

United International Private School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 10

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.

United International Private School was inspected in March 2011 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 Muhaisinah 4, United International Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Secondary, aged four to 16 years. The school follows a Philippine curriculum, ending with Grade 10. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,303 students on the 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. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of academic education provided by the school. They thought their children's progress in Arabic, English, science and mathematics was good. Parents stated that the school provided satisfactory learning opportunities and facilities for students in a safe environment. Most of the parents were satisfied with the timely feedback, meetings and written communication by teachers and administrators. They were also satisfied with the school's responses to their concerns. The majority considered that the school was led well and had responded effectively to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Most of the parents agreed that school inspection had led to improvements in the school. The quality of teaching was seen as a strength of the school but also an area, together with school facilities, that managers should continue to improve.

How well does the school perform overall?

United International Private School provided an acceptable quality of education. The senior management had acted on all of the recommendations made following the initial inspection. Significant effort and resources had been spent to improve the learning environment by adding a new building, recruiting competent teachers and substantially reducing class sizes. The school met its mission, goals and objectives by preparing students for further education in college courses in the Philippines. There were many indications that the leaders and teaching staff, demonstrated the capacity and commitment to continue to improve the school.

Students' attainment in the Kindergarten phase was good in Filipino and acceptable in science, mathematics and English. At the primary phase, attainment and progress were good in Filipino and science and acceptable in Arabic, Islamic Education, English and mathematics. At the secondary phase, attainment was unsatisfactory for Islamic Education although progress was acceptable. Attainment and progress were acceptable in Arabic, science and English and good in mathematics and Filipino. Acceptable support to students and arrangements to ensure their health and safety were evident across the school. Overall, teaching for effective learning was acceptable at all phases. The curriculum was of acceptable quality and was effective in meeting most students' needs. In addition to providing the full curriculum of the Philippines, recent improvements had ensured that the government requirements were also met. The academic committee regularly reviewed the effectiveness of what was offered. The behaviour of students was good; their civic and Islamic understanding was good at the Kindergarten and primary phases and was outstanding at the secondary phase. The students' knowledge and awareness of the environment and of Dubai was good at the Kindergarten and primary phases and outstanding at the secondary phase.

Key features of the school

- The significantly improved quality of teaching;
- The unsatisfactory attainment in Islamic Education in the high school phase
- Students' good attitudes towards their work and their courtesy and behaviour;
- The outstanding civic and cultural understanding of older students;
- The genuine concern and commitment of managers and teachers to ensure further improvements.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment in Islamic Education in the secondary level;
- Continue to improve teaching so that it becomes consistently good;
- Introduce more opportunities for students to apply new knowledge, solve problems and engage in critical thinking;

- Assess students' knowledge and skills in greater detail to identify their strengths and weaknesses and modify teaching accordingly;
- Strengthen the school's improvement procedures to include more specific targets and success criteria;
- Include a wider group of stakeholders in the school improvement committees, in school self review and in the governing board.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education in the primary phase were acceptable. In the secondary phase attainment was unsatisfactory and progress was acceptable. Almost all primary students knew the five Pillars of Islam and the five daily prayers. Most students had acceptable knowledge about the life of the Prophets. They knew about their birth, where they lived and some of their miracles. Most students made acceptable progress in Qur'an recitation. Most secondary students had acceptable knowledge of the Prophet Mohammad's life (PBUH). A majority of students explained the voluntary fasting practice but they could not explain the effects of such fasting upon their lives. Students made limited links between lessons and their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable across the school. There was significant improvement in higher primary grades. When speaking, students in Grade 1 pronounced Arabic letters correctly. Students in Grade 3 could say short sentences. Students in Grade 5 presented a play and students in Grade 9 presented a description of fire-fighters' duties. However, students in Grade 10 had difficulty saying short sentences. In listening and comprehension, all students in the primary phase understood teachers' instructions but, in Grade 10, students asked the teacher to translate from Arabic to English to explain the understanding of some ideas. In their reading, students in Grade 1 read the letters and words with vowels included. Students in Grade 3 read short familiar passages but students in Grade 10 had difficulty in reading.

Attainment in Filipino was good across all phases of the school. Most students demonstrated good skills across all four learning areas. In the Kindergarten, children demonstrated good speaking, listening, and reading skills. Almost all students were able to read simple one and two syllable Filipino words. At the higher grade levels in primary phase and in the secondary phase, students had progressed in their communication skills especially in fluency, vocabulary, and in overall subject mastery. At Grade 3 students were able to read paragraphs fluently in Filipino. At the secondary phase they read novels in Filipino as part of the curriculum.

