

INSPECTION REPORT

Philadelphia Private School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Philadelphia Private School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ppsdubai.org
Telephone	04-264-6202
Address	PO Box 185020, Muhaisnah 4, Dubai
Principal	Rose Al Qareh
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	993
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	45 (5%)
Date of the inspection	5th to 7th November 2012

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The context of the school

The Philadelphia Private School is situated in Al Muhaisnah. At the time of the inspection, the school had 993 boys and girls on roll, aged three to 18 years. The school roll was increasing; at the previous inspection there were 800 students on roll.

The school consisted of almost 50 nationalities with most students studying Arabic as a first language. Approximately five per cent of the students were Emiratis. The school followed a US curriculum based on the Florida State standards and Common Core Curriculum standards for English and mathematics. Students were entered for external TOEFL and SAT examinations in Grades 11 and 12.

At the time of the inspection, there were 78 teachers in the school. All were well qualified and suitably experienced. The school had a history of high teacher turnover, although the most recent changes in staffing had been necessary to address the increased number of students.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language and English;
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour as well as their community and environmental awareness;
- The outstanding provision for health and safety across the school;
- The good and improving support for students with special educational needs;
- The strong and committed leadership of the Principal, senior staff members and middle managers.

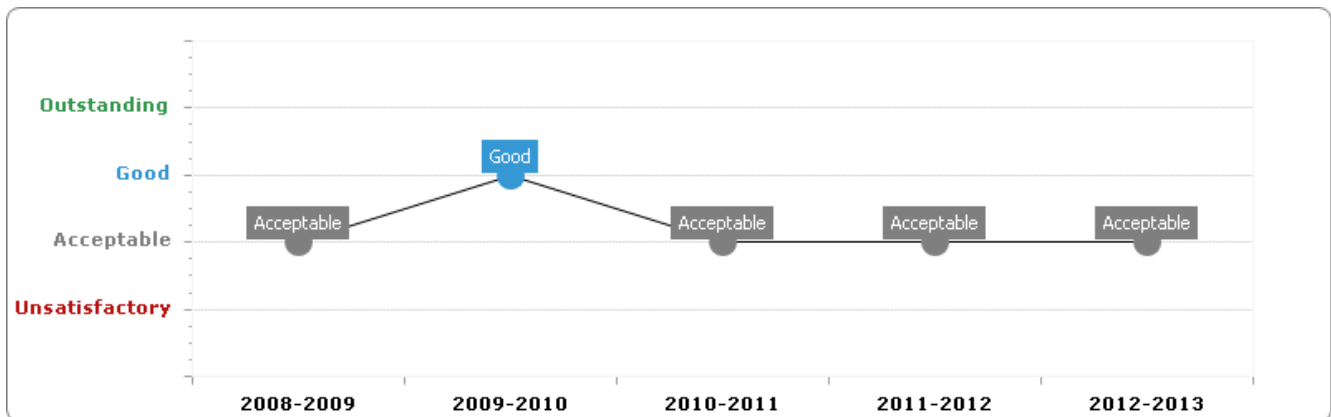
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in the remaining key subjects across all phases;
- Make teaching and learning consistently good by supporting teachers to improve;
- Use assessment information to identify and support the learning needs of all groups of students;
- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation and prioritise school improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

