

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Mirdif Private School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Mirdif Private School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.mirdifprivateschool.ae">www.mirdifprivateschool.ae</a>
Telephone	04 2883303
Address	PO Box 79195, Dubai
Principal	Randa Ghandour
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-14 / Kindergarten to Grade 9
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	468
Number of Emirati students	313 (66%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 30th to Tuesday 31st January 2012

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## The context of the school

Located in Al Mizhar, Mirdif Private School provides education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 9. The school followed a US-style curriculum and had recently introduced the New York state standards in English, mathematics and science.

There were 36 full-time teachers including the Principal, Vice Principal and middle managers. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. Kindergarten teachers were supported by a number of teaching assistants. There was one small class in Grade 9, the first of the high school phase to date. The school had appointed 27 new teachers at the start of the academic year, which represented a significant rate of teacher turnover. The school roll had increased from 355 students in the previous year to 468 at the time of inspection. Most of the new students were entrants to the Kindergarten. Most students were Emirati and spoke Arabic as their first language. A number of other nationalities were represented by the student body.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Mirdif Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. It had some good features as well as unsatisfactory outcomes in Arabic as an additional language. The outstanding aspects of the school included health and safety and parental partnerships, as well as the daily management of the school. The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten and high school. The acceptable teaching in the elementary and middle phases was characterised by inconsistent lesson reviews and questions to challenge the more able and support the less able students. Teachers did not use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively. The New York state standards had been used to assess learning in Grades 3 to 9 and progress was beginning to be tracked. Leaders had analysed results and understood what improvements were needed to raise attainment; for example, students answers to questions about comprehension.

Some progress had been made towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The Principal and Vice Principal had provided strong leadership through a challenging time with a large number of new teachers. A comprehensive programme of staff development had been introduced and had led to more consistent teaching. Middle managers had worked well with senior leaders in formulating detailed school improvement plans. Overall, assessment was of acceptable quality but written feedback to students was poor. The school identified children with special educational needs well, but effective support was variable throughout the school. There were good links with the on-site provider for children with specific learning difficulties.

## Key strengths

- Students' good attainment and progress in the elementary, middle and high school phases in Arabic as a first language;
- Students' good behaviour, respect and courtesy to one another and to adults;
- Middle and high school students' outstanding understanding of Islam;
- Outstanding health and safety procedures, as well as outstanding healthy lifestyles;
- Strong leadership of the Principal and Vice Principal;
- Outstanding parental and community partnerships.

## Recommendations

- Raise the attainment of students for whom Arabic is an additional language;
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in English reading and writing, mathematics and science;
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching in the elementary and middle schools;
- Ensure that teachers use the curriculum standards to accurately evaluate students' progress and plan activities that meet their learning needs;
- Ensure effective use of ICT by teachers and students to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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

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

Attainment was good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary, middle and high schools and acceptable in all other subjects throughout the school. Almost all students demonstrated clear understanding of Islamic values from The Holy Qur'an and Prophets' sayings such as patience. In Arabic as a first language, the four key skills were more developed in high school. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was stronger in Grades 1 to 3 and unsatisfactory in the other grades because speaking and listening skills were weak. In English, listening and speaking were good but reading and writing attainment was weaker throughout the school with few writing opportunities provided. In mathematics, most students did not apply and use their knowledge of numbers to solve problems. In science, students generally lacked confidence and experience in working independently or in groups to investigate, record and predict what might happen in experiments.

Progress in the Kindergarten was good in English, mathematics and science. It was also good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary, middle and high schools. Progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in the elementary grades but unsatisfactory in the middle grades, as the development of speaking and listening skills was weak. As students moved through the elementary and middle phases, progress in English was acceptable with limited opportunities to write and improve their grammatical skills. In mathematics, children became more confident in their use of numbers and in identifying a variety of shapes. Older students were beginning to apply formulae to solve problems. Progress was improving in all phases and students were beginning to acquire discrete mathematical skills at a good rate. In science, students' knowledge was stronger than their investigative skills and this weakness impeded their progress when formulating hypotheses. The progress of students with special educational needs was acceptable overall.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' behaviour and attitudes toward learning were good. They engaged well with their classmates and teachers. They were courteous to visitors and had good awareness and understanding of health related issues. Students' attendance over the last term was good. Almost all students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. In the upper grades, almost all students showed an excellent awareness of Dubai's multi-cultural society and understood the importance of equality and respect for one another. Most students had good understanding of Dubai's past and how it has evolved. Most understood the reasons for the changes in Dubai. Students understood major environmental issues such as pollution and had organised worthwhile projects to consolidate their learning. Students had limited responsibilities in the school.

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

Teachers showed secure knowledge of their subjects and, at the start of most lessons, learning objectives were shared with students. However, most lessons did not include a learning review before the finish, in order to assess and consolidate learning. In general, lessons were appropriately planned and the majority actively engaged students in their learning. Most teachers enjoyed positive working relationships with their students. Teachers' questioning for factual recall of information was good. Questioning to prompt higher order thinking was also good in Arabic and Islamic Education, but weaker in the other subjects. Teachers used a range of resources to support learning, but there was insufficient use of ICT to enliven and enhance lesson delivery. In most lessons, the tasks set by teachers were not sufficiently different to meet the full range of students' needs. This resulted in a lack of challenge for the more able and a lack of structured support for the least able students.

The quality of students' learning was good in the Kindergarten and high school, and acceptable in the other phases. Students were attentive in class, motivated and keen to do well. In several subject areas, such as Islamic Education, students could articulate their learning to the whole class. Across all phases, students collaborated and worked well together. In a few subjects, for example Arabic, students systematically developed their research and enquiry skills as independent learners. Generally, these study skills were less evident. Students tended to show a lack of initiative and were over-dependent on teachers' advice and support.

