

Al Eman Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 9

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.

Al Eman Private School was inspected in January 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Rashidiya, Al Eman Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 9, aged three to 14 years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 554 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session of the last school year was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires which were completed by parents. Overwhelmingly, the parents were very happy with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school and that the teaching was good. They felt that their children were treated fairly and that they were being encouraged to become independent and responsible. Parents liked the range of activities available to their children. Almost all said that they were comfortable in approaching the school with a question or complaint, but a minority did not know if the school would respond to concerns they raised, and a third did not know if the school had responded positively to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Parents felt that their children were well cared for and that teachers were good at explaining to parents what they could do at home to help with their children's work. A minority of parents who responded did not know if the school had good links with the community. Parents were happy with their children's progress in all subjects. A few parents commented that they expected more interactive learning.

How well does the school perform overall?

Al Eman Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. Inspectors judged the performance in all the key subjects as acceptable. Students could recite The Holy Qur'an at age appropriate levels and knew about the life of the Prophet (PBUH). Students read texts of the expected level in Arabic, but with little extended writing or independent reading in the older grades. Students' listening, speaking and reading in English were acceptable overall, but students' writing skills were unsatisfactory. In mathematics, students' independent problem solving was under-developed, but most students were able to perform arithmetical calculations well. Students' progress in science had improved since the last inspection.

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Students worked hard and treated everyone around them with respect. Students' civic, Islamic and cultural understanding was acceptable. They appreciated and valued their Islamic identity, had an acceptable understanding of Islam, and were proud of the culture and heritage of the UAE. Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. They were aware of Dubai's progress and its place on the international arena. Students had limited knowledge about environmental problems.

The quality of teaching was acceptable overall. Most lessons across the school were well planned, but objectives were often not clear. Most teachers knew their subjects well, but a majority did not employ a wide enough variety of strategies to address the varied needs of students. Teacher-student interactions were almost always positive, but too many teachers dominated lessons with long stretches of speaking. Students' learning in lessons was acceptable overall. Most students were attentive during the lessons observed but only a very few took responsibility for independent learning. Teachers often provided too much information, and in doing so kept students dependent, passive recipients of knowledge. Most students acquired subject knowledge by memory, but did not apply it to different contexts. The development of students' enquiry and research skills was limited, and students' higher order and critical thinking skills were not well developed. Assessment of learning was of acceptable quality. Most students knew how well they were doing in each subject, although the quality of marking varied considerably. The school's assessment methods were narrow in scope, with an emphasis on factual knowledge recall. Records of assessments were kept rigorously, but a majority of teachers did not use assessment information to effectively plan for improved individual learning outcomes. The curriculum was acceptable and offered an appropriate range of subjects and prepared most students to advance to the next level of learning. Arrangements to ensure health and safety were good. In spite of a limited facility, all staff worked effectively to ensure the safety of the students. The quality of the support the school provided was acceptable. All staff members were caring towards students and developed positive relationships with them, but there was insufficient career guidance in Grade 9.

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. The Principal and her senior colleagues were committed to improving the school and had taken some steps to address the recommendations of the previous report, although further work was necessary to develop learning throughout the school.

Key features of the school

- Throughout the school, staff had caring attitudes towards their students and developed a positive nurturing atmosphere and students had positive attitudes towards the school and each other;
- The school administration worked effectively to ensure that students were safe and well-supervised;
- Many lessons' objectives were not clear or measurable and were not shared with students to involve them in their assessment and learning;
- The curriculum lacked challenge for the most able and appropriate goals for the less able students;
- The middle management had little time or training to develop their roles in the school;
- The governing body had no parent or community stakeholder representation;
- Many classrooms were too small and did not have enough resources to support a sufficient range of learning experiences.

Recommendations

- Improve the planning for lessons so that teachers share clear measurable objectives with students and use them to assess learning;
- Further develop the curriculum to include sufficient challenge for the most able and addresses the learning needs of less able students;
- Develop middle management roles with clear responsibilities and allow them sufficient time to carry out their duties;
- Establish an advisory group with parent and community stakeholder representation and accountability, to help guide the strategic development of the school;
- Ensure that classrooms have sufficient space and resources to support high quality learning and teaching.

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

Attainment and progress were acceptable in Islamic Education. Grade 1 students knew a number of daily prayers. Grade 9 students memorised the chapters of The Holy Qur'an they studied and understood their overall meaning. Students knew basic facts about the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and most students knew many of the His teachings and understood the impact of those teachings on their lives. Grade 6 students knew about the community of Medina and the relationship between the residents of Al Ansar and Al Muhajreen from Mecca. Grade 7 students knew about some of the battles the Prophet (PBUH) led and Grade 9 students knew about Islamic rules and how they benefit of the community.