- Progress and attainment had been maintained in spite of significant staff changes;
- Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning especially in the higher phase;
- The increased focus on the monitoring, support and development of teaching and learning;
- The maintenance of outstanding provision for health and safety;
- The Principal, senior and middle managers were much clearer about their roles and responsibilities.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was acceptable in a majority of subjects and phases. However, attainment was good in Arabic as a first language and English, as well as Arabic as an additional language in the elementary phase and mathematics in the higher phase. In Islamic Education, older students knew the Five Pillars of Islam but their recitation and memorisation of The Holy Qur'an and their understanding of the Hadeeth were not so secure. Attainment was better in Arabic, as students' listening and speaking skills were well developed and they read with accuracy and fluency. In English, students demonstrated high levels of critical thinking and research skills. These skills were also seen in mathematics in the higher phase, where students worked independently to research topics and develop their mathematical knowledge. In science, students' levels of achievement were broadly age-appropriate. In the Kindergarten, children did not have enough opportunities to play and explore, thus limiting the development of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Students' progress was generally acceptable. It was good in Arabic as a first language and English as well as Arabic as an additional language in the elementary phase and mathematics in the high school phase. Students made steady progress in Islamic Education except in their recitation skills and, in Arabic, they made good progress developing listening, speaking and reading skills although their writing was less well developed. Teaching supported critical thinking skills, especially in English. However, students' progress was not as good in mathematics and science lessons where teachers talked too much, thus restricting opportunities for student inquiry and language development. Students with special educational needs made similar progress to other students in their classes.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were 45 Emirati students in the school at the time of the inspection. Their attainment and progress were acceptable overall. It was good in Arabic and English. In Arabic, students' speaking and listening skills were more effectively developed. In English, they were able to read with accuracy and fluency. Across the other subjects, their performance was similar to that of other students in the school. Almost all students were mature and sensible in lessons and during break times. Their attitudes and behaviour were good. Older students were beginning to develop an attitude of self-reliance towards their education. The curriculum offered a good range of choices in the upper phases and was suitably designed to meet their needs. The school had good links with the parents of Emirati students and invited them to visit the school, attend assemblies and meet teachers.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Attendance was acceptable over the last full term and good during the inspection. However, too many late arriving students had a negative effect upon the first lessons of the day. Relationships between teachers and students were very positive and students worked well with each other. Almost all students were sensitive and courteous towards one another and towards adults, but a very few boys were discourteous. Students made good choices about their food and exercise habits. Younger students had an adequate understanding of how Islamic values influenced modern society in Dubai. Older students respected the heritage and culture of Dubai and UAE which was fostered through visits to cultural landmarks. Their appreciation of their own culture and the culture of others in the school was a strength. Students had a good understanding of their civic responsibilities as a result of their work as class representatives on the school council and their extensive charitable work. Students had a positive work ethic and were active in environmental and recycling projects including the provision of recycling boxes across the school. Older students understood the concept of environmental sustainability and appreciated the value of their involvement in the community.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable across the school, except for the higher phase, where it was good. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and established positive and supportive working relationships with their students. The use of technology was a strength of teaching, especially in the higher phase. Lesson planning rarely took account of all groups of students, especially those with special educational needs. Different planning for different students was rarely seen. Teachers relied on additional exercises rather than increasing the level of challenge they offered students. Teachers had a variety of useful strategies, including clear learning objectives, group work and wrap-up tasks, but they were not consistently confident in their use of them. There was little evidence of extended challenge except in the higher grades.

Learning was acceptable across the school, except for the higher phase, where it was good. Students worked co-operatively with one another and focused well on their studies. They used technology confidently and to good effects. The application of learning to the real world was evident in most subjects; for example, by linking art to history and social studies to science. However, in too many lessons, learning was restricted by teachers' talk which dominated lessons. The best lessons were when teachers involved students in learning and encouraged research and independence. These were often seen in the higher grades as students eagerly prepared for their lessons by researching topics. Critical thinking skills were

developed well among older students but less evident elsewhere. Students' enquiry skills were evident but not developed sufficiently.

