

INSPECTION REPORT

Pristine Private School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Pristine Private School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.pristineschool.com
Telephone	04-2674299
Address	Al Nahda - 2 Area, P.O.Box 60830, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Aisha Ansari
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS1-Year 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,578
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	7 (0.51%)
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th February

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The context of the school

Pristine Private School provided education for 1,578 boys and girls, an increase of nine per cent from the previous year. Over two fifths of the student population were Pakistani; about a quarter were from the Philippines and about one fifth were Asian, mainly from Sri Lanka and India. In total there were students from 48 different nationalities. Emiratis made up less than one per cent of the total number of students.

The school offered the National Curriculum for England and Wales. In Foundation Stage the school followed the Early Years curriculum. In the primary and secondary phases it followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales, as well as the Ministry of Education in the UAE framework for Islamic Education and Arabic. Senior students sat the University of Cambridge International Examinations (IGCSE) at Year 11, and Cambridge AS and A-levels at Years 12 and 13.

The school was organised into four phases. Foundation Stage made up one fifth of the student population, primary (Years 1 to 6) made up a half, secondary (Years 7 to 11) made up a quarter, and post-16 (Years 12 and 13) made up almost one twentieth of the school's population.

During the week of inspection the principal was supported by three heads of school and a further 146 teaching staff; about a third were new. Most teachers had a recognised qualification and about a tenth did not have regular assigned teaching commitments. The principal had been at the school for over thirteen years but this was her first year as principal.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Students' outstanding attainment and progress in English and Science in the secondary phase;
- Students' outstanding behaviour and attitudes in Foundation Stage;
- Students' positive, calm and enthusiastic approach to learning and to their school;
- Students' outstanding community and environmental responsibility in the secondary phase and good levels of awareness and involvement elsewhere across the school;
- The very good start the senior leadership team had made in sustaining the school's drive for improvement, by effectively promoting high academic achievement and the school's core values;
- The highly stimulating and well-resourced learning environment in Foundation Stage enabled children to make an excellent start.