Attainment and progress in English were acceptable across all phases. In the Kindergarten, children's writing skills were good and most could form letters correctly. However, listening skills were not well extended. Children could speak clearly and write simple sentences. Most could read simple words. In the primary phase students had acceptable speaking and listening skills, although sometimes a few found it difficult to express their views clearly. They read and

understood texts which included short poems. They used a range of vocabulary to construct clear sentences, although this was inconsistent. Most wrote using neat handwriting. In the secondary phase, listening and speaking skills were acceptable. The majority of older students actively participated in lively debate on topics such as the benefits of cloning. They could read and understand factual texts. Extended writing, including creative and narrative forms was limited.

Attainment and progress in mathematics was acceptable in Kindergarten and primary phases and good at secondary phase, but there were variations within aspects of the subject. Students' attainment was highest in number work. Students in Grades 9 and 10 showed a good grasp of algebra and calculus. Although students were beginning to practise more mathematical problem solving activities, attainment in this aspect was not as strong. In Kindergarten, children were becoming confident users of number, although they had few opportunities to investigate mathematical concepts through practical play. In Grade 2 students identified and used basic fractions. Grade 6 students could calculate accurately using up to five decimal places. In Grade 9 most were able to calculate the areas of circle segments in geometry. By Grade 10 most students could apply rules of differentiation in solving the derivative of a function.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in the Kindergarten and secondary, but good in the primary phase. International tests showed that most students in the primary phase attained above international averages. Students across the school showed skills in memorising scientific facts. In Kindergarten, they knew the parts of the body. In secondary phase they knew the periodic table. Students were enthusiastic learners and engaged in science learning almost all lessons. They co-operated in groups regularly to classify, analyse, measure and test their ideas. They kept good records of their observations and communicated their findings clearly. Students' investigative skills developed well in the primary phase but progress slowed in the secondary phase, where a few were doing work below their ability levels. Students' understanding of the scientific method was good but they did not have sufficient opportunity to perform open-ended investigations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Almost all students showed respect to their teachers and peers at all times. They were courteous to guests. Most students were self-motivated and eager to participate in lessons and school activities. Almost all students were aware of making good healthy life style choices especially through healthy food and sport. Attendance overall was good and punctuality at the start of each lesson was acceptable, with a few students arriving late to school assembly and classes.

Students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and cultures were good in the Kindergarten and primary phases and outstanding in the secondary phase. This was reflected in the activities included in the morning assemblies and projects to promote and further enrich their knowledge and appreciation of local culture. Secondary students were active in the students' council and social activities. Most students

showed good respect and appreciation of Islam. Children in Kindergarten and primary were aware of different nationalities in Dubai. Secondary students could explain the advantages of living in a multi-cultural society very well.

Economic and environmental understanding was good in the Kindergarten and primary phases and outstanding in the secondary phase. Almost all students had a good understanding of how Dubai had developed. Secondary students discussed current issues in Dubai's economy to an advanced level. Almost all students in secondary phase had a clear idea of how they could contribute to the future of Dubai. Almost all students across the school took care of their immediate surroundings. Secondary students had excellent knowledge and understanding of the need to protect natural resources. They were able to discuss and suggest solutions to advanced issues related to the environment locally and internationally, such as climate change and global warming.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching quality was acceptable across the school. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects was generally good but a few lacked essential knowledge. Lesson planning was consistently detailed and the management of time in lessons was usually skilful. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) resources was variable in its effects. Almost all teachers used a range of resources to engage students in their lessons, but a few depended too heavily upon the text books to guide their teaching. Teacher-student interactions were almost always positive, but a few teachers did not manage their classrooms well. A few teachers talked for too long, leaving students passive or disengaged. Teachers' skills in asking questions were variable, as some promoted deep thinking but others simply asked students for one or two word answers. A few teachers asked their students to respond in unison to very simple questions. Teachers provided different tasks to meet the needs of their students, but the more able students were frequently not challenged enough to learn new ideas.

Students' learning was acceptable in all phases. Their engagement in and responsibility for their own learning was a strength, but their independent learning skills were not. For example, students responded very well to their teachers' directions but did not have opportunities to plan their own learning experiences. Students' interactions and collaboration were consistently respectful and productive. The application of learning to the real world was regularly planned but was underdeveloped in mathematics lessons. Planned connections between areas of learning were evident in students' work and in their oral contributions during classes. Students' enquiry and research skills were limited, as were their critical and higher order thinking skills.