Attainment and progress were acceptable in Arabic across the school. Most KG children were able to read and write the letters they studied and identified their sounds. In Grades 1 and 2 students were able to read and write short sentences. Students in Grades 4 to 6 read age-appropriate texts with correct pronunciation, and understood the main and supporting ideas. In Grades 7 and 8 students read grade level texts well, but independent reading was insufficient. Grades 8 and 9 students copied short texts from the textbooks at an appropriate level, but had little extended writing. Most students had acceptable listening skills and used informal Arabic frequently, but had grade-level speaking skills.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable overall, but most students' writing skills were unsatisfactory. Most students responded well to their teachers' questions and could follow instructions correctly. A few students did not understand simple English language questions, for example, questions about Dubai. Spoken English skills varied, but were mostly acceptable. Girls' spoken English was generally stronger than that of boys. Likewise, reading skills varied and were stronger amongst the girls. Most students could read aloud with acceptable proficiency, but a few could not do so. Writing skills were the weakest aspect of English, partly because the level of challenge to students was too low. Most students could not write full sentences independently, and older students could not compose paragraphs or essays independently.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were acceptable across the school. KG children were developing a sense of number. They could count to 13 and recognised and formed digits. Most primary students could perform arithmetical calculations at appropriate levels. By Grade 5 most students could add 3-digit numbers including decimals. Although most students could perform calculations adequately, few could explain the mathematics behind the procedures they followed. Older students demonstrated a basic understanding of algebra and Grade 8 students could solve equations by substituting numbers for variables. Grade 9 students were able to use co-ordinates and calculate sides of triangles using Pythagoras theorem. At all levels, students' application to practical situations and independent problem-solving was underdeveloped, and few students worked beyond an average performance for their grade.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable and there had been significant improvement in students' progress over time in Grades 6 to 9, since the previous inspection.

Most students had at least an age-appropriate understanding of science and the world around them, yet the lack of a well-equipped science laboratory detracted from their knowledge base. Students in the lower grades were involved in practical skills, but not in investigative projects. Grade 3 students showed an awareness of environmental issues of water conservation and recycling and Grade 5 students knew some geological terms and concepts.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Students displayed good manners and treated everyone around them with respect. Almost all students paid attention in classes, despite the extended periods of teachers' talk. Students voluntarily kept the playground clean during break times. Student-staff relationships were based on mutual respect. Students responded well to their teachers and appreciated them. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session of the last school year was acceptable. Attendance for the first semester this school year was not up to the same level and a few students also arrived to school late in the morning. Students moved to classes punctually, and behaved well when waiting for teachers to start lessons.

Students' civic, Islamic and cultural understanding was acceptable. The school did not have a students' council, but monthly meetings were taking place to give students a voice and allow them to express their views. There were limited opportunities for students to help around the school. Students appreciated and valued their Islamic identity and had an acceptable understanding of Islam. They had an acceptable knowledge about the culture and heritage of the UAE, of which they were very proud. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and were aware of the positive contributions made by the expatriate community working in Dubai.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. They knew about the main figures who contributed to the progress of Dubai. They were aware of Dubai's place on the international arena, although only a few had detailed knowledge. Students understood some of the contributions they could make to Dubai, but had limited knowledge about environmental problems. For example, few students had acceptable knowledge about rainforests depletion and the impact on climate.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable. Most lessons were of acceptable quality and a few were good, but equally, a few were unsatisfactory. There was no concentration of good teaching in any subject or grade, but there was more unsatisfactory teaching in English and Arabic lessons. Most lessons across the school were well planned, but objectives were not clearly stated to students. Most teachers knew their subjects well, but a majority did not employ a sufficiently wide range of strategies to address the varied needs of students. Teacher-student interactions were almost always positive, but too many teachers dominated lessons with long stretches of speaking. Furthermore, too many teachers asked questions that promoted one-word answers as opposed to independent and analytical thinking. The result was that teaching strategies across the school addressed the needs of the majority, but not all students.

Students' learning in lessons was acceptable overall; at times good and at times unsatisfactory. Most students were attentive during lessons. Only a very few took responsibility for independent learning. Teachers often provided too much information, and in doing so kept students dependent, passive recipients of knowledge. Most students interacted well but true collaboration on tasks was rare. Students' application of their learning to the real world was generally weak. Most students acquired subject knowledge by memory, but were rarely seen applying it to different contexts. The development of students' enquiry and research skills was limited, due in part to the low level of information and communication technology (ICT) provision and its integration with the curriculum. Students' higher order and critical thinking skills were not well developed.

