

Pristine 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.

The Pristine Private School was inspected in December 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 Nahda, Pristine Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to secondary, aged three to 17 years. The school follows a UK curriculum and students completed IGCSE examinations as part of their studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 1068 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked being at school and that the teaching was good. They felt that their children were kept safe, were treated fairly and that the school provided good support to children with special educational needs. Almost all parents were happy with the school and felt that if they had any concerns these were dealt with quickly and effectively. They also felt that the school helped their children to choose healthy lifestyles and that parent-teacher meetings were regular and helpful. Most parents were unhappy with the progress being made by their children in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. The majority of parents were happy with their children's learning of Arabic as an additional language. Almost all were pleased with the progress being made by their children in English, mathematics and science. Almost all parents felt the school was well led. The majority of parents felt that the school had responded positively to the recommendations of the last inspection report.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Pristine Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. It had a number of strengths. The school had responded well to the recommendations from the last inspection report. The school had improved students' attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language and there was progress in Arabic as an additional language in the primary stage. The school had also improved arrangements for governance which included representation from a range of stakeholders. Teachers had begun to implement new assessment, recording and feedback procedures. Arrangements had been put in place to develop the evaluative roles and responsibilities of all subject leaders further. The school demonstrated a good capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable at the primary stage. In the secondary stage attainment was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was acceptable in the primary phase whilst progress was unsatisfactory. At the secondary stage both were acceptable. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was unsatisfactory in both the primary and secondary phases. Progress was acceptable in the primary and unsatisfactory in the secondary stage. In English attainment was acceptable in Kindergarten and primary and good in secondary. Progress was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in primary and secondary. Attainment and progress in mathematics was good across all phases of the school. In science, attainment and progress were acceptable in Kindergarten and good across the other stages of the school. Students demonstrated good attitudes and behaviour and they were supported by well-developed and effective systems to ensure safety and care. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was acceptable in Kindergarten and primary and good in secondary. Overall, the curriculum was good. Arrangements for health and safety and support for students were good across the school. Leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Partnerships with parents and staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable also, while governance was good.

Key features of the school

- Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic required further improvement; teaching strategies in these lessons were not sufficiently varied or interesting to meet the needs of all students;
- Staff-students relationships were positive;
- The high turnover of teachers provided the school with significant challenges to sustain its drive for improvement;
- The Principal was committed to fostering positive and caring relationships at all levels within the school;
- There was strong support from parents;
- The good facilities of the school including information and communications technology (ICT) and science;
- There was good attainment in external examinations at the upper stages.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Develop rigorous self-review processes which will enable the school to improve teaching and learning;
- Ensure that appropriate data is developed from external and internal assessments to provide a measure against which to assess and analyse individual student progress; Provide feedback to students to ensure they are aware of their strengths and the next steps in their learning.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the primary stage. In secondary attainment was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. Most primary school students could name the six pillars of Faith. They showed age-appropriate knowledge about the Prophet's (PBUH) life and his companions. Most students showed good recitation skills of The Holy Qur'an but they did not understand the meaning of the verses they had read. Most students in the secondary stage showed acceptable progress in classroom discussions when they talked about the purpose of sending Prophets to people. A minority of students demonstrated good knowledge about important events in Islamic history and were able to link their knowledge of Islam to their daily lives.

Attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable in the primary stage and unsatisfactory in secondary. Progress was acceptable across the school. Most students in the primary stage were confident while reading aloud. Their handwriting was developing at age-appropriate levels. The majority of students were able to speak in standard Arabic and their responses to questions indicated good listening skills. However, only a minority of secondary students could speak standard Arabic with correct grammar or speak confidently about what they had read. Most students were able to write short paragraphs and they showed acceptable progress in reading familiar and unfamiliar texts.

Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was unsatisfactory at all stages. Progress was acceptable in primary and unsatisfactory in secondary. Most students were unable to answer simple questions or to introduce themselves using simple sentences. They were unable to talk about their names, age or where they lived. They were not able to engage in any unfamiliar simple conversation. Throughout the school writing was limited to copying from the board or the textbooks. Most students were able to read familiar texts. Only a few were able to fully understand or talk about what they had read.