Assessment of learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in the rest of the school. Assessment systems had continued to develop since the last inspection, including improvements in the collection of data, reporting of progress and the use of publisher's textbook checklists. However, in the classrooms, students were not given sufficient support and feedback on their performance. Marking in students' books was cursory or not undertaken at all. In the elementary, middle and high school phases, formative and standardised assessments were analysed and used to improve teaching and to evaluate curriculum materials. Assessment information was not used sufficiently to identify and support the learning needs of all groups of students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was of good quality overall and reflected the school's belief that learning should include analytical skills and creativity. There was a clear rationale to the curriculum based upon standards from the United States. A broad range of subjects were offered to students, including a new language course and other electives. A wider range of courses, activities and examinations were available to high school students as a result of a careful review since the previous inspection. Overall, curriculum planning gave students appropriate progression year-on-year and senior students were sufficiently prepared for higher education in almost all subjects. In some lessons, teachers' planning did not consistently challenge the higher attaining students. Instructional time for Islamic Education was slightly short of the MoE requirements for primary-aged students. Cross-curricular links were made at opportune moments but were not centrally planned. The curriculum was enriched by clear links to field trips, special events, visitors and some Advanced Placement courses in the high school.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for students' health and safety was outstanding. The premises were well-cared for and kept safe through a programme of regular maintenance. Students were very well-supervised and procedures for evacuation and for transport had been carefully devised and developed. Students were made aware of health issues and were given clear guidance on maintaining healthy lifestyles. Eating healthily was promoted very well by subjects and by the school canteen.

The quality of support for students was good. Teachers knew their students very well and were fully aware of their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Relationships with staff members were positive and supportive. Students were comfortable in seeking advice from teachers and counselors. Behaviour management programs were provided and supported by parental involvement. Child protection issues were well understood and staff members received training. Guidance and advice for students for many issues was effective. The school had an effective policy of contacting parents when a student was absent.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had effective systems for identifying students with special educational needs. Students were supported through individualised learning plans, including classroom modifications and individual support where necessary. Teachers were aware of which students had specific learning needs but did not always plan lessons to fully accommodate those needs. Specialist teachers communicated with other teachers to support students' welfare and well-being.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership and management of the school were good. The Principal provided resolute leadership for the school and had a clear understanding of the improvements required. She was capably supported by a strong senior leadership team and many middle managers who shared her vision. Leadership was very clearly focused on improving teaching and learning whilst maintaining the school's strengths in terms of care, support and relationships. Middle managers had an increasingly clear sense of direction and a commitment to the values and vision of the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal, as well as the governors, had an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation documents had been compiled and action plans completed but they were not sufficiently focussed on analysing and

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interrogating the school's performance and prioritising improvements in terms of short and long term goals. The analysis and interpretation of data and other evidence in order to reach subject-based judgements was inconsistent. The school had started to address the recommendations from the previous inspection report but inconsistencies in teaching remained and the attainment and progress of students in key subjects required further work.

Links with parents and the community were positive and supportive. The school was highly regarded by parents due the quick response made by staff to any queries or concerns. The school used a range of methods to keep in touch with parents, including the use of technology. Parents reported that they had helpful information about their children's learning and any forthcoming events. They agreed that the school was particularly good at building students' confidence and self-esteem in a caring, safe and secure environment. There were community links with places of interest, local venues, universities and, to a lesser extent, local businesses.

Governance of the school was good. The governors had secure knowledge and strong commitments to the school. They rigorously held the school to account and received regular updates from the Principal. They had a realistic and accurate view of the school's performance. The governing body was supported by an academic board representing stakeholders and the community comprising students, parents and alumina. Nevertheless, some students and parents did not think that the school listened to their opinions or involved them sufficiently in decision-making.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. Teachers were well qualified, with most having earned a certificate or credential as an educator. Professional development opportunities were suitably focused on teaching and learning. The facilities and resources were sufficient to support the curriculum. The resources for information and communications technology were good and benefited students' learning.

[View judgements](#)

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	178	26%
	Last year	134	23%
Teachers	62		89%
Students	137		98%

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

Approximately one quarter of the parents responded to the survey which was similar to last year. Parents generally agreed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, although they were less positive about Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all parents reported that their children enjoyed school and felt safe in school and on the buses. They agreed that students were respected and valued at school, and most felt that any incidents of bullying were dealt with well. Parents were positive about the school welcoming students with special educational needs and almost all parents and students felt that their needs were identified accurately. Almost all parents and most students felt that the school was well led.

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.

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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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