

The Private Religious Institute Inspection Report

Cycle 2 to Cycle 3 Boys

Report published May 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school.....	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations.....	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?.....	6
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	7
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
Summary of inspection judgements.....	10
Next steps	14
How to contact us.....	14

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.

The Private Religious Institute was inspected in January 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

Located in Satwa, The Private Religious Institute is a private school providing education for boys from Cycle 2 to Cycle 3, aged 11 to 18 years. The school follows a Ministry of Education curriculum. The school was established mainly to specialise in providing Islamic Education to students hoping to prepare them to hold Islamic positions such as imams of mosques and scholars. At the time of the inspection, there were 89 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was outstanding.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Almost all parents agreed that their sons were making good progress in key subjects. Most parents agreed that their sons liked school, were fairly treated and felt safe in school. They also felt that the boys were encouraged to become independent and responsible. A minority of parents felt that teachers could explain more about how they could help their sons at home with school work. Most of the parents believed that the school was well led and felt that meetings about their sons' progress were helpful. Almost all of them agreed that communication between school and parents was effective and that the school responded appropriately to their concerns.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Private Religious Institute continued to provide an acceptable quality of education, overall. Although the school leadership was acceptable overall, self-evaluation processes were lacking and the school had made limited progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Attainment and progress was good in Islamic Education, Arabic, mathematics and science. However, attainment was unsatisfactory in English. Although students made acceptable progress in Cycle 2 their progress in Cycle 3 was unsatisfactory. A majority of students lacked the knowledge and skills in English expected at their ages. The Private Religious Institute fulfilled its promise to parents to provide an educational experience rich in Islamic Education and Arabic; yet students' overall learning experiences were limited.

Key features of the school

- The broad, balanced and enriched Islamic Education and Arabic curricula;
- The good behaviour of students and high levels of mutual respect between students and staff;
- Students' outstanding Holy Qur'an recitation skills;
- The buildings were aging and not always well-designed for learning;
- The low attainment in English across school.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in English throughout the school;
- Continue to improve the quality of curriculum to achieve balance, particularly in English;
- Ensure that there is a clear child protection policy which is understood by all staff;
- Use assessment data to inform lesson planning, teaching and the curriculum;
- Prepare a self-evaluation plan, with clear success criteria and share this with all departments.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good across school. Most students memorised chapters of The Holy Qur'an and could recite with few errors. Most students had sufficient knowledge of recitation rules. In Cycle 2 most students were able to explain the meaning of Allah's name attributes. They knew the purpose of marriage in Islam and could explain the conditions of marriage. Most students distinguished between Hajj conditions and Hajj pillars. In Cycle 3 most students were able to derive Islamic rulings from the Prophet's sayings (PBUH).

Attainment and progress in Arabic were good in both phases. Almost all students listened carefully during lessons and could speak fluently and correctly. In Cycle 2 most students were able to read paragraphs correctly. Most students were able to use dictionary to search for new words and definitions. They used correct grammar in sentence construction. In Cycle 3 most students could speak about a person's life using standard Arabic. They read poetry and prose fluently and with excellent expression. Almost all students could analyse text correctly but their extended writing skills were less well-developed.

Attainment in English was unsatisfactory in both cycles. Progress was acceptable in Cycle 2 and unsatisfactory in Cycle 3. Students' listening skills were broadly acceptable but a few could not understand basic conversational questions in English. Students' speaking skills varied but were better in relation to age in Cycle 2 than Cycle 3. Students' reading and writing skills were underdeveloped among most students in all grades. Better reading progress was more evident in Cycle 2 than Cycle 3. Most students required the teachers' support to read full sentences; a few could read independently. Writing skills were very limited across all grades with insufficient opportunities for the students to undertake original creative writing.

Progress and attainment in mathematics were good in both Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. In Grade 7, students solved linear equations involving fractions and could divide mixed number fractions without the use of a calculator. Students in Grade 10 organised their work well, checked results and could explain the mathematical concepts involved in geometric number sequences. Grade 11 students could calculate rates of change from data in both diagrammatic and table form and were confident in interpreting charts from current financial newspapers. Students in all grades were confident in tackling more complex mathematical problems.

Progress and attainment in science were good in both Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. Grade 8 students collaborated well when carrying out research on the anatomy of a pigeon. Students in Grade 10 worked in pairs to investigate the mass-volume relationship or density of water and could describe confidently why the results from each team differed by small amounts. They could define the difference between mass and weight. Students investigated the various ways in which rock formations were created by erosion. Grade 12 students could set up experiments with a laser beam and a variety of lenses to investigate such phenomena as diffusion of light and the focal length of a concave lens.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across school. Almost all students expressed positive attitudes towards learning in general and towards Islamic subjects in particular. They helped each other inside and outside classrooms. Students behaved well and were self-disciplined. They demonstrated respect for their teachers and excellent relationships were evident. The students felt safe and valued. Attendance rates were outstanding. Students consistently arrived punctually to school and to lessons.

Students' civic and Islamic understanding was good across the school. Students studied rich and diverse Islamic programmes. All students performed the noon prayer in school every day led by their peers. They understood multi-cultural community of Dubai and the relationships within this community. Students made positive links between these relationships and Islam. Almost all students knew Dubai and UAE traditions in relation to food, clothes and culture. The student council was an elected body which was listened to well by the schools' leaders.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable throughout the school. Students kept their school courtyard litter-free. The majority of students understood the importance of a clean environment. The majority of students could name the reasons for Dubai's rapid economic growth and attributed this to strong leadership and good planning. Students spoke knowledgeably about projects in Dubai such as the Metro and Burj Khalifa. Students understood the impact of environmental pollution and the majority of students suggested sensible solutions for the local and global economic situation.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable, overall. About half of the lessons observed were good. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects was mostly good but in a minority of lessons teachers lacked the necessary knowledge to teach effectively. Teachers' skill in understanding how students learn was varied. A minority could engage students actively but too many talked at length and thus denied their students opportunities to develop their skills. Teacher-student interactions were generally positive but a few teachers referred to students in an inappropriate way. Teachers' questions to students almost always required them to recall facts and rarely promoted deep thinking. Lesson planning was also varied; a few teachers had clear learning objectives in mind while others planned lesson content only. Teachers generally did not share lesson objectives with students at the start of a period or review what had been learned at the end. A few teachers planned to meet the learning needs of students at different levels of attainment, but most did not.