In English, attainment was acceptable in Kindergarten and primary and good in secondary. Progress was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in primary and secondary. Students made acceptable progress in listening, speaking and reading. Attainment in writing was good. In Kindergarten, children could construct simple sentences, were able to read them confidently and wrote accurately. Grade 6 students spoke confidently and were able to convey their opinions and respond to others' ideas. They read with good expression. Secondary students were articulate and showed independence of thought. They made thoughtful character comparisons on Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice'. Independent writing was well developed across all stages.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good at all stages. Kindergarten children could subtract numbers and recognise simple patterns. By the end of primary, students could convert larger metric units to smaller ones and add and subtract metric quantities. Students in the early secondary stages knew how to calculate the area, radius, diameter and perimeter of a circle. By the end of the secondary phase all students had acquired good skills in applying mathematics, using number and algebra to problem solve, understand shape, space and measures and interpret and handle data. Attainment in external examinations compared positively with international expectations.

Attainment and progress in science were good across all phases of the school except Kindergarten where they were both acceptable. Children did not sufficiently develop age-appropriate scientific skills. They could use basic equipment and recognise elements of oral hygiene. Primary students knew the impact of different magnitudes in forces. Most understood the structure and function of plants and used laboratory resources to name different plant parts. In a few less successful lessons, student attainment and progress were not maximised. Students in Grade 8 presented their knowledge of health topics well. Grade 12 students had good understanding and application capacities in titration experiments. IGCSE results were well above expectations in chemistry.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in Kindergarten and good in the rest of the school. Most students engaged enthusiastically in lessons and collaborated well in tasks. A few boys in the upper primary and lower secondary classes were not always well behaved. Most students were making good progress in the development of personal skills and self-confidence. They showed concern for and tolerance of others, made healthy choices and understood the benefits to be gained from regular exercise. Attendance was acceptable and almost all students arrived in time for lessons and at the start of the day.

Students' civic understanding and understanding of Islam was good in Kindergarten and secondary and acceptable in the primary stage. Kindergarten and secondary students' understanding of Islam was good and they had good understanding of local traditions and cultures. Primary students were aware of their role and responsibilities in school and the local community. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and valued the contribution other nationalities made to life in Dubai.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was good. Most had an acceptable understanding about the sources of income in Dubai and the main industries in the UAE. Almost all students had developed good knowledge about the Gulf countries through very interesting commerce and social studies lessons. Students contributed to a number of charity programs and felt that they had a duty to care for Dubai and the UAE. They felt they had a responsibility to keep the local environment clean and to protect local, national and world resources. They had a good understanding of Dubai's customs and landmarks and appreciated living in Dubai.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and primary and good in secondary. Across the school, almost all teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. Whilst learning objectives were prepared for all lessons, they were not always shared with the students. In the best lessons the plans were detailed and structured and teachers used a wide range of strategies and activities to encourage active and collaborative learning. Teaching approaches successfully addressed the varying needs of most students. In a minority of lessons there was pace and challenge and time was used effectively. Whilst most teachers provided additional resources to support teaching, too few effectively used ICT as a teaching tool. Questioning was frequently used to reinforce taught skills but the use of open-ended questions, wait time and prompting was not used consistently at all stages.

The quality of student learning was acceptable at Kindergarten and primary and good in the secondary. Although students were often passive learners, they demonstrated positive attitudes toward their learning when tasks were challenging and relevant. Secondary students were eager to respond to questioning and could explain what they had learned. They worked together effectively on simple collaborative learning tasks and demonstrated independence when given the opportunity to do so. Students did not have regular opportunities to use ICT to support learning and extend their knowledge. Most students had age-appropriate skills but critical thinking and independent research skills were less developed.

Assessment arrangements were acceptable at Kindergarten and primary and good in secondary. Teachers were at an early stage of gathering and using a range of assessment results to modify their teaching to support improve student attainment. Ongoing assessment results were beginning to be collected and some teachers had begun to discuss these results with students. A few teachers were setting learning targets and provided constructive feedback. In most classes, jotters were marked regularly but not all teachers provided sufficient guidance to students to help them learn from their mistakes and understand how to improve.

