

Deira Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Primary

Report published April 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.

Deira Private School was inspected in November 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 Twar, Deira Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to primary, aged three to 11 years. The school follows a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 70 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. All parents agreed that their children were happy and safe at the school, and that they were satisfied with the quality of education provided. Most parents believed that their children were making at least satisfactory progress in the key subjects, and a majority indicated that progress was good or better. All agreed that their children enjoyed lessons and were enthusiastic about learning. A few parents thought that extra-curricular opportunities were poor, but most were satisfied with them. About half of the parents responding said that their children required a lot of additional help with their studies. All agreed that communication with the school was effective and that the school responded appropriately to their concerns. Similarly, they said that reports were regular and informative and that parent-teacher meetings were helpful and held regularly. About a quarter of parents indicated that the school should focus on improving the activities and opportunities outside the classroom.

How well does the school perform overall?

Deira Private School provided an acceptable quality of education for its students. It was a small school that had doubled in size from 29 to 70 students since June. The school had not been inspected previously. It succeeded in meeting its stated mission to provide a multicultural environment and help each student develop their potential. The school's leaders, teachers, students and parents were all enthusiastic about growing this small school into a high quality institution. The capacity to achieve that goal was evident during the inspection.

Among the key subjects, the levels of progress and attainment for students in Islamic Education were acceptable. The levels of progress and attainment of students in Arabic as a first language were acceptable, but progress and attainment of students in Arabic as an additional language were unsatisfactory. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics across the school were acceptable. Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the primary years. Students of all ages demonstrated good attitudes and behaviour at all times. Muslim students were able to explain how their faith influenced their personal behaviour. Muslim and non-Muslim students had a good understanding of Islam. The quality of teaching and learning was acceptable, although variable, across the school. Most students were enthusiastic learners, engaged in learning most of the time. The assessment of learning was good across the school. The curriculum was of acceptable quality. The provision for the protection and support of students was good; the school provided an atmosphere of care for all students. The quality of leadership of the school was good, and self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school's leaders understood their students, staff and quality of provision accurately. Partnerships with parents and the community were also acceptable. There was strong support for the school from all parents. Governance of the school and staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall.

Key features of the school

- Good senior leadership;
- Students' good personal and social development, including civic and Islamic understanding;
- Low student attainment in Arabic for non-Arabs;
- Inconsistent teaching quality across all years and subjects;
- Good provision for students' health and safety;
- Good support of students across the school.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment in key subjects, especially in Arabic for non-Arabs;
- Develop students' economic and environmental understanding;
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across all subjects and years;

- Teach to meet the needs of all learners, especially the high attainers;
- Develop the curriculum, especially in Arabic for non-Arabs and Foundation Stage Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

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

In Islamic Education, attainment and progress were acceptable. Most students memorized and recited the short chapters of The Holy Qur'an which they were learning and a few could recite a few more. The majority could recite these chapters following the appropriate recitation rules. Most students had basic knowledge about the family of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Most students understood how Muslims were required to concentrate during prayers and also knew the qualities an Imam should have. They also understood the importance of listening attentively when The Holy Qur'an was recited.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were acceptable. Most students spoke Arabic with an acceptable level of confidence. By Grade 5, most students could give short oral descriptions of their classmates. Most students listened attentively to, could follow and responded appropriately to their teachers' instruction. Almost all students could read short passages with acceptable fluency and accuracy. They could also write a few sentences in response to direct questions based on the texts they read. Most students could identify singular and plural forms of words and different types of verbs. However, they made limited progress in developing their ability to write extensively. Also, the majority made very limited progress in developing their ability to work independently or with others.

