

INSPECTION REPORT

Deira Private School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Deira private school

Location	Al Twar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.deps-sch.ae
Telephone	04-2641595
Address	P O Box 231959, Dubai
Principal	Sharyn Ann Grieve
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-11 / Foundation Stage 1-Year 6
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	225
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	52 (23%)
Date of the inspection	13th to 15th January 2014

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The context of the school

Deira Private School, located in Al Twar, provides education for girls and boys aged three to 11 years, from the Foundation Stage to Year 6. Students in the school were mainly Emiratis and other Arabs with smaller numbers of Indian and Pakistani students. About one quarter of the students studied Arabic as a first language. The school had identified 52 students as having some form of special educational need. At the time of the inspection there were 225 students on roll. The school had a Foundation Stage and a primary phase (Years 1 to 6) following the English National Curriculum using the Cambridge International Primary Programme. There were 25 teachers including the principal and 18 teaching assistants. Teachers had a range of academic and teaching qualifications, and most were suitably qualified for the subjects and age groups they were teaching. The school roll had increased significantly since the last inspection.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment, progress, teaching and learning in English and mathematics as well as the provision in the Foundation Stage;
- Students' personal and social development including their awareness of Islamic values and their involvement in the environment;
- The curriculum, which provided a wide range of enrichment activities and was thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of all students;
- The school's outstanding arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students and the support offered to ensure their achievement and well-being.

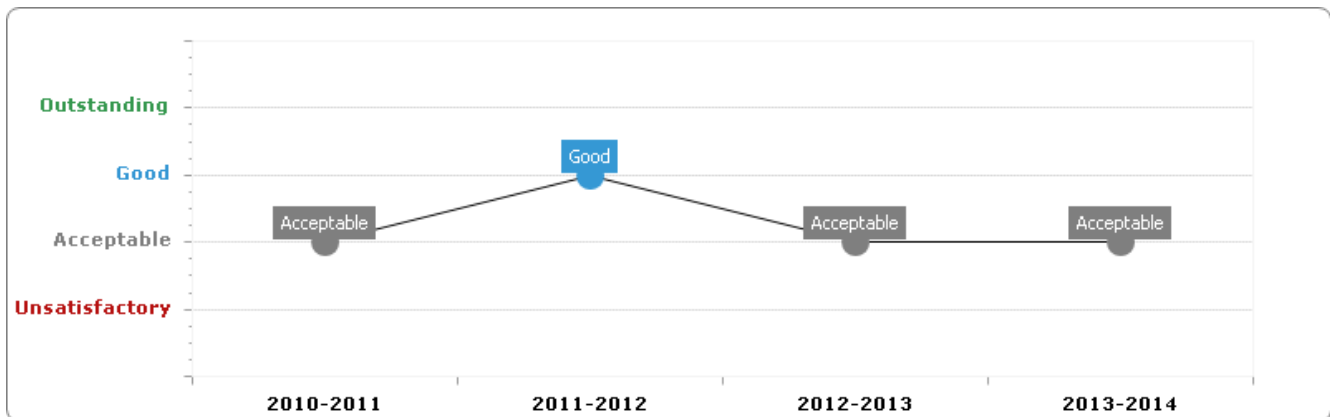
Recommendations

- Raise the attainment and progress of students in Islamic Education, Arabic and science in the primary phase through carefully targeted support and better teaching.
- Ensure that students are more involved in their learning by encouraging their thinking skills and providing more opportunities for practical and investigative work, especially in science.
- Improve the quality of marking in the primary phase to ensure that students know exactly what they must do to improve, and involve them more in the assessment process.
- Use available data to identify priorities for inclusion in the school development plan, providing clear action plans with deadlines and well-focused goals which are regularly evaluated.
- Review the time allocated to Arabic and ensure that the school is compliant with Ministry of Education requirements.

