies. In the post-16 phase, students sat AS and A-level examinations.

There were 147 full-time teachers with 44 new to the school. Most teachers were suitably qualified to teach their subjects. Teachers were supported at the Foundation Stage to Grade 3 by 14 caregivers and six classroom assistants. Students were arranged into 56 classes varying in number from six sections at each Foundation Stage to two sections in each year group by post-16. Students sitting post-16 certificated courses were few in number.

Less than one per cent of the students were Emirati. There were thirty-seven nationalities amongst the student body. At the time of the inspection the Principal had been in post for less than one week.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The school provided an acceptable level of education. It had ensured an inclusive and caring environment for students. Foundation Stage children's attitudes to learning and behaviour were outstanding and these were good in the other stages, with particular strengths at the post-16 phase. The school had responded well to the last inspection's recommendations but was not sufficiently pro-active in developing the full leadership or management capacity of staff or in ensuring consistently high quality teaching and learning. Recent developments taken by the school provided positive early steps to address these issues.

Attainment and progress in science in the Foundation Stage had improved to good. Primary students' attainment in English and mathematics had declined to an acceptable level, with progress also declining in

mathematics. The greatest decline was at the lower primary stage. Secondary stage students' attainment had improved to an acceptable level in Islamic Education and in both Arabic as a first and additional language. The progress of additional language Arabic students had improved to an acceptable level. The attainment and progress of post-16 students was good in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. No students sat post-16 examinations in English. The quality of teaching, students' learning and assessment had declined to an acceptable level at the secondary stage but was good at post-16. Partnership with parents and management, including staffing, facilities and resources had declined to an acceptable level.

Key strengths

- The improvement made in students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic in the secondary phase;
- Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour, particularly at the Foundation and post-16 stages;
- The caring and inclusive ethos provided for students;
- Students' learning experiences in science through their engagement in practical learning processes.

Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress, particularly in the primary classes, in Arabic as an additional language, English and mathematics;
- Improve teaching and learning through providing effective support so that all teachers and support staff meet the needs of students of all abilities;
- Define more clearly staff leadership and management roles and responsibilities to enhance their capacity to support learning at all levels;
- Strengthen self- evaluation by involving all stakeholders in reviewing the impact of the work of the school and by making better use of performance data;
- Support individual staff development and ensure that the recently introduced performance management system holds staff to account, provides appropriate support and identifies and shares good practice across the school.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attainment was good at the Foundation Stage in mathematics and science. It was acceptable in English. At the primary stage, students' attainment was good in science but was acceptable in the other key subjects, except for Arabic as an additional language where students' attainment was unsatisfactory. Secondary students' attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and in both Arabic as first and additional language. Students' attainment was good in English, mathematics and science. At post-16, attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education but was good in mathematics and science. In science, across the stages students attained above age-related expectations, especially in biology. Children in Foundation Stage classes effectively explored their environment and had acquired a range of scientific vocabulary. By post-16, most students related their learning to the real world and understood and could apply a fair test through practical investigations.

At the Foundation Stage, children's progress was good in mathematics and science but was acceptable in English. Students' progress was good in science in the primary stage but was acceptable in the other key subjects. Progress at the secondary stage was acceptable in Islamic Education and in both Arabic as a first and additional language. It was good in English, mathematics and science. While progress slowed in the lower primary in English, mathematics and science it increased again to above expected levels as students moved through the varying stages of the school. The progress of students with special educational needs was similar to that of other students.

Emirati students' attainment and progress was also similar to that of other students. They were attaining and making better progress in science and to a lesser degree in mathematics than they were in their other key subjects.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding at the Foundation Stage and good across the rest of the school. Students were very polite, behaved well and showed respect to staff and visitors. Children in the Foundation Stage were particularly effective in taking on age-appropriate roles of responsibility. Older students were keen to hold responsibility but opportunities offered by the school were too limited. Students across the school were aware of healthy food choices and life-styles. Attendance was acceptable overall. Students' civic and Islamic understanding was good across the school. Students understood the benefits of the multicultural nature of Dubai. They demonstrated good understanding of UAE heritage and culture, including Emirati traditions such as its costumes and food. Non-Muslim students understood important aspects of Islamic practices such as fasting in Ramadan and daily prayer. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was good. Students understood their civic responsibilities and they were able to contribute their views to influence school decision-making. They were less effective in ensuring that the school yard was kept free of litter. Almost all students knew about Dubai's development. Most understood the reasons for the changes and environmental issues such as pollution and the need to conserve resources.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Teaching was acceptable at all stages, except at post-16 where it was good. Teaching was most consistently strong in science, particularly at the post-16 stage. Teachers' common lesson planning approach including a focus on group work and cross-curricular links but this varied in quality. Teachers planned insufficiently to meet students' varying learning needs. Learning intentions were identified at the beginning of lessons but were not shared effectively with students in a minority of lessons. Learning intentions were not always appropriate to meet the students' needs, for example, in some English classes. Teachers used appropriate behaviour management strategies in most classes. They were developing their skills in using information and communication technology (ICT). The pace of lessons varied in quality. It was often too long and dominated by teacher talk and this resulted in students being too passive in their learning. Pace was good when teaching was focused and supported students' engagement in learning.