The assessment of learning was acceptable across the school. Teachers' questioning was used effectively to assess students' background knowledge and to check progress. Class tests, based on New York curriculum standards, were being introduced to establish international benchmarks for student attainment. This initiative had the potential to provide a strong and reliable basis to track the progress of whole classes

and individuals. Teachers' marking of students' workbooks was poor. There were few instances, other than in Arabic, where teachers provided constructive feedback to students to direct the next steps in learning. There was little evidence of self- or peer-assessment in the lessons observed. In general, the assessment data gathered was not used effectively to inform lesson planning in order to meet the needs of all students.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was good in all phases of the school and had improved since the previous inspection. It was broad and balanced, and met the needs and interests of students in all phases. Leaders had devised a curriculum which met statutory requirements and which promoted the well-being of students in personal, emotional and academic terms. Curriculum planning was impressive and there was a clear rationale for curriculum development at the whole-school and individual subject levels. In response to the findings of the previous inspection report, leaders had increased instructional time by over four hours per week. The curriculum was under continuous review and was evaluated formally on an annual basis. Amendments were made in the light of new school priorities, for example the introduction of a ninth grade. The use of ICT to accelerate academic progress was insufficient across the school. Although there was an increasing number of projects to foster independent learning, opportunities for students to become more self-reliant in their learning were underdeveloped in many subjects. The debating club developed students' critical thinking skills. Older students supported younger children in the Kindergarten and also helped students at the early stages of learning Arabic. There was strong parental involvement in co-curricular activities; many attended workshops designed to make them more aware of what their children were studying and the progress they were making. Parents were also involved in activities to support the development of students' reading skills.

## 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

The school environment was safe and secure because adults placed a very strong emphasis on students' health and safety. The clinic was well equipped and organised. The maintenance of buildings was outstanding. Procedures were clear and very well documented to ensure that students were always well supervised and safe when travelling to and from school. There was a strong emphasis on students' awareness of the importance of eating healthily. Specialists had been invited into school to improve parents' understanding of the importance of this aspect of their children's development. Incidents relating to anti-social behavior were consistently dealt with and effectively recorded. All staff members were suitably trained and well informed about child protection issues. Procedures on entry to school enabled parents to familiarise themselves with child protection documentation.

Students received good quality support because there were well-established systems to ensure that their personal needs were effectively catered for. There were good procedures to identify students who had special educational needs and adults knew these students well. Excellent links with the on-site provider enabled staff to liaise with specialists to gain advice, assessments and additional support. The support these students with special educational needs receive during lessons was variable and related to the quality of teaching. Excellent procedures for promoting attendance resulted in high attendance and good punctuality. Students were usually in school by the time lessons started but too many did not arrive until after assemblies had started.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was good. The Principal and Vice Principal had provided strong leadership to middle managers and 27 new teachers in communicating the school's vision and ambitions. Roles and responsibilities had been clearly defined with a focus on raising attainment. Leaders throughout the school had identified areas for improvement. Action plans were detailed and had been well communicated to ensure that both staff members and students know what was required of them. The introduction of the New York standards was supporting the school in raising standards. The leaders at all levels had devised strategies that supported improvement, such as the comprehensive programme of teacher training to ensure high quality teaching for effective learning.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Senior leaders identified the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Professional development was key in ensuring a consistency in effective teaching across the school, and Islamic and Arabic leaders had already established good quality teaching in their subjects. These served as good models for the rest of the school. Strong performance management systems were in place with a focus on raising attainment levels. The development of middle managers was reflected in detailed and evaluative action planning that was beginning to improve both attainment and progress.

Parental partnership was outstanding due to the highly productive links with the school community. Parents were informed of what their children would learn on a weekly basis. They also received a weekly report on the progress their children had made. The school had provided an information meeting about the introduction of the New York standards and how the school would use them to improve outcomes. There were good links with the community with many visitors to the school including DEWA, Dubai police and the parents themselves who helped with reading and activities such as a visit to the fruit and vegetable market. There were good links with the on-site provider of special educational needs. Parents shared their concerns about future teacher retention.

Governance was good. The governing body had increased its number to eight, with many parents filling the governor's role. The governing parents represented all phases of the school. Governors held the school to account for most aspects of its performance. They acted as critical friends when new initiatives had been proposed, such as the introduction of the New York assessments. They had been listened to and their views were respected.

The day-to-day management of the school was outstanding. Staff members were well qualified and deployed appropriately with extensive training available. The premises were of the highest quality with a well-stocked library, ICT suite and science laboratory, and very well planned outside recreational areas. All areas were easily accessible to students and supported a variety of learning opportunities.

## 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	39	12%
	Last year	41	16%
Teachers	16		42%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A small minority of parents and almost half of the teachers responded to the survey. Most parents were highly supportive of the school and very positive about their children's progress in the key subjects. There was little disparity between parents' and teachers' comments, and all groups believed leadership, teaching and students' behaviour to be key strengths of the school. Parents and teachers were very positive about the leadership in the school and recognised the improvements in teaching and learning in subjects such as Islamic Education, Arabic and science. Parents felt that their opinions were valued and suggestions acted on by the school. Parents felt involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways and felt that school reports were timely and helpful. Most teachers agreed that the last inspection had led to improvements in the school and the majority of parents agreed. Overall, almost all parents and teachers who responded were very satisfied with the quality of education provided.

## 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.

**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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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