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

The curriculum was good in all phases of the school. It had a clear rationale and reflected the school's mission and vision as well as the needs of students. It was broad, balanced and generally challenging. Progression through all grades was evident. In Kindergarten weekly themes that covered a range of topics provided the cornerstone for a diverse and wide ranging curriculum. In English, in Grade 4, themes based on novels, such as 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', provided opportunities for creative and imaginative work. In Grade 9 students were beginning to undertake comparisons of characters and plot development. In upper secondary, analysis of Shakespearian plays and poetry were enriched by research using dictionaries and the internet. In science, practical work, as well as using ICT reinforced theoretical learning. The school had extended the basic texts used in Islamic Education effectively. In Arabic, the school had identified different student abilities and was attempting to modify the curriculum by adding new resources to meet individual needs. It was also expanding its range of Arabic texts to encourage reading and develop stronger links with social studies. The curriculum was reviewed annually. Enrichment occurred in many classrooms with the use of visual presentations by teachers and students' use of the interactive white boards. Cross-curricular links plus extra-curricular activities, such as the humanities programme enabled students to construct a broad understanding of differences and diversity. Those who visited a home for the aged or the special needs school were able to appreciate differences and provide help and support. School assemblies were of good quality and provided opportunities for students to develop their confidence.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for the health and safety of students were good, overall. Medical information was updated and kept securely. The school effectively promoted healthy living practices and nutrition. Students were well supervised in classrooms, playgrounds and as they moved around the school. Students in wheelchairs were unable to access the facilities on the upper floors. All of the staff and students were aware of the child protection policies and protocol.

The quality of support across the school was good. Staff-student relationships were positive and procedures were in place to deal with and track behaviour issues. Classroom teachers, medical and counselling services personnel supported and tracked students' well-being. The established process for identification of students with special educational needs ensured their access to additional support. Procedures for tracking academic progress were being established but were not fully effective in planning next steps for students' learning. Reports to parents were comprehensive and clearly set out students strengths and developmental needs. Attendance and punctuality were monitored effectively and parents were contacted promptly when absences occurred.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. The Principal showed strong pastoral leadership qualities. She had consulted widely with her management team to identify areas where improvement was required and had put in place strategies to begin to address these deficiencies. Whilst the school leaders had worked hard to ensure consistency of practice across the school they had not been entirely successful. They had worked hard to demonstrate good teaching strategies and had modelled effective teaching techniques to members of staff. These initiatives had resulted in some improvements to teaching and discipline management but were not consistently implemented or applied by all teachers.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The leadership team knew their school well. They had begun to put in place measures to ensure that the school's performance was accurately understood, analysed and used at a strategic level to drive the school toward improvement. However, these arrangements were not fully effective. The school's action plan and systems were based on a whole-school self-evaluation that involved input from all stakeholders. Whilst it covered a range of sources the processes had not been sufficiently rigorous. Heads of departments had conducted departmental self-evaluations but there was an inconsistency in the standards used. The school had responded well to the recommendations of the previous inspection report; for example, the arrangements related to governance had improved considerably and there was regular monitoring of classroom practice.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. The school had a well-established system of reporting to parents. They were kept informed of their children's strengths and improvement needs. Parents spoke positively about the welcoming nature of the school and the frequent opportunities they had to consult with teachers.

Governance was acceptable. The recently appointed governing body was committed to providing a good quality education for children living in Dubai. They had met once, were well informed about the school and supportive towards it. Whilst anxious not to interfere in running the school, the governors were aware of its successes and supported its needs. They did consult with parents and other stakeholders and took account of their views.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good. Most teachers were qualified and were teaching within their specialty. Whilst many were well qualified and experienced, a number were not fully trained in teaching approaches and behaviour management to ensure all students learned well, were fully involved and making appropriate progress. The students benefited from a clean, well-maintained learning environment. The science laboratories and ICT rooms were modern and well equipped. The libraries were spacious and used effectively to address most students' learning needs. There were insufficient reading materials to support students' learning in Arabic. Easy access for those with physical disabilities was limited to the ground floor.

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:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
5% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	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	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

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

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