The quality of learning was acceptable overall but in a few classes students took the initiative to learn more than what was being taught. Students collaborated well almost all of the time but a few relied on classmates to do the work for them. They did what was asked in lessons without exception but were not developing the skills of independent learners who could find out things for themselves. Application of learning to real-life situations was evident across different subjects. Students' higher-order and critical thinking skills were significantly underdeveloped in most lessons.

The assessment of learning was also acceptable overall. Most, but not all, teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Ongoing assessment was evident during lessons. Marking of work was limited to corrections and signatures; there was little evidence of marking that helped students understand how to improve their learning. The school kept comprehensive records of students' academic progress and had adopted a standard method across all subjects. Assessment information was used to identify students at three levels of attainment and to plan remedial teaching for those not attaining expected levels. Modified curricula and teaching methods based upon assessment information were evident in only a few lessons. A few students assessed their own work and that of their classmates.

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

The curriculum was of acceptable quality overall. It had been reviewed and significantly updated since the previous inspection by the new academic committee. The breadth of learning opportunities had increased to include physical education, arts education and economics. Physical education was limited to one period a week for most students. A weekly activity day allowed students opportunities to try new things and enjoy their time at school more. The activities included drama, calligraphy, information and communications technology (ICT) and science, among others. The balance of the curriculum had also improved, enabling students to spend more time in subjects beyond the core of Islamic Education and Arabic. However, the time given to some subjects was significantly below that offered in the standard for Ministry of Education schools. The school had created enrichment materials to supplement resources in some subjects and these provided challenge to students. There was general continuity in the curriculum as it was based upon the Ministry of Education scope and sequence, but in a few classes, work was repeated from one year to the next. Extra-curricular activities had improved since the previous inspection, including ten field trips over the school year to local sites, broadening students' learning horizons. These experiences were not directly linked to the students' course work. The school library was linked to the language programmes and was well used by students. Cross-curricular links were evident in a few lessons but not centrally planned.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring health and safety were acceptable in both cycles. All staff took their duty of care seriously; they knew and adhered to the Institute's policies for health and safety. On each site, a teacher was qualified in First Aid. Procedures for more serious medical incidents were handled by a local clinic where all the students' health records were stored. Arrivals and departures were well co-ordinated and supervised by staff. Security guards patrolled both sites. Buildings and facilities were generally safe, secure and reasonably maintained although some areas needed attention. The lack of first floor external fire escapes was a potential hazard. Student transport was well managed, buses were maintained regularly and passengers monitored. Procedures for emergencies, such as fire drills, were well established. Equipment was checked and appropriate staff were trained to use it safely. Although healthy lunches were provided daily for all students, opportunities for promoting healthy lifestyles were not promoted through the curriculum. Child protection issues had been addressed but there was no written child protection policy.

The quality of support for students was acceptable in both cycles. Careers education and advice on appropriate higher education and career options were underdeveloped. Behaviour issues, albeit rare, were dealt with sensitively by the support counsellor as were absenteeism and poor punctuality. Students respected and cared for each other and relationships between teachers and student were, for the most part, positive. There were well-developed systems for data-analysis but little use had been made of assessment information to inform the planning of lessons. Students reported that they felt safe in the Institute.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership capacity was acceptable, overall. The school mission has been shared with staff, students and parents. The Vice-Principal had clear sense of direction and had strong management skills that had led the school forward to make some improvement. The Principal had taken the role of a general supervisor. There was room for more formal devolved leadership to develop the skills of staff and to help measure the impact of the many school initiatives. Although there were subject leaders in place, the school had not consolidated monitoring of curriculum and teaching.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Senior managers could not accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, the key priorities were not clearly identified to make good improvement planning. The school has designed a self-evaluation plan but has not implemented it yet. Very limited progress had been made in meeting the recommendations of the last report. For example, students' attainment in English remained unsatisfactory. Formal observations of learning and teaching were at an early stage of identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. The quality and regularity of communications with parents had improved. Parents helped the school with field trips and events. Reports to parents on their children's progress provided insufficient information on how they might help them improve. However, regular termly meetings ensured teachers shared progress information with parents. Positive links had been established with the wider community. Students had visited many factories, government authorities and book fairs. This had supported staff development as well as helping students develop their understanding of the local community.

Governance was acceptable. The Board of Trustees met twice a year. Although it had representation from certain stakeholders such as a member of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, it had not expanded to include parents and teachers. The Board had started to make a positive impact in supporting the school through providing some support. The school also kept the stakeholders regularly informed. The Board of Trustees had reviewed the previous inspection report and was aware of the improvements that the school had made to meet the previous recommendations. However, the board had yet to establish a more formal means through which parents could have their views represented in advising and holding the school to account for standards.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Almost all teachers were qualified and met Ministry of Education requirements. They were competent in their subjects and were effectively deployed. The two separate buildings owned by the school, although small and old, were not over-crowded. In most cases they met the learning needs of the small number of enrolled students. Although the library and science laboratory were used effectively, the ICT facilities and the language laboratory were not fully utilised to enhance students' learning.

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:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
100% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

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.

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

Copyright 2011

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.