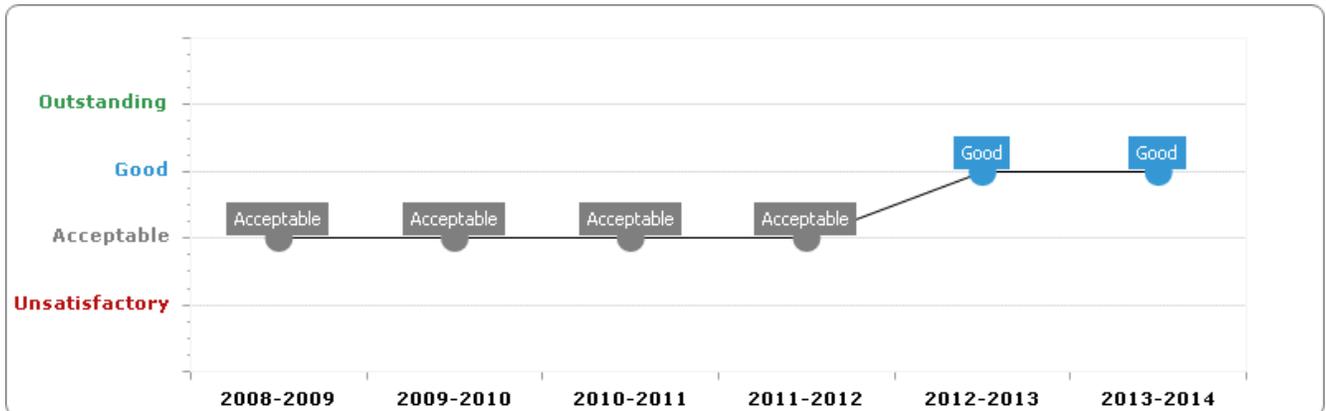
Recommendations

- Continue to improve students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic across the school;
- Ensure that the attainment and progress of young primary students improves by:
 - Reviewing roles and responsibilities to provide greater clarity and accountability;
 - Involving teachers more actively in their own planning of lessons within appropriate teams;
- Improve teaching to enable students to learn more effectively and independently;
- Ensure that sufficient attainment upon entry data is collected to provide a secure baseline to accurately measure progress;
- Ensure that the full Governing Board maintains a high level of accountability and professional challenge when receiving presentations and reports about the school's performance.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school's significant consolidation of its good overall performance and extension of outstanding features;
- The continued development of the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases;
- The developing strength for the provision for students with special educational needs;
- Taking account of the views of the school's main stakeholders;
- The positive progress in meeting the requirements of most of the previous inspection recommendations.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
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	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment across the key subjects and different phases varied from acceptable to outstanding. In Islamic Education, students across all phases showed an acceptable understanding of Islamic concepts and values and Holy Quran recitation was developing although most students recited the chapters they learnt with frequent errors. In Arabic as a first language, listening and reading skills for most students were in line with expectations while speaking was still developing. In Arabic as an additional language, most students could read simple words and wrote short sentences. Listening and speaking skills were limited. In English, children in the Foundation Stage used their secure knowledge of key vocabulary and phonics to write simple sentences and read contextualised text to a good standard. Students' basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling were well established by the end of the primary phase. Secondary students' attainment was outstanding because their language skills were more developed and skills were refined to enable highly successful outcomes. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children showed an increasing confidence with number, and could understand the properties of simple shapes. Primary students used their number skills to accurately collect and display information. Senior students showed competent algebraic skills, a secure knowledge of geometrical properties and an increasing competence to solve complex problems. In science, Foundation Stage and primary students demonstrated good factual knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Secondary students were able to use scientific knowledge to give accurate explanations or solve challenging problems and report their findings using accurate scientific language. Attainment at post-16 science was good. Attainment in biology, chemistry and physics exceeded international comparisons at the highest grades of IGCSE. This had been maintained for the last four years.

Students' progress was at least good in most subjects and across most phases. In Islamic Education, most students were making significant progress particularly in Quran recitation. In Arabic as a first language, most students made good progress in listening skills, while in Arabic as an additional language the majority of students made good progress in reading and writing. Progress in speaking was limited across most grades in Arabic as a first and as an additional language. In English, children in Foundation Stage first developed good listening and speaking skills. After learning to use and apply their phonic knowledge, they confidently attempted to read and write. Primary students' understanding of language developed well. Their reading became more expressive and sentence writing increasingly more complex. Students' progress accelerated in the secondary phase and was outstanding. This progress was consolidated in Grade 12 as students adapted to the higher demands of AS level. In mathematics, students made good progress from their starting points at successive stages of the school. They competently applied their skills in a variety of contexts particularly in project work. Post-16 students made the best progress in developing and applying algebraic skills across the subject and when problem-solving. In science, the majority of Foundation Stage and primary students made good progress in understanding scientific content and in developing investigative skills. Progress

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accelerated in the secondary phase where students made much better than expected progress compared to their starting points. At post-16 they were confident in carrying out a full range of appropriate practical work and were able to learn by investigation and research. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, and good progress in English, mathematics and science.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Most students were motivated to acquire new skills and knowledge and often demonstrated high levels of concentration and perseverance. Post16 students also articulated high personal aspirations for the future. Secure relationships created a positive climate for collaboration and co-operation. Students often took responsibility for their own learning and were able to apply prior knowledge to new learning contexts. Older students enjoyed conducting research and enquiry based investigations when given the opportunity. All students were especially interested in using ICT to support their learning and were eager to participate in new initiatives such as the school's regular paperless Digital Days. Although students were motivated when working in groups, not all progressed at the same rate, with some being passive and making little contribution. Critical thinking and problem-solving were still developing.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good across the school and it was outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Students showed positive behaviour, positive attitudes and self-reliance. The Foundation Stage children were highly responsible and self-disciplined for their age. As such, students enjoyed good relationships with staff and were very happy coming to school. They showed independence of mind and co-operated well with others. Older students acted as role models for the very young students by providing them with weekly learning support in lessons. Two active school councils initiated activities that encouraged and involved others in making healthy eating and living choices. Attendance was acceptable and punctuality was good. Students' understanding of Islamic values, and their local, cultural and global awareness was good across the school. Students showed great respect of Islamic values and had a clear understanding of how these values influenced the society in Dubai. They showed appropriate knowledge of UAE heritage and culture, produced good displays around the school and could talk about life in Dubai. Students gave good examples of their own cultures and traditions and could speak in depth about this, but their understanding of UAE traditions and heritage was less well developed. Students' community and environmental development was good in the Foundation Stage, primary and post-16 phases and outstanding in the secondary phase. Students showed good work ethic and willingly took on important roles and responsibilities. They also actively

