

Al Ameen Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Secondary

Report published May 2011

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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.

Al Ameen Private School was inspected in March 2011 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

Al Ameen Private School is located in Al Nahda, providing education for 478 boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 11, aged three to 16 years. The school followed the English National Curriculum. The students' attendance reported by the school for the last session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents were very satisfied with the quality of education. All parents reported that they were pleased with their children's progress in Islamic Education. Most parents were pleased with progress in Arabic as a first and additional language, English, mathematics and science. Most parents thought teaching was good and that their children learned well. Almost all parents were happy with the level, type and quality of communication with the school. They agreed that reports were informative and found parent-teacher meetings helpful. Most felt behaviour was good and well managed and that resources were good. Almost all parents thought their children were treated fairly by the school and that provision for students with special educational needs was good. They said the school promoted healthy lifestyles; a majority believed that the school helped their child make good choices about their future education and career. Almost all parents indicated that the inspection reports had led to improvements at the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school provided a good quality of education overall. There had been good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report, and the school performed effectively in almost all aspects of its work.

Students showed good behaviour and respect for their teachers and peers. Teaching, learning and assessment were good and this resulted in good attainment and progress in all key subjects. The curriculum was of high quality. The arrangements for the health and safety of the students were good. All staff members took their duty of care seriously, and health and safety policies and procedures were followed. The buildings and facilities were safe, secure and well-maintained. Caring staff members knew the children and their families very well. The school had developed an appropriate range of self-evaluation activities, most of which had positive effects upon teaching and learning. Outstanding relationships with parents and the wider community contributed strongly toward the success of the school. Home-school links were highly effective. The quality of leadership and management of the school was good. The Principal and her senior colleagues had both vision and a personal commitment to the success of the children. The school demonstrated a strong capacity for continued improvement.

Key features of the school

- Continuing outstanding partnerships with parents and the community;
- Good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report;
- Good attainment and progress in all key subjects;
- Effective leadership and management which led to continued improvement;
- The commitment to continuing professional development for teachers.

Recommendations

- Provide more regular and effective learning opportunities for students to develop research and enquiry skills across the curriculum;
- Further develop assessment methods to identify students with special educational needs and special talents;
- Increase students' use of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to enhance learning;
- Widen the curriculum to improve the range of student choices in the upper stages of the school.

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

Attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education. Most students had sound knowledge of Islamic concepts and could list and explain the Pillars of Islam and the Pillars of Faith, for example, the Prayer, the Fasting and Zakat. Most students had detailed knowledge about the life of most prophets and knew the qualities of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) such as honesty and truthfulness. They could list many of the Prophet's companions and knew their contributions to spread the message of Islam. Most students had good knowledge about Islamic values in the verses of The Holy Qur'an, for example, equity and mercy. A few students had limited understanding of how to apply Islamic knowledge and values in their lives. They were not always clear about their duties and responsibility as members of the wider community.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were good. Almost all students across the school listened well for overall meanings and key ideas. Most students could speak about themselves and their family using common phrases. In the Primary years most students were able to read and write sentences and short paragraphs with few errors. After practice they could recognise singular and plural nouns. They also distinguished between different phonemes and sounds. In secondary classes most students were able to read long paragraphs aloud making only a few errors. Students demonstrated good spelling skills in dictation and applied grammar rules correctly. They were able to write basic short paragraphs. A minority demonstrated acceptable extended writing skills.

Attainment and progress in English throughout the school were good, with some outstanding aspects. In the Foundation Stage, children listened attentively and responded to questions with relevant answers. They made good progress with phonics. In both the primary and secondary years, students' listening skills were very well developed. Almost all could speak fluently, confidently and at length. However, in many cases, pronunciation was not clear. Students could read and understand both factual and imaginative texts. Their attainment in extended reading was noteworthy. They wrote with good sentence construction, although some students made spelling errors consistently. In the secondary phase attainment and progress were good. Attainment in examinations in 2010 exceeded international averages. Listening and speaking skills were very good. Most students showed good appreciation and understanding of the themes in modern, relevant poetry. Students' writing was well presented, well-structured and thoughtful.