Progress since the last inspection

- Progress in English and mathematics in the primary phase had improved although attainment and progress of science was only acceptable.
- Lesson planning and the assessment of progress were now better matched to the English National Curriculum.
- Teaching had improved as a result of ongoing professional development which had been focused on planning, differentiation and questioning techniques.
- There had been ongoing improvements in the quality of support.
- The time allocated to Arabic was still not sufficient to comply with Ministry of Education requirements.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Students' attainment was good in the Foundation Stage and in primary English and mathematics. It was acceptable in the other primary subjects. Most students had a basic knowledge of key concepts in Islam and a secure knowledge of compulsory and communal prayers. In Arabic as a first language, students demonstrated strong listening skills; they spoke fluently although accuracy levels were variable. Reading skills were secure for most students but very low for a few. Writing skills were underdeveloped with little evidence of creative writing. Students of Arabic as an additional language had appropriate reading and listening skills, and could understand and respond to instructions. Their writing skills were very limited. In English, students' reading skills were weak although the school was working hard to improve reading. Basic number skills were effectively promoted in the Foundation Stage and children could count from 1 to 20. By the end of Year 6, students could carry out long multiplication, measure lengths, calculate perimeters and use statistical diagrams. In science, children in the Foundation Stage were beginning to learn basic scientific investigation skills but, in the primary phase, there were insufficient opportunities to develop such skills through practical and investigational work.

Students' progress reflected their attainment, except in Arabic as an additional language where progress was good. They made acceptable gains in all aspects of Islamic Education but their progress in applying recitation rules and memorising chapters of the Holy Qur'an was not so strong. Students steadily developed their listening, speaking and skills in Arabic as a first and as an additional language. However, writing skills were less well developed with too much copying of text and limited progress in independent writing for the majority of students. In English, students made good gains in their understanding of grammar, punctuation and writing structure. They were able to use and apply their increasing knowledge when writing. In mathematics, students made good progress in numbers and shape through a range of basic activities and play. In the primary phase, progress in algebra and developing mathematical thinking was less evident. Progress in science was adequate but inhibited by an over-reliance on worksheets that did not provide sufficient challenge.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoyed learning and had begun to develop good independent learning skills. They took responsibility for their own learning and learned through exploration and investigation which helped them to develop their thinking skills. This was not the case in the primary phase where students had too few opportunities to develop their practical and investigative skills. Too much of their work was focused on

completing worksheets. Most students worked well individually and in groups but collaborative assessment was rare. Students were offered too few opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Teachers' marking rarely involved a dialogue with students on how their work could be improved or what they must do to meet their targets. In the best lessons, students were challenged and encouraged to think critically through open-ended questions. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, students were challenged to think of ways to recover salt from a solution. Acceptable use was made of information technology to enhance learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

All aspects of personal and social development were good. Students were well motivated and showed high levels of interest and engagement in their learning. They were considerate, polite and respectful to each other, as well as adults and visitors to the school. Students were very confident and responded positively to one another. Healthy eating was promoted very well across the school and students understood the importance of healthy living and physical fitness. Attendance was acceptable. Almost all students arrived on time for school and for lessons.

Children in the Foundation Stage took the initiative with Islamic greetings and demonstrated Islamic values such as kindness, friendliness and co-operation in their school life. Students in the primary phase appreciated the importance of Islam in modern society in Dubai and they respected and appreciated Islamic traditions. They could identify and talk in depth about local traditions and cultural heritage. Students were able to talk confidently about Dubai's multi-language and multi-cultural society. Their appreciation of the arts was supported well by the school.

Students showed an awareness of their community and took pride in their contribution to various community and charitable projects. They demonstrated a similar understanding and respect for the environment and were actively involved in a range of environmental projects ranging from recycling to planting trees around the school. Students demonstrated a good work ethic and showed an enthusiasm for helping and supporting one another. Most of their work and projects were of a very high standard.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. Its quality ranged from unsatisfactory to outstanding. Teaching in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and science was not

