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**Report following the analysis and evaluation of evidence submitted by Jawatha Private Schools for the purpose of accreditation as a Thinking School by Thinking Schools @Exeter, University of Exeter.**

### **Starting point: the school context**

Jawatha Private Schools (JPS) is a popular and highly successful large educational establishment comprised of seven schools within the JPS banner (Boys, Primary School, Boys Middle School, Boys High School, Girls Primary School, Girls Middle School, Girls High School and Kindergarten). Together, they provide a rich 'all-through' educational experience for 1543 children between the ages of 4 and 18. Opened in 2008, JPS has a clear vision to prepare students through world class educational programmes, state of the art facilities, and empower students to develop as self-regulating lifelong learners. In 2014, the Jawatha Educational Company was founded in response to the rapidly changing educational landscape. In 2018, in response to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, a committee reviewed the mission and vision of JPS. The committee concluded that it is crucial to develop students' potential for higher order thinking. This led to a development partnership with ReThinkers, an organisation committed to supporting schools on the journey to develop a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking. The aim is to transform education systems into something better suited to the real needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by enabling JPS to develop as a Thinking School. This clearly captures the school's belief in learning being an active and dynamic process. Specifically, the core values and purpose of JPS are:

- To enable all students to ponder, reflect, meditate, investigate, and achieve understanding
- To enable all students to apply cognitive skills in various contexts
- Improve every learner's academic performance

- To enhance all learner's intellectual skills and improve the organisation of the creative processes.

These facets have been so well embedded that they form the culture of the entire organisation. There is a palpable 'Culture of Thinking'. The Drive Team is comprised of Governors, parents, students, and teachers. There is also a supporting team to further aid the operationalisation of the school's purpose and mission. This leadership model is highly innovative and effective due to the high premium placed on collaboration. These factors combine to create consistency of approaches via clear and collaborative leadership. Active Governor support is of particular note in the development process.

The school's curriculum is clearly mapped. Four Thinking Pathways are included into all facets of the curriculum:

- Thinkers' Keys
- Visual Thinking
- Habits of Mind
- Philosophy for Children (P4C).

Of particular note, is the curriculum focus on pupil-centred development as this fits exceptionally well with the philosophy of being a Thinking School. JPS is research-informed and this embraces knowledge / skills, cognitive skills and dispositional development. Together this further acts to operationalise the school's mission to include the recognition of close links between emotional wellbeing and academic achievement, encouragement of ambition, curiosity, positivity and resilience and parental engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Pupil progression through phases has high priority at JPS. Since beginning its Thinking School Journey, JPS has gone from strength to strength with its work surrounding meta-cognitive development. A number of foci have been skilfully introduced and embedded such that the school's mission to develop and deeply embed thinking tools into school life and the

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<sup>1</sup> Reflective Proforma and Evidence Platform

curriculum is a reality. This is illustrative of JPS's commitment to foster deep thinking for all students.<sup>2</sup> Students at JPS have an history of excellent achievement and the school is relentless in pursuing high academic standards. However, it is lifelong holistic learning that is placed at the core of the educational provision at JPS and not just the end result. Subject specific learning sits alongside wider dimensions such as the development of psychological wellbeing and dispositional growth. Underpinning this provision is a fully inclusive support provision embracing children, parents, staff, and the community.<sup>3</sup>

### **Evidence Base**

Thinking Schools @Exeter received the school's submission for accreditation from Saleh Omran Alomran and Khaled Mohamed Turkey Elyousef (Headteachers) evidencing the history of the school's cognitive education development journey and the work that the school had undertaken stemming back to its origin and specifically since 2018 when the focus moved towards Thinking Schools and embedding metacognitive strategies for learning. The evidence for accreditation is skilfully woven into the reflective proforma and includes links to a comprehensive Evidence Platform together, all of which are clearly linked to the 15 criteria and accreditation rubric. This structure is exceptional and is a model of excellent practice. JPS maintains a 'golden thread' throughout the holistic educational process and has a particular focus on personal development based key meta-cognitive elements, leadership, work-related aspects, sport, and the arts, as well as other key dimensions such as entrepreneurial skills.