In Arabic as an additional language, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. In speaking, almost all students in most classes relied mainly on translation and the use of English to understand the basic teacher instructions. Most students could only pronounce letters and words when prompted with familiar pictures. In writing, most students orally repeated and copied the letters and the very limited range of simple words which they were learning. However, almost all students were unable to use the words they had learnt to express themselves or to make new, meaningful sentences.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable. Children in Foundation Stage had good listening skills and were able to follow their teacher's instructions. Writing skills were strong and children could write their names legibly. Their speaking skills were less developed, as the majority of the children had limited English literacy skills at the start of their education. In the primary phase, students spoke confidently and convincingly. Their listening skills were also well developed. They were confident in their abilities to read and speak well. Although students wrote accounts of their experiences, their writing skills were not well developed because opportunities to work on writing tasks were limited.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were variable across the school but acceptable overall. Students' numeracy skills were age-appropriate. Children in Foundation Stage could match counters to single digit numbers. In the lower primary phase, students understood the

concepts of 'longer' and 'shorter' when measuring objects, and were able to sort and order odd and even numbers up to a hundred. Year 3 students could multiply single-digit numbers and Year 6 students could multiply two-digit numbers and apply this skill to shopping trips using calculators. In the upper primary phase, students also developed their skills in representing data and creating frequency tables. The older students could analyse graphs and charts to draw conclusions. The mathematics progress of a few students was limited by English skills and, at times, too low a level of challenge.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the primary years. Children in Foundation Stage investigated properties of materials using magnets and iron filings. They could name basic body parts and their functions, and explored different types of fruit. Year 1 students knew the parts of a flowering plant and could name a few different plants. Year 2 students learned how force upon an object creates motion, and how it can change an object's speed and direction. Year 3 students could classify common materials according to properties of transparency, magnetism, resilience and hardness. Older students developed their understanding of materials and their properties, but at higher levels of complexity. The progress of a few students was limited by their English skills. Investigative skills were beginning to develop among the older students.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students of all ages including the Foundation Stage children demonstrated good attitudes and behaviour. Respect, moral values and the importance of maintaining positive friendships were actively promoted through regular assemblies and achievement awards. Motivation for learning was evident throughout the school. Attendance was good and almost all students arrived punctually at lessons. Students were aware of and keen to adopt healthy lifestyles. They enjoyed a range of sports and had a good awareness of the benefits of healthy living. They had contributed to maintaining a clean, litter-free school environment.

All students had a good understanding of Islam and showed understanding and appreciation of local culture and traditions. Muslim students were able to explain how their faith influenced their personal behaviour. The UAE National Anthem was played and sung in Arabic during regular assemblies and students were appreciative of the opportunity to live in a harmonious multicultural community. Students developed their civic awareness through working together towards common goals in the school house system.

Economic and environmental understanding was acceptable overall, but stronger among the older students. They could describe and give thoughtful opinions about Dubai's economic development as well as make comparisons with other countries. Students understood that skilled workers were important to the economy of Dubai and aspired to become skilled through education. Most students had sound knowledge of the importance of using water sensibly and all kept the school grounds free of litter and graffiti.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable across the school. Good teaching was observed in both sections, but about half of the lessons observed were acceptable. Teachers showed good subject knowledge, but in a few lessons teachers showed a lack of understanding of how young students learn. Teachers' planning was generally good, but their use of time was occasionally poor. A few teachers dominated lessons, lecturing while students remained passive for too long. Teacher-student interactions were almost always positive, but dialogue with students did not usually promote the critical thinking and creativity to which the school's mission aspired. Too often, teachers' questions to students were simply requests to recall facts, although a few teachers offered thought-provoking questions to students. Lessons usually met the needs of most students, but provision for the highest attaining students, through challenging tasks, was rarely available.

Students' learning was acceptable across the school. Most students were enthusiastic learners, engaged in learning for most of the time. In a very few lessons a majority of students became disengaged, particularly the younger ones. Students cooperated with teachers and one another, and collaborated on common tasks well. However, students were too dependent upon their teachers for each task and thus their learning was limited when tasks were completed. Application of learning to the real world was developing, as were connections between areas of learning. The development of critical and higher-order thinking skills was limited.

The assessment of learning was good across the school. Most teachers assessed learning during lessons, but few teachers were unaware of students' progress as lessons unfolded. Summative assessment was directly linked to curriculum expectations and included detailed learning targets in all subjects across the years. Levelling against expected standards had been completed and further tests were planned to occur later in the school year. At the time of the inspection, assessment information was not fully informing curriculum planning and teaching. As a result, a few students were not challenged enough in key subjects. Students carried progress diaries home daily, which ensured ongoing assessment and allowed parents and teachers to monitor their work closely.