The assessment of learning was acceptable across all phases of the school. Assessment as part of the teaching and learning process was effectively done by almost all teachers, allowing students to be taught at appropriate levels of challenge for continual progress. Diagnostic and summative assessment methods were used to identify students who were not succeeding in internal tests but details of attainment levels were not analysed. External assessments measured attainment against regional and international student populations. The use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning was varied. Some teachers modified their lessons accordingly but others did not. Teachers generally knew their students' strengths

and weaknesses but did not yet set targets for improvement. Teachers' regularly marked students' work. Students monitored their progress in each subject quarterly by graphing their marks, but they did not identify their own next steps in learning. Portfolios of learning were kept by all students, including group portfolios amongst the older students. The school's assessment data was not linked to overall monitoring of performance and improvement planning.

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

The curriculum was of acceptable quality and was effective in meeting most students' needs across all phases of the school. In addition to providing the full Philippine curriculum, recent improvements had ensured that the government requirements were met. There was a wide variety of subjects available to students, including ICT, art, music and physical education. A particular strength was the attention given to promoting students' social development, good manners and civic responsibility, both through specific lessons and opportunities to develop leadership. In key subjects, a significant proportion of the curriculum was closely linked to text book content. This restricted the learning experiences available to students. Although plans showed intentions to set new concepts in a real world context to help students understand their relevance, this did not happen often enough. Kindergarten students had little opportunity to learn through their play experiences. The focus of the curriculum was upon imparting knowledge. Although efforts were being made to provide more practice in applying knowledge to new situations or using it to solve problems, this remained a weaker aspect along with practical and investigative work. The academic committee regularly reviewed the effectiveness of what was offered on the basis of how students performed, but their analysis was not sufficiently specific to pinpoint exactly what needed to be modified. In most subjects there was a logical progression of increasingly difficult work, but on occasions the most able students were not sufficiently challenged. There were examples of links being made between subjects, but these opportunities to enhance learning were not fully exploited. Good links with the community through sport, trips and environmental and charity projects helped enrich students' experiences.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure health and safety of students were acceptable across the school. Clear policies and procedures to promote students' health and welfare were at the early stages of implementation. The school premises were well-maintained and clean. Classrooms were maximized for various learning activities. Students' medical care was a priority and records were well maintained. Although the school was active in promoting healthy living, this has had little impact on students' attitudes. Bus transport arrangements had improved, which ensured the safe arrival and departure of students. The school had well-established arrangements for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality.

The quality of support provided by the school was acceptable overall. Most teachers were aware of their students' social, physical and intellectual needs. They often offered valuable advice and guidance to improve students' performance. The school was active in providing students with knowledge of possible career choices and monitored their progress. The school managed the rare instances of poor behaviour and expectations were regularly shared with students and parents. The well-organised learning enhancement support programme was used effectively to support students and track their progress. Both parents and students found the specified areas for improvement to be very helpful in clearly setting out the next steps for learning. Attendance and punctuality were well managed. Accurate records were kept.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Authorities and responsibilities were clearly defined. Delegation of tasks such as monitoring of teachers' performance was achieved through a subject co-ordinator system. Senior staff members were part of the governing board and were able to provide information to the school managers, particularly during the bi-annual board meetings. The school leadership demonstrated an acceptable capacity to support future improvement of the school.

Self- evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had met the recommendations of the initial inspection. The processes of self-assessment and school improvement planning were based on results of learning outcomes of students. These were linked to international benchmarks. The school improvement plan committee met regularly to agree on the yearly plans. Representation on this committee was limited. There was no parental representation although complaints and feedback from parents were considered in making the improvement plans. The performance of teachers was monitored by subject co-ordinators but this work was incomplete. The results of assessments and monitoring activities were well documented. Objectives in the school improvement plan were comprehensive but were not measurable or time-bound. Consequently, progress towards meeting these objectives was difficult to track.

Links with parents and the community were acceptable. The school published a newsletter and an internet web page to keep parents informed. The school also used social networking sites. All students had notebooks to facilitate communication between home and school. There was a Parent-Teacher Council that met quarterly. Parents participated in extra-curricular activities and a Family Day was held annually. The school participated in inter-mural sports contests at both the primary and secondary phases.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The governing board representation was limited to employees and owners of the school. It met twice yearly to plan the academic calendar and to review programmes and activities at the end of the year. Although parents were not included, their views were taken into account at board meetings. In addition, the Chairman met with education officials from the Philippine Education system to obtain advice.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. There were enough teachers but many were new and deployed outside of their subject specialist areas. This affected the quality of teaching. In addition, most subject co-ordinators did not have sufficient time to perform their required tasks. A new building had been added to allow for smaller class sizes. Facilities were well maintained and clean. Resources were sufficient for almost all subjects but there were not enough resources to deliver the science curriculum fully.

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?			
0% 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	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Filipino?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?

Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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	Acceptable
Governance	Unsatisfactory
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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