Students' learning was good at post-16 but was acceptable at the other stages. Almost all students enjoyed learning and responded well when asked to contribute to class activities or undertake personal research. They were most effective when summarising their responses to topic discussions. Most students collaborated well in group discussions, listened attentively to their peers and responded appropriately. Students were insufficiently aware of how they might improve their work. They were not clear about specific steps to improve. Students' links with the real world in the main activities being studied were not strong, except for science. In the non-key subjects students were making acceptable to good links in social subjects and in geography. Students across the stages were making some use of ICT to help complete their homework and project work. Some confidently supported their learning through using the interactive whiteboard, in geography for example, to help their presentations but this was inconsistent.

Assessment was acceptable across the school, except at post-16 where it was good. Teachers were developing their skills in using questioning to evaluate students' progress. They used assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning across the school. They marked students' work regularly, but focused their written comments insufficiently on helping students to improve. Staff members were developing their use of English National Curriculum level descriptors to observe record and report students' attainment and progress. Students' assessment results were analysed regularly and baseline assessments were used to identify students' educational needs. The school was not yet rigorous enough in tracking and monitoring students' progress to ensure that all students were suitably supported or challenged. At post-16, teachers were able to provide more effective personalised support for students.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

The curriculum was good in the Foundation, primary and secondary stages. It was acceptable at post-16. The broad, balanced programme of activities provided varied and interesting learning experiences and ensured good progression for most students. It was enriched by a significant number of 'special events' which stimulated students' learning. The annual curriculum review led to improved provision, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic. However, the use of assessment data to adjust curriculum plans was inconsistent across the school. There were limited opportunities for enquiry, critical thinking and research skills in most of the key subject areas. Despite many positive features, the post-16 curriculum was acceptable due to the limited number of subjects offered, particularly in relation to Cambridge International Curriculum examinations courses. Carefully managed transition arrangements ensured that students settled quickly to the next phase of their education. However, extra-curricular activities were limited in the range of activities available.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students were good. The school's had effective procedures for the safety and supervision of students in all areas of the school. Medical care, transport arrangements and fire-safety procedures were good. Staff training in relation to health and safety, especially transport, was up to date and comprehensive. Buildings and equipment were hygienic and kept in a good state of repair. There had been good progress in promoting an awareness of child protection issues and all staff had received training and systems had been put in place. The promotion of healthy living was acceptable.

The quality of support was good. Staff-student relationships were positive and most teachers knew students well. There were well understood systems to manage behaviour and these were applied well by most staff. Assemblies and counseling lessons contributed to the school's caring ethos. Advice on the choice of careers and further education options was available to students and parents. The school admitted students with special educational needs and disabilities and monitored their progress carefully. There was a willingness to collaborate with parents and outside agencies but this was often dependent on parents taking the initiative. The school was only partially successful in engaging with all parents whose children required additional support. In most classes, where teachers involved special educational needs students in interactive and practical learning, these students made progress equal to their peers. Systems to ensure regular attendance and punctuality operated effectively.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The former Headmistress had established a caring and supportive school environment for students. The new Principal had worked effectively with staff during his short period as an educational consultant in the school. This was helping to increase the school's capacity for improvement. The senior and middle managers had responded positively to very recent and significant changes which were helping to develop their leadership skills. This included initial steps to enhance communication at all levels of the school and to formalise leadership roles and responsibilities.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. An increased focus on evaluating teaching, learning and attainment helped the school gain a more accurate evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement. A recently introduced performance management system was at an early stage in identifying and sharing good practice. A professional development programme for managers and teachers linked to performance review was being established. The school's improvement plans had helped ensure good progress in meeting the recommendations from the last inspection. Action plans were broadly appropriate but the school's ability to evaluate the impact of its actions was still developing.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. A Parent Council helped the school with fundraising and special events. Useful reports were sent to parents regarding their children's school examination performance. They had insufficient information on how their children were progressing in class or how they might help them learn. Parents received regular information through the school web-site but did not have access to SMS to help enhance their ability to communicate with the school. A few parents had contributed to educational aspects of school life but this was underdeveloped.

Governance was acceptable. The governing body included educationalists and business representation as well as a parent member. They supported the school through meetings with the senior leadership team. They were less effective in holding the school to account for educational aspects of its work. Governors consulted with parents but this required further attention.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Managers were generally effective in supporting the school despite a lack of formal training or clear remits. Some Arabic teachers were insufficiently qualified. School accommodation met the needs of the expanded student numbers. However, prayer rooms were insufficient to support prayer or teaching of prayer as part of the curriculum. Interactive whiteboards were being used regularly and effectively and the science and ICT laboratories were appropriately equipped. The library had insufficient contemporary reading resources to support Islamic Education, Arabic and English.

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 that responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	226	27%
	Last year	311	35%
Teachers	123		85%
Students	22		2%

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

Almost all teachers and most parents were positive about the school and thought it was well led. A majority of students were happy with most aspects of school life. Some parents and students were concerned over the constant changes in teaching staff and the quality of some teachers' Arabic and English language skills. Parents wanted more information on their children's progress in class and strategies to help them learn. A majority of parents and less than half of the students who responded thought the school offered a good range of subject choices. Only a few students thought that the school provided a good range of clubs and after-school activities. A minority of students felt that they were encouraged to make healthy life choices. Some teachers who responded were unhappy about the quality of communication in the school, particularly in relation to the appointment process for new staff.

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.

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.

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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