### **Thinking School Ethos and Culture**

From the evidence presented, it is clear that Thinking Skills are embedded within the culture of JPS. Curriculum policy documents and plans clearly map out a thinking strategy that subsequently feed into teaching strategies, and so moves thinking approaches from policy to practice. Pivotal to this is the high premium placed on sharing of best practice across the school to include all staff.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Reflective Proforma and Evidence Platform

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

JPS has a prominent and visible thinking culture, and this is due to the excellent organisational structure and visual presentation. Students are able to show how cognitive skills are a crucial component of everything that happens in their school. Staff, (including the support team) are fully committed to applying the ReThinkers principles and there is an exceptionally strong collaborative ethos between the family, the community, and the school. This ensures that the thinking partnership between the school, parents and community is strong. Indeed, there are opportunities for parents and the community to discuss the process of cognitive education in terms of how to maintain and improve it. The high premium placed on awards, celebration opportunities and displays further strengthen the Thinking School ethos and culture. As a consequence of these actions, the whole learning community is equipped to support children's learning.<sup>5</sup>

JPS has forged a number of partnerships underpinned by a Thinking Schools focus. This outstanding collaboration enables best practice to permeate throughout the partner schools and also more widely. Through its connections with these stakeholders, JPS conveys a positive, caring, and creative atmosphere, demonstrating that careful thought has been put into its organisational structure and visual presentation. This is clearly evidenced.<sup>6</sup>

### **Senior Management and Whole School Commitment**

The senior leadership of JPS is high profile and gives full commitment to both the Thinking School ethos and the implementation of the cognitive development agenda. This has cascaded to leadership throughout the school and the strong Drive Team leadership structure, comprised of Governors, senior leaders, parents, students, and teachers, stands as a model of excellent practice. The collaborative and integrated leadership model includes local community partnerships and exceptionally qualified Thinking Coordinators. Indeed, the Thinking Coordinators are qualified up to Doctorate level in Education and they have specifically specialised in the field of thinking and creativity. Leadership gains exemplary support and feedback based on a comprehensive audit of the key accreditation elements from Dr. Lana Mbaideen and the ReThinkers advisory team.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

The Governors and Executive Team are not only fully supportive of the school's commitment to cognitive education, but also demonstrate a good understanding of how this approach enables children to think through their curriculum in order to bring learning to life. Governors and Executive Team are kept fully up to date about the school's approaches to cognitive education as a result of the excellent distributed and collaborative leadership model. This stands as a model of exemplary practice. Feedback indicates a positive shift in students' thinking skills together with whole school development as a Thinking School.<sup>8</sup>

The Thinking Drive Team has a clear domain of distributed responsibilities directly linked to the Thinking Schools accreditation criteria. Action plans (general and executive) are specifically developed to execute the school's curriculum Thinking Pathways at every level and is closely integrated with the educational provision as a whole. There is an executive training programme designed to outline and align thinking skills, together with pathways, in advance of the academic year. This also has continual formative evaluation built in. Communication is excellent as are planning processes including meetings and subsequent developmental actions. The integral and active involvement of the students is an excellent addition to the leadership of cognitive education. Together, these aspects ensure that there is continued dialogue about Thinking Skills so that specific areas of development can be identified and acted upon.<sup>9</sup>

There is ample evidence to indicate that JPS is receptive to change and innovation. The school's marketing provides the wider community with a clear and concise visible illustration of the school's Thinking School vision and approach. The development of cognitive approaches has been part of the school's vision and drive for improvement for well over five years in response to ensuring that the school has an explicit vision based upon inclusive educational values that would serve as the foundation for a strategic move forward.<sup>10</sup> A range of ways of scaffolding effective thinking and learning skills have been incorporated into all aspects of the school as appropriate spanning visual tools, thinking dispositions and higher-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

order reflection.<sup>11</sup> There is a specific organic School Development Plan designed to secure the wide-spread use of thinking tools across the school. The range of cognitive developments indicates that plans are aspirational and designed to empower children to progressively take ownership of their cognitive development.<sup>12</sup> Also, plans and CPD provision dovetail well and provide a clear mechanism for ongoing development.