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promoted school key values and showed interest in conservation and sustainability. In lower phases, children understood the issue of road safety. There were good levels of student participation in projects, including those involving the local community. Secondary students' outstanding development reflected more proactive initiation and considerable community involvement. For example, all commerce students successfully planned and prepared for the Trade Fair involving many local businesses that helped them improve their business skills.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good across the school. Most teachers had high expectations of students. Students benefitted from well-structured and meaningful introductions to lessons. However, tasks did not always sufficiently match the learning needs and interests of all students. In some lessons they were not appropriate. Teaching encouraged the development of speaking and listening skills. Teachers listened carefully to student responses and adjusted their questions accordingly. They skilfully reviewed what students had learnt in discussions at the end of lessons. In some lessons there were missed opportunities for challenge, and independent work was limited. Teachers made good references to subject specific vocabulary and encouraged students to use this consistently when planning investigations. Teaching assistants were deployed effectively. They knew the students well and had a clear picture of the needs of individual students especially those with special educational needs. Planning was thorough across the school. However, in some lessons, teachers were inflexible and kept strictly to their lesson plan when an adjustment would have better suited the circumstances.

The quality of assessment across the school was good. Standardised and internal assessments provided teachers and senior managers with valuable information that was used effectively to monitor students' progress and to set students' targets regularly. Senior leaders ensured assessment information was accurate through a range of moderation activities. In most subjects, teachers had good information regarding the strengths and weaknesses in students' knowledge and understanding which they skilfully used in planning lessons. Most teachers used questioning effectively to check students' understanding during lessons. However, in some lessons, opportunities were missed to provide challenging activities for the high attaining students. The marking of students' written work was sometimes weak. In most classes it was regular, and students were given clear guidance on how to improve their work. Marking was more developmental in the English department.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality across the school was good. It clearly reflected the school's values with its focus upon support, challenge and care for the individual student. The school regularly reviewed its curriculum and had recently effectively adapted it to reflect changed requirements. The introduction of a 'Thinking Skills' programme has added an innovative feature to students' learning experiences. Transition procedures between classes were effectively planned so as to ensure continuity of learning. Senior students were well-supported through a structured careers guidance programme. Opportunities for project work promoted independent learning. The school successfully engaged with the community through environmental projects such as My City-Dubai and Me, which also provided a meaningful context for cross-curricular links in science, commerce, geography and environmental management. These extra dimensions to the curriculum promoted a stimulating and enriching learning experience for many students. However, the recent reduction in the after-school activities programme diluted this enrichment.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was good and was effectively planned. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum promoted a child-centred approach which enabled children to learn successfully. The school skilfully modified its curriculum to meet the different needs of almost all its students, including those students with special educational needs. Intervention strategies supported students who required remedial action in their studies. A good range of subject options promoted the curriculum interests of senior students. This also included a distinctive vocational choice of Leisure and Tourism. Students were encouraged to bring their own IT devices to school to promote their independent learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety across all phases was good and the school had established a health and safety culture. The systems for bus departure and parent collection were safe, efficient and well organised. Buses were all equipped with safety belts, fire extinguishers and first aid kits, and registers were maintained on a daily basis. The school was fully compliant with fire safety regulations but there was inadequate signage at fire mustering points. Students' safeguarding and protection, and the related training for staff, were effective. The recruitment policies ensured that staff employed by the school had undergone all the necessary checks. The adoption of a healthy lifestyle was effectively promoted through the curriculum, enriched by prominent displays, and reinforced in the canteen where a wide selection of healthy options were available.

The quality of support was good. Staff-student relationships were very positive and based on mutual respect, and behaviour was managed effectively. The school's strong pastoral care system ensured that good use

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was made of the school counsellor, who provided high quality and individual advice and support to students, including to those students with special educational needs. Attendance was monitored on a daily basis and any problems arising from absences resulted in immediate contact with parents. Personal development programmes were provided through designated lessons, with age appropriate guidance on health and well-being, and personal effectiveness. Careers lessons helped prepare students well for the next stage of their development.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The principal set clear direction and high expectations with a strong focus on improvement. She was supported well by committed, and almost always, effective teams at all levels. Through their shared school vision, leaders effectively promoted high academic achievement and the school's core values. Almost all delegation and mentoring were effective, and good relationships and communication were widespread. Leaders at all levels demonstrated good capacity to make further improvement. They had responded well to the analysis of the school's performance in international tests in English, mathematics and science, and were using some useful international benchmarks to evaluate the school's performance. However, some lack of clarity and accountability for roles and responsibilities in the lower primary phase, for example in planning, were holding back progress.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. Self-evaluation included taking account of both parents' and students' views. Performance management systems had several successful features including direct links to high quality professional development. They had led to some improvement in teaching, but performance objectives were not always structured to optimise intended improvement. Paired lesson observations, some external validation, and the school's better use of assessment data, provided more consistency and rigor. Improvement planning was generally effective but the structure and detail of plans, and their inconsistent use of success criteria, held back improvement especially at subject leadership level. There had been significant improvements since the last inspection, but these had yet to fully impact in Islamic Education and Arabic. The school's use of data to bring about improvement was effective.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents strongly supported the school and felt welcomed and valued partners. Communication was effective and included sharing students' targets and advice on how to improve. Parents' views had brought about some improvements. Student projects and community service had improved but their impact on students' learning was restricted. Parents wanted more after school enrichment.