In mathematics, attainment and progress throughout the school were good. In Foundation Stage, most students could count to 30 and order the numbers correctly. They identified simple shapes correctly and collected data to make block graphs. Most primary students were very competent in number, shape and data handling. They often worked successfully at levels well above those expected for their ages internationally. Secondary students showed very good recall of number facts and could apply them correctly in everyday practical situations. By Year

11 they showed considerable competence in number, algebra, shape and data handling and succeeded at high levels in external examinations.

Attainment and progress in science at all levels were good. Most Foundation Stage children could observe and describe a range of properties relating to materials. By Year 3 most students had developed good understanding of the need for fair testing and could apply fair tests to experiments using magnets. By Year 9 almost all students could plan their own investigations and make appropriate adjustment and corrections to them if required. In Year 11, physics students had acquired good practical skills. For example, they accurately measured the refractive index of glass. At the end of primary all students achieved at expected levels of attainment with a significant number well above. Secondary students achieved well above international standards in their external examinations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Behaviour was generally very good both inside classrooms and around the school. Almost all students had very good relationships with others and with their teachers. They had very positive attitudes towards school and learning. They approached their school work in a calm, mature way. Almost all arrived punctually at school. The reported attendance was acceptable and the school's managers were engaging with parents in an effort to improve attendance levels.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good. Most students demonstrated good understanding of Islam and the impact of Islam on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. Most students could list and discuss some of the local traditions and the nature of modern Dubai, such as local games and camel racing. A majority of students were able to talk about aspects of Dubai's multi-language and multi-cultural society. Most students demonstrated a positive approach to their roles and responsibilities as members of the school community.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Most students mentioned good reasons for the fast economic growth in Dubai, such as good leadership and planning. Most students spoke about huge projects in Dubai such as the Metro and the Burj Khalifa. Almost all students had good awareness of the importance of keeping the environment clean. The school's environmental community guided students about the dangers of pollution and they were also involved in enhancing the school grounds with a range of plants. There were boxes in school for recycling waste which were used regularly.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good. Almost all teachers displayed good knowledge of their subjects. Most teachers used a range of suitable teaching strategies during lessons and the pace of their lessons was good. Almost all teachers planned their lessons well, which included clear learning objectives and outcomes. At times the strict adherence by a minority of teachers to the planning structure inhibited them from responding effectively to unplanned learning

needs. During lessons teachers made good use of a wide variety of resources, including ICT and interactive white boards. In general, teacher questioning was of a high standard. There was good development of critical thinking skills in a minority of lessons and this was particularly evident in Islamic Education lessons. Most lessons were well matched to students' learning needs. In a minority of lessons this was not always achieved.

The quality of learning was good at all levels. All students had positive attitudes to their learning. Almost all students were aware of their progress and engaged in appropriate activities to improve. When given opportunities all students collaborated well in paired and group work. In most lessons the students made connections between different areas of learning, resulting in good cross-curricular development. Students' enquiry and research skills were well-developed in most subjects. Students used ICT competently to make presentations, do project work, create 'blogs' and websites. There was insufficient independent research using ICT in lessons.

Assessment throughout the school was good. In the Foundation Stage, there were comprehensive day-to-day assessments of the early learning goals. They were recorded regularly and most led to appropriate actions. Individual students' achievements were discussed by the Foundation Stage team on a weekly basis. Parents were regularly informed of their children's progress. In the primary classes, assessment occurred on a daily basis and was used effectively to help individual students when appropriate. There was a programme of continuous assessment, unit and topic tests for each concept, end of half-term and end-of-term testing. Teachers analysed students' answers in assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses. All data was recorded and discussed at planning meetings which improved lesson planning. In Year 8, an external agency was used effectively to assess students' aptitudes, abilities and skills in relation to career choice and secondary course options. There was a variety of assessments during the year and these provided effective challenge and support as appropriate for individual students. Teachers' marking was regular, accurate and mostly informative. Students were effectively involved in self-assessment and setting their own targets for improvement.