### **Learning and Teaching**

It is clear, from the documentation provided, that Thinking Skills are embedded within the culture of JPS and that there is a clear 'golden thread' of holistic education throughout the school. Planning and Drive Team meetings provide an effective springboard for action in order that all lessons include thinking skills. The four Thinking Pathways (Thinkers' Keys, Visual Thinking, Habits of Mind, and Philosophy for Children) are extremely well embedded in the school's pedagogy. Of particular note is the innovative customisation of thinking tools. For example, the school has a rich evidence base of strategies, tools and resources being modified to better meet the requirements of the entire educational community. Where possible, this has involved the curriculum being wonderfully connected to real-life experiences. Excellent support and resources ensure that staff and pupils develop thinking approaches effectively. This is largely due to a 'keep it simple and clear' approach. JPS uses highly innovative learning projects in order to engage students. The Robotics project is a wonderful example of this. These projects make full use of thinking tools in order to design lines of enquiry based on deep thinking and wide application of knowledge. JPS places a high premium on the mental health of the whole learning community. There is ample provision for pupils who need support, and the Thinking Drive Team meetings typically focus on what works best, for whom and how. Indeed, robust diagnostic assessments are used judiciously to monitor growth and impact in this respect. This, aligned to excellent leadership and communication, ensures that good practice is shared effectively with all staff to develop their classroom impact. There is a universal staff belief in the importance of taking a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking and that all students are capable of making progress. This further supports the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Reflective Proforma and Evidence Platform

school's commitment to cognitive education. This clearly demonstrates how it is one of the school's main aims.<sup>13</sup>

The school's pedagogical approach is informed by ongoing CPD which has specific research-informed elements built in. This sound research evidence base has allowed learning and teaching to move forward with purpose, coherence, and impact. The emphasis placed on the learning environment is also clearly illustrated in the evidence provided by the school. These elements, combined with JPS's commitment to the development of psychological well-being, have resulted in learning and teaching that is focused on the holistic development of every child.<sup>14</sup>

The school has heavily invested in character development, leadership, and entrepreneurship. As such, children receive recognition for exhibiting effective learning habits. The aim is to develop a learning approach where higher order thinking qualities are not only nurtured but are also given the practical opportunities to flourish. Effective use of displays enriches the learning environment by encouraging a common language for learning and fostering self-regulation of thinking and learning. Of particular note is the interactive quality of displays where children are encouraged to interact with the content by selecting a particular focus for their learning. Where feasible, the school has personalised and contextualised visual displays to aid consistency, recognition, and application of Thinking Skills. Children are encouraged to strive for high standards through displays of high-quality pieces of work. JPS has clear evidence of developing learning and teaching and the appreciation of elements such as Habits of Mind has shifted practice from a teaching approach to a pedagogical culture.<sup>15</sup>

## **Training**

The Drive Team are well versed in the theory, application and assessment of cognitive education and psychological well-being. The highly trained Thinking Schools co-ordinators and Drive Team has undoubtedly influenced the focus on establishing a common thinking

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

language and approach across the curriculum.<sup>16</sup> There is an ongoing and differentiated training programme in place, aimed at the development of expertise in a range of cognitive tools, strategies, and resources for established and newly appointed staff. There is an exemplary cycle of lesson study in place that centres on core elements. This has clear goals and topic selection aligned to the global educational standards of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Together these provide the content standards for Mathematics, English Language, Arts, and Science to illustrate the curriculum emphases for students to develop the skills and concepts required for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The leadership of the school is committed to creating and maintaining world-class teachers. It is clear that staff model life-long learning and 'Growth Mindset'. Staff training materials are aligned to excellent external and in-house provision. This is highly innovative and takes a holistic approach embracing peer modelling, peer guidance, peer support and peer review. Of particular note is the full inclusion of support staff. There is ample provision for staff to trial and extend approaches to the teaching of thinking. Parents are fully informed of the Thinking Schools ethos, which features prominently in the school's communications and displays. Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively and to provide mutual support through the development of thinking generally and also through particular foci. Good practice is shared widely, and lesson observations are used extensively to evaluate and share good practice in a climate of mutual support. Moving forward, this would benefit from the further extension of a practitioner research to embrace the SPARE model of evaluative action research and the Drive Team are well placed to lead on this aspect.<sup>17</sup>