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Governance was acceptable. The governing body set clear strategic priorities, increasingly acted as a critical friend and provided significant funds for major resourcing. Appraisal across the school ensured some accountability, including that of the principal, but opportunities for strengthening this through the termly board meetings and the monthly joint governors and senior leadership committee, were not taken.

Management, including staffing and resources, was acceptable. Day-to-day management was good and buildings were well-maintained. The learning environment was very attractive but the quality of facilities and resources were variable. In Foundation Stage, these were excellent, but overall, classrooms were often cramped. There was limited access for students with physical disabilities. Most staff were suitably qualified and trained, but the high staff turnover made sustaining improvements difficult, even though the school had strategies to compensate this. Staffing for special educational needs had been extended. There were now also better outdoor areas for Foundation Stage and more access to ICT in the secondary phase.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were only a very few Emirati students enrolled at the school. Their attainment was good in English, mathematics and science, and acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic. They also made good progress in English, mathematics and science, and acceptable progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. They were well-motivated and enjoyed taking part in lessons. Teachers often engaged them in learning through questioning, and tracked their progress and achievement in detail, which also included identifying the priorities for improvement and the support provided. An Emirati student in the secondary phase had won third place in the Dubai "Art, Fashion and Interior Design Challenge 2014."

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

The school's provision for students with special educational needs was good. The school's admission policy determined both whether students would be able to manage the demands of the curriculum, and whether the school could meet each student's needs. On admission, the special educational needs of students were effectively identified and planned for. This involved screening tests, the use of baseline testing, interviews and observation. An effective referral system was in place that also made good use of attainment data. Individual students' progress was tracked reflecting the National Curriculum and students' individual education plans. Support was effective in most subjects and included a designated support teacher depending on the specific need, although some learning activities intended to match students' needs were not appropriately targeted. Most students with special educational needs made good progress in line with

their peers. Gifted and talented students were identified, and provision was subsequently made which mainly targeted their ability related needs. Special educational needs were managed well. Designated staff were appropriately qualified and deployed, and were supported well by external specialists. The school involved parents in supporting and reviewing their children's special educational needs, and particularly in agreeing targets for their individual educational plan. However, not all parents concerned responded positively to this.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Across the school, the teaching of Arabic as a first language was adequate. Teachers' subject knowledge was secure, and their clear objectives in their lesson plans were sometimes shared with students. Teachers used smart boards, ICT, white boards, flash cards, models, worksheets as well textbooks to enhance learning. Interaction in most lessons was dominated by teachers who asked closed questions. Some teachers provided work that matched their students' broad ability levels, but this was limited. In too many lessons, teachers set low expectations for their students and talked excessively, resulting in less opportunities for students to be involved in discussion or work in groups or in pairs. Students' learning skills were limited because teachers did not follow-up their work sufficiently. The work given to students in class was pitched at levels that were below the curriculum expectations. Transition between grades was adequate, but the curriculum was not sufficiently reviewed to ensure that the needs of all students were met. Cross-curricular links were few, even though more were planned. A few Arab students were studying Arabic as an additional language instead of Arabic as a first language, but the school, during the inspection, began to take action to address this issue.

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	420	40%
	Last year	317	34%
Teachers	112		89%
Students	159		90%

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

The surveys produced a good level of response from the parents, students and staff. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Their children enjoyed school and made good progress in the core subjects with a few parents stating reservations about progress in Arabic as a first language. Almost all parents valued the safe environment and the positive quality of relationships with staff. They also indicated that bullying was dealt with effectively. A high proportion of parents agreed that the school was well led and that their concerns and opinions were listened to. Students were satisfied with the education provided for them, particularly endorsing the progress made in English. Most students recognised that homework promoted their learning. A minority were dissatisfied with the range of subjects offered and the restricted extra-curricular provision. Teachers were strongly supportive of almost all features of the school.

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

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