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

The curriculum was of acceptable quality across the school. It was planned according to Cambridge International Primary standards. As is normal at a small school, there were limited choices for students but the needs of most were met. Nevertheless, the curriculum was reasonably broad and balanced and contained some cross-curricular links. Theme days were held periodically to bring all students and staff together and the house system enriched students' experiences in many aspects of provision. The English curriculum was reviewed in June and was twice modified to meet better the needs of students whose first language is not English. For similar reasons, the mathematics curriculum was modified in Foundation Stage to

help language development among the children. Other modifications were made to localise the curriculum, thereby making it more meaningful to students. Arab and non-Arab students shared one Arabic lesson per week to facilitate language development, enhance meaning and foster friendships between students. Knowledge and Understanding of the World in Foundation Stage was less well developed compared with other subjects. Also, the curriculum in Arabic for non-Arabs was narrow in scope. Extra-curricular activities were limited in range, but there were a few opportunities for students to learn within the community and local environment.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety was good across the school. The school's clinic was staffed full-time by a registered nurse. In addition to her responsibilities in the clinic, the nurse played an important role in the effective delivery of the school's health and fitness programme, including provision of workshops and maintaining links with parents to encourage healthy eating choices by the students. There was a well-developed system for the administration and storage of medications, and teachers were informed of those students who had medical conditions that require monitoring. The nurse also maintained close links with medical professionals to ensure consistency of care for students with specific medical conditions. Roles for all persons responsible for health and safety were clear and well documented. The premises were clean and well maintained. The building and grounds were well cared for by the maintenance staff. Findings from daily inspections were logged and appropriate actions were taken. Fire drills were carried out twice a semester. Play areas were safe and properly supervised. Security at the school was very good and all students indicated that they felt safe. The school had a recently drafted child protection policy.

Support for students was good. The school provided an atmosphere of care and support for all students. Teachers and leaders shared collective responsibility in caring for their students. The school had a counsellor who actively supported the students and liaised with the class teachers to monitor and support vulnerable students. There was a system in place for the identification and support for students with different learning styles and special needs. Individual Education Plans were on file. Attendance was managed well.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal and the two heads of section knew their students well and were committed to their success. They led a school that had a warm, supportive climate. Communication amongst the senior leaders and teachers was regular and focused upon student outcomes. Teams were effective in helping the Principal to realise her vision for the school's immediate and long-term future. Work was shared and plans were the result of collaboration by many. Teachers' professional development needs had been identified and their performance was monitored. The leaders demonstrated the capacity to improve the school further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school's leaders accurately understood the quality of provision. Priorities for improvement were set out clearly and lines of responsibility were understood by all staff. The school had a detailed action plan that organised work around six themes. Required outcomes were linked to teacher development planning, and were time-bound. The work of students and teachers was closely monitored and actions were taken when necessary to bring about improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. There was strong support for the school from parents in the on-line survey and those interviewed echoed that support in their opinions of the school. Communication with parents was done daily through learning diaries and the school had a useful world-wide web page to keep parents informed of special events, curriculum updates and general news. A successful parents' night had been held and there were plans to form a standing parents' group. Partnerships with the community were less well developed. Although there were opportunities for students to learn outside the school and welcome special guests, these were not many in number.

Governance of the school was acceptable. A governing board had been formed early in 2010 and included broad representation from people outside the school community. It had recently met, but its leader did not have a clear understanding of the results the school had produced over the last full term. The governing board was still in an early stage of development but was beginning to have a positive effect on the school.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. All teachers were qualified in their subjects and there were no gaps in teaching provision. Teaching loads were mostly equitable. The school facilities were modern, but specialist areas such as the science laboratory and the library were not fully equipped, thus limiting opportunities for students to learn independently. General resources for learning were mostly sufficient and there was adequate provision for students with special physical needs. Classrooms featured appropriate educational decor and had enough space for active learning to take place.

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:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic? 73% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
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:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
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:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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