### **Assessment and Outcomes**

Alternative and complimentary forms of assessment spanning the formative, summative and ipsative domains are routinely used to examine the development of cognitive skills, and how these are related to learning outcomes in the wider sense have been implemented. These include internal ongoing practical surveys and judgements that inform next stages in the learning of pupils. The innovative integrated assessment process has multiple foci. The ReThinkers survey (pre and post intervention) is exemplary in terms of students feeding back

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<sup>16</sup> Reflective Proforma, and Evidence Platform

<sup>17</sup> Ibid



on the efficacy of thinking tools. Outcomes are then shared with teachers and parents. This is another example of outstanding practice. Assessments, including attendance and behaviour, indicate high cognitive, oracy, critical thinking, visual planning, and philosophical development. MALS is used astutely and formatively in order to provide rich feedback for both students and teachers. JPS may want to consider the use of norms in this respect to further enrich the benchmarking of outcomes. In addition, dynamic ('real-time') assessment processes illustrated by the work of Ron Ritchhart (Harvard University) in his book 'Making Thinking Visible' may also provide further avenues for assessment development. Academic outcomes for JPS are consistently high and the excellent ReThinkers data support the conclusion that academic impact of taking a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking is high. A future development area may well include the use of baseline and subsequent growth indicators via both quantitative and qualitative data sources. JPS demonstrates excellent use of qualitative indicators, particularly classroom artefacts and again this is an example of good practice. JPS demonstrates a healthy 'data informed' (rather than data led) approach to assessment to avoid assessment becoming the master of the curriculum rather than the servant.<sup>18</sup>

The school is clear that the focus on cognitive development through a whole school consistent approach to learning has improved children's attitudes, improved their enjoyment, developed their independence, contributed to high quality teaching and led to better pupil progress.<sup>19</sup> There is qualitative data from staff, pupils, parents and Governors about how the development of learning behaviours are associated with positive outcomes for students and are associated with high academic outcomes and improved motivation.

The excellent pupil achievement results indicate impressive curricular impact. The school's own internal analysis and presentation of these outcomes reflect a positive achievement trend and demonstrates transparency and aspiration for further improvement.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Reflective Pro-forma and Evidence Platform

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

## Evaluation of Programmes

There is a continual review of the range of cognitive tools, strategies and resources employed, with specific reference to their impact on pupils' meta-cognition and the transfer of skills, strategies and learning behaviours. MCS makes excellent use of the cycle of lesson study due to its clear process foci:

- Establishing and training the self-evaluation team
- Developing the action plan for self-evaluation
- Enhancing the internal review methodology
- Process and analysis of data
- Moving forward with the next cycle.

Students are integral to the evaluative process via student reflections. The reactions to the ReThinkers support is high in both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The SPARE model of illuminative evaluation is used extremely well by the external QA process team. There are clear evidence-informed recommendations for future development as a result. By way of further development, the SPARE model of Illuminative Evaluation (Action Research) would benefit from dissemination at all levels (from executive leadership to individual teachers) to further foster a 'researching professional' culture. Through a collaborative approach to leadership, the Drive Team have established a culture of thinking and school improvement built on regular opportunities for staff to discuss the process and efficacy of cognitive education and how it can be maintained and improved. There is a genuine feel that 'this is the way we do things around here'. The development plan is an organic collaborative, document, and the student voice features prominently. Evaluative reports are filtered via:

- Equitable Learning
- High Expectations
- Supportive Learning
- Active Learning
- Progress Monitoring
- Well-Managed Learning

- Digital Learning.

Outcomes are extremely positive in terms of quantitative and qualitative data. The Achievement Status and Growth Summary Quadrant Chart is particularly informative and supports a high impact conclusion. There is a clear evaluative focus on developing the transfer of thinking skills and strategies and the collaborative nature of the entire process is a model of excellent practice. It is clear that JPS is well placed for future Advanced Accreditation, and this reflects the ongoing ambition to develop an exceptional whole school approach to the teaching of thinking.