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

The curriculum was of good quality. The school's modified National Curriculum for England had a clear rationale. It embraced the school's mission, and organised planned activities in the context of the UAE, alongside the requirements of IGCSE. It enabled all students to sit examinations in eight subjects. There were additional and effective learning opportunities for very able students and for those with special educational needs. The curriculum was reviewed annually and there were monthly meetings that ensured good continuity and progression, and informed lesson planning. Cross-curricular links were outstanding. There was a well- designed programme based around social studies in which many other subjects were involved. This had strong links to everyday life. Cross-curricular links were particularly evident between subjects such as art and English, science and English, science and mathematics. They included, for

example, drawing characters from stories, writing comprehension for science articles, and using formulae in physics. The range and quality of the well-attended extra-curricular programme was considerable. It provided considerable enrichment of students' learning experiences. These included a wide range of clubs and inter-school competitions. Further opportunities to developing students' creativity were provided through real life problem-solving activities. There had been a considerable range of educational visits. Nevertheless, curricular choices were limited for older students and those studying an additional language.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for the health, safety and security of students were good. The premises were carefully supervised, very well maintained and clean. The arrival and departure of buses were very well supervised. Staff took particular care when allowing students to join their parents in cars, though some students still had to negotiate the roadway alone. Emergency evacuations were carried out regularly. Medical services were very professionally administered and the nurse kept detailed records of treatments. The school had developed a good safety policy for laboratories and the ICT room and students observed appropriate safety guidelines. Teachers promoted a healthy diet and encouraged exercise. All staff members had received training in child protection. A few were not clear about procedures.

The quality of support for students was good, as were relationships between staff and students. Students had good advice on course choices and on careers from Year 8 onwards. The school organised speakers to give information on careers. Provision for students with special educational needs was appropriate although process for the identification of those students required further development. Talented students were not consistently identified and challenged. Although additional support and tuition were available, there were no individual education plans. The school offered a high quality programme for reading reinforcement, with regular tests and individual tuition from reading coaches. Teachers offered some extension work for higher achieving students in English and mathematics. The school kept accurate records of punctuality and attendance. Parents received requests to co-operate in ensuring higher attendance but levels of attendance remained only acceptable.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal provided clear direction and had driven development at a fast pace. All stakeholders were aware of the school's values and supportive of them. The leadership team shared out the monitoring and supporting roles, which underpinned successful professional development. All staff members had engaged in the development of an effective action plan and there was shared ownership in implementing improvements. The school had made a positive response to the previous inspection report recommendations and the school's own improvement issues. There were clear lines of accountability. The senior leadership team and the wider team of managers demonstrated good capacity to initiate further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Evaluations of planning had resulted in revised procedures including, for example, wider cross-curricular work and better arrangements in teaching. The highly effective self-evaluation activities generated valuable information about the school's performance and areas for improvement. The school had set appropriate priorities for continuing development. Self-evaluation took account of the views of students, parents, the governing body and the teachers. Well organised meetings ensured that all staff members were involved in helping the school to improve.

The partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. There were well-established communication links between home and the school. These included circulars, e-mails and the use of the school's high quality interactive website. The parents valued the clear guidance they received about how to help their children learn and develop. They spoke highly of teachers' willingness to make extra efforts to support families. Parents received regular reports on their children's progress and there were frequent parent consultation meetings to discuss students' performance. The school had organised a range of support workshops for parents which were well supported. For example, an examination information morning was arranged for parents of Year 8 students to provide guidance regarding the subjects offered at the school.

The quality of governance was good. The Board of Governors was active in disseminating the vision and direction for the school. Governors were involved in ongoing reviews of the school's effectiveness and had significant input into the self-evaluation process. The Principal shared attainment reports with the governors, who had contributed to the identification of actions to be taken. The Board of Governors engaged in open and frank discussions with the leadership team regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the school, thereby ensuring continuing accountability. Whilst direct teacher representation was lacking, the Board was representative of the local community and most members were parents.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teachers and other staff members matched the demands of the curriculum and all were effectively deployed. The space available was well used to facilitate learning in a variety of groups and made good use of staff expertise. The premises were well maintained; the range of high quality displays of students' work enhanced the learning environment. The library was a focal point for study and students benefitted from an increase in appropriate book stocks. The ICT facilities had been further enhanced by the acquisition of interactive whiteboards.

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:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good	Good

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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