as strong as in English, mathematics and the creative arts. A notable strength of teaching lay in teachers' planning. Resources were plentiful and used well to enhance learning. In lessons, teachers' strong subject knowledge enabled them to pose searching questions which challenged students' thinking and extended their knowledge. For example, in a Foundation Stage lesson, children were able to identify and distinguish between fruits and vegetables and sort them according to their health benefits. In science, there were gaps in some teachers' scientific knowledge which led to an over-reliance on worksheets and too little scope for students to learn through experimentation.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. The tracking of students' progress was not well embedded in practice. Most teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses very well. However, teachers were not skilled enough at analysing and using assessment data to identify weaknesses in students' achievement and to decide the next steps in their learning. The marking of students' books was regular and conscientious but not sufficiently focused on identifying what they needed to do to improve. Consequently, the majority of students were not involved in their own learning as well as they could have been. Assessment procedures were good for students with special educational needs and for children in the Foundation Stage where they effectively identified learning needs and subsequent progress. Students' evaluation of their own work and that of others was not widely used as part of the school's assessment procedures.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good. It was broad, balanced and creative with a focus on planning for progression across the school. A high priority was placed on personal and social development, which promoted good behaviour and gave students the confidence to take on responsibilities and contribute to the life of the school. The curriculum was reviewed regularly to ensure that coverage was sequential and suitably adapted to meet the needs of students: in particular the high number of new students joining the school. An example of this was seen in the changes made to the way reading was taught and these changes had helped to raise standards. In some parts of the curriculum, there was an over-reliance on the use of worksheets and not enough opportunities to develop thinking skills. Good enrichment activities and extra-curricular provision extended students' knowledge and provided them with memorable experiences.

The curriculum was well designed to meet the needs of all students, especially in English and mathematics. Students of different abilities were identified on lesson plans and appropriate activities were provided for them. Students with special educational needs were supported well by shadow teachers or learning assistants who had a good awareness of their learning objectives. Gifted students and those with above

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average ability were given activities or extra work at a more challenging level. There was a range of interesting subjects on offer at the after-school Monday Club including art, music, drama, sewing, cooking and photography allowing students to learn new skills and develop their knowledge and understanding.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provision at the school was outstanding. Rigorous and robust procedures were in place that ensured all students and staff benefited from a safe and secure environment. Records of evacuation and 'lock down' drills were up-to-date and well documented. Arrangements for students who travelled on buses were excellent. Students were very well supervised throughout the day by adults and this included arrival and departure from school. All medicines and medical records were kept securely in the clinic and the provision for students' medical needs was outstanding. Healthy living featured highly in the school with termly focus weeks aptly named, 'One healthy week one healthy lifetime'. Buildings and classrooms were maintained in excellent condition. All staff were suitably trained and fully aware of child protection procedures.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Relationships between staff and students were excellent, creating a purposeful learning environment. Well-trained and knowledgeable professionals provided good levels of support both in the classroom and in the support room to ensure that students were fully included. Students with special educational needs were well supported, enabling them to access the curriculum and make progress similar to other students in the class. Good behaviour was typical due to a consistent approach by staff. Procedures for recording attendance and punctuality were systematic and parents were contacted if a student failed to appear. Students could seek advice and support on academic or personal issues from a wide range of adults. They felt confident that concerns would be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. Student Council members supported the more vulnerable students in the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The principal was highly respected by staff, parents and children. She provided a clear direction for the school based on a clear understanding of what was needed to be done. Purposeful leadership had ensured an appropriate focus on the improvement of teaching and learning through well-focused professional development. Senior leaders provided committed support for the school but their engagement was relatively new and they lacked sufficient professional development for their role.

Relationships between leaders and staff were professional and supportive. Strengths in the Foundation Stage, as well as English and mathematics, were not shared across the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Leaders, in particular the principal, had a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation was realistic and mostly accurate but documentation lacked focus and evaluation. Departmental leadership was insufficiently focused on identifying and addressing shortcomings. Lesson observations were regular and professional development was supportive but not directly linked to priorities arising from lesson observations. Some staff did not feel involved in decision making. Recommendations raised in the last inspection had mostly been addressed but assessment information was still not being used to identify trends in students' performance or to inform the school's improvement planning.

The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was good. Parents were engaged in decision making and their views were sought regularly and acted upon. Feedback from parent questionnaires was mostly positive and parents valued reports, meetings and involvement. Written reports were regular and included detail of National Curriculum attainments but lacked explanations or next steps. Parents had considerable regard for the leadership of the principal but expressed some concern about the level of communication about day-to-day matters. Links with the wider community were developing with visits to the Mamzar Home for the Elderly and involvement in a range of charitable events.