### **Ownership**

There is no doubt that JPS has made a full commitment to developing and embedding cognitive education throughout the school. From the initial introduction of cognitive tools and practices, the school has carefully and judiciously expanded their repertoire of cognitive pedagogy. There is evidence that the school is beginning to distil and integrate these practices both in how they are used together and in the way they have become part of the thinking culture throughout the school and across roles and ages. Through the careful and progressive introduction of cognitive tools and CPD geared towards developing teachers as skilled mediators of learning, linked to the school's vision and values, the school has laid a strong foundation that ensures the whole school approach to the teaching of thinking flourishes. The school ethos is alive throughout the school and has done much to ensure that learning is an active process. Teachers, students, and parents combine to effectively promote the educational growth of all children by providing them with ownership over their own development. Teaching and learning at JPS has moved from being an educational process to being an exemplary pedagogical culture such that the school stands as a beacon of holistic lifelong learning excellence.

JPS is a truly unique and inspirational educational community. It has carefully developed and nurtured its core values so that they permeate throughout the entire school and beyond. Thinking is at the heart of every facet of the organisation. Levels of collaboration are wonderfully high, and research informs practice at every levels. As a result, the holistic achievement of all students is exceptional. Staff and children think deeply about what they

do, and levels of collaboration are exceptional. JPS is undoubtedly at the forefront and cutting edge of educational provision and pedagogy. The school stands as a model of exemplary practice for others to emulate.

### **Conclusion**

The range of evidence submitted undoubtedly indicates that Jawatha Private Schools meets the criteria set by Thinking Schools @Exeter as a Thinking School and demonstrates a true commitment to the continued development of a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking. I therefore recommend that accreditation be awarded until January 2026.

I would like to thank the schools for the clear and judicious evidence base, clearly organised around the evaluation rubric, which provided the lens through which the exemplary practice could be viewed.

### **Further Recommendations**

I conclude my evaluation with some suggestions as to how the schools could continue to develop as a Thinking School to inform a development visit to aid action planning. This might include:

- Further develop and maintain staff development through ongoing external and internal training geared towards rationalising what works best by fine-tuning the already best practice. This combination of training will secure a balance of internal self-improvement with an external freshness and perspective. This requires getting underneath cognitive tools and dispositional development to identify the underlying meta-cognitive processes that enhance children's learning and thinking.
- Further integrate thinking processes with questioning, visual tools, dispositional development, thinking routines (geared towards further developing Growth Mindset), assessment of process, assessment of product, evaluation of process and evaluation of product. This should take the form of an overview for how these elements are integrated. This would enable teachers and leaders to have a clear overview of metacognitive development as a whole.

- Further extend lesson observations to include key indicators of learning and thinking processes. These need to be simple, clearly observable and made explicit to all staff. The work of Project Zero (Harvard University) is a particularly useful source in this respect. These indicators of thinking development can be utilised both formatively (ideally in 'real time') in order for teachers to provide feedback at the point of need, and summatively so that teachers and leaders can monitor and evaluate impact.
- Add the internal use of effect sizes at an individual teacher, team, and whole school level to further strengthen the quantitative robustness of data to supplement high quality qualitative data. This will allow impact comparisons of meta-cognitive strategies and feedback with the work of The Sutton Trust and John Hattie. The key evaluative questions are 'What works best?', 'For whom?' and 'How?'. A multi-method approach to data may serve to get to the heart of these questions and focus group interviews are particularly effective in generating efficient data to supplement outcome and survey data.
- Further move from evaluation to evaluative research to further foster the development of staff as researching professionals. Shift 1 is to move from a self-evaluation processes that produce objectives to ones that generate research questions of the style 'How can we/I improve...?'. Shift 2 is to ensure that all staff sustain the 'open door' philosophy and remain open to evaluating their own impact in an honest and self-critical way. Shift 3 means providing opportunities for best practice impact to be made public. To gain accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School, researching professionals are expected to offer articles relating to best practice to publications such as the school's magazine, local newspapers, the school website, and professional publications. Other forums where impact can be made public are leader/teacher learning communities and action research seminars. The SPARE model of evaluative action research is a useful framework through which to apply evaluative research at all levels of leadership and classroom practice and could easily be applied to the evaluative protocols already in place. Thinking Schools@Exeter is well placed to support in this regard.
- JPS may want to further consider the use of the Myself as a Learner Scale (