Assessment of learning was of acceptable quality. Most students knew how well they were doing in each subject, although the quality of marking varied considerably. A minority of teachers assessed the progress of students daily as part of the teaching and learning process, but this was impeded by severely crowded rooms, in some cases. A few teachers did not notice students who were falling behind during lessons. The school's assessment methods were narrow in scope, with an emphasis on factual knowledge recall. Records of assessments were kept rigorously, but a majority of teachers did not use assessment information to effectively plan the improvement of individual learning outcomes. There was effective communication of basic assessment information to parents, but reports did not include what students had learned and what they needed to do to improve. Not all subject leaders had a thorough knowledge of attainment and progress by their students. Finally, the use of assessment information to inform planning for students with special educational needs was underdeveloped.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. It offered an appropriate range of subjects and prepared most students to advance to the next level of learning. The curriculum in general over-emphasised factual learning at the expense of more challenging work, such as extended writing in Arabic and English. A major weakness in the curriculum was the reliance on textbooks and workbooks to deliver instruction. The curriculum materials were not always based on expected learning outcomes in terms of what students should know, understand, and be able to do in order to progress. Many of the teachers were new to the school and they, together with their lead teachers, were responsible for an annual curriculum review. The curriculum rarely provided sufficient challenge for students of higher learning abilities, and it did not often make provision for students of lower levels of ability. Teachers supported these students by giving them additional classwork and homework assignments. There was limited development of cross-curricular themes, but students benefited from science and mathematics being taught in English for one period per week up to Grade 6. Opportunities were not always taken to make useful connections between subjects and aspects that would promote greater coherence in the curriculum. The school library did not enhance the curriculum, but students used their local libraries and the Internet for research. Extra-curricular activities and field trips were limited.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure health and safety were good. All the staff worked effectively to ensure the safety of the students despite the limitations and disadvantages of the school's location. The school provided close supervision during break times and boarding buses. Fire drills were conducted this year, however evacuation plans were not displayed around the school. Playground metal poles were padded with soft material to ensure students were safe while playing. Although the school building was old, it was well-maintained. Available playground space was limited. Medical records were updated regularly, and students' health problems were regularly monitored. Reasonably healthy options were available in the school canteen. Teachers understood clearly their duty of care; they had clear understanding of child protection and their role in looking after the students physically and emotionally. They cooperated well with the administration to ensure the welfare of students.

The quality of the support the school provided was acceptable. All staff members were caring towards students and developed positive relationships with them. The social worker worked with the Principal and the teachers to provide social support to students. He also participated in monitoring low achievers and planning to support them, although still with limited impact. The school did not provide sufficient career guidance or preparation for students moving to the next phase of schooling, especially for Grade 9 students. Almost all teachers handled behaviour well, however there was no shared policy to clearly state expectations, rewards and consequences. Although the school kept records of students' marks in tests, more able

students were not adequately supported. The school called parents to follow up absence cases, but they were too relaxed about lateness.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Administrative matters and behaviour were managed well. Much leadership was focused on the Principal, who was committed to the development of the school. Most subject coordinators had a high teaching allocation and so they had insufficient time to develop learning across the school. Therefore school leadership had little impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. A 'Quality Team' was established in 2009/10 and was developing self-evaluation procedures, including forms for teacher and student self-evaluation. School self-evaluation was mainly restricted to reviewing exam scores and monitoring behaviour, and did not involve all staff or departments in regular review and improvement. The strategic plan addressed all issues from the previous report and included several appropriate strategies, although success criteria were not measurable. Progress had been made in addressing many issues from the previous report, including attainment in English and Islamic Education, but teaching and learning were still characterised by teacher-centred approaches.

Partnerships with parents and community were acceptable. There was, though, no parents' council and many parents were rarely involved as partners in their children's education. The school had established several initiatives to involve parents more, including guidance to teachers about parents meetings, a suggestion box, and the installation of a telephone in teachers' room so that parents could contact teachers more easily. The use of the local community for extra-curricular football and swimming had been discontinued due to staff changes, but the community was accessed for some field trips.

Governance was unsatisfactory. A five person School Board oversaw three schools in the group, provided the Principal with advice, and reviewed the school development plan and its implementation. Board members brought some relevant business skills that helped provide finance for a new playground and liaison with local traffic authorities. There was no parent or community representation on the Board, nor plans to develop an advisory group for the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. Staff were appropriately qualified, adequate in number and suitably deployed. School premises were on a small and restricted site, with limited space for girls PE and inadequate science facilities. A majority of classrooms were crowded and restricted the sufficient range of learning experiences. One new KG room was sufficiently large, but the remainder were small and did not allow for age-appropriate activities. Playground space was small, although a new playground was under construction. New plants had been purchased to enhance the environment. ICT support for teaching was limited to one computer lab and a computer and projector in the library.

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:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	KG	Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 to 9
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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.

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