Governance was acceptable. Governance included a range of stakeholders including parents. They played a significant role in supporting the school and holding it accountable for its performance. Representatives visited and reported back on the school at regular intervals. They had a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors were particularly active in offering support for professional development and the development of resources. They actively sought out parents' views and responded to any concerns raised. Most statutory duties were met but governors had failed to ensure that the curriculum complied with Ministry of Education requirements in terms of Arabic teaching.

The school was managed well. Routines and procedures were very effective. Teachers were approved by KHDA, but were not always deployed to their curriculum strength. The campus was spacious and the ground floor was accessible. The library was well stocked and there were designated, well-resourced rooms for information and communication technology (ICT), music, science and art.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Across the school, the attainment of Emirati students was acceptable in all subjects. On entry to the school children were well below expected levels and made good progress in English and mathematics in both phases, and satisfactory progress in Arabic and science. Progress in Islamic Education was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. In lessons, students were well engaged because they were supported and their individual needs were met. They were fully included in all activities. There were good links with parents who willingly supported their children at home. Attendance for Emirati students was acceptable.

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

Students with special educational needs (SEN) made acceptable progress overall across the school. Progress in English and mathematics was good because the support focused well on students' needs. This was less the case in Islamic Education, Arabic and science. Learning support assistants and shadow teachers were trained on a regular basis to ensure the students' learning needs were matched to their work, particularly in English and mathematics. This was mainly due to detailed individual education plans which were written as a result of on-going assessment and observations by teachers and support staff. The school provided more challenging work to gifted students. Progress was monitored through regular written assessments in English and mathematics. This information was analysed and subsequently used in curriculum plans to ensure detailed learning targets were set for students with SEN.

The school had an effective admissions policy and SEN policy. The school accepted students with SEN if it was able to meet their long term needs. Students with SEN were fully included and took an active part in all aspects of the curriculum. Parents were involved at all stages through the referral system. Regular meetings were arranged between parents and teachers to discuss progress. The school also offered workshops, advice and guidance to parents to ensure a consistent approach between home and school. Leaders had extensive expertise and had recently developed training for support staff working with SEN students. Most teachers were clear about how to modify the curriculum to address SEN needs in their subjects.

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

Teaching in Arabic across the school was adequate. Teacher's subject knowledge was secure and most lessons had clear objectives which were shared with students. In a few lessons, especially in the upper grades, teachers talked too much, restricting opportunities for students to be involved in their learning. In too many lessons, teachers had modest expectations of students. Questions to students were often closed so that thinking skills were not developed. This also limited opportunities for further developing extended speaking skills. In most lessons, teachers used ICT, whiteboards, flash cards and textbooks but rarely differentiated activities to meet the needs of different students particularly the less able. In lessons, fewer opportunities were given to students to develop and practice their writing skills.

The curriculum followed the Ministry of Education curriculum. The arrangements for transition between year groups was adequate. The curriculum was not reviewed regularly to ensure that it was meeting the needs of all students. The amount of time allocated by the school for Arabic as a first language did not fully meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education for the subject. Additional activities to support students' knowledge and awareness were limited. The curriculum was not modified skilfully enough to meet the needs of all students, for example to address the poor performance of a minority of students or to improve the limited creative writing skills.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	109	66%
	Last year	74	65%
Teachers	25		100%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

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

Over half of the parents responded to the survey, a similar proportion to the previous year. Parents were generally positive about the school and felt their child was making good progress in English but were concerned about progress in Arabic and Islamic Education. Almost all parents were satisfied with the quality of education and agreed that their child enjoyed school, was looked after and kept safe. Almost all parents agreed that school reports and meetings were regular and helpful although they felt that the school was not always so good at communicating organisational arrangements. For example, they did not always find out about opportunities to attend assemblies or help children in the school to read. Most parents felt that the school was well led. Teachers felt encouraged to integrate students with special educational needs into the school. They felt that their professional development needs were met and the school was led well. A minority of teachers felt that school leaders did not listen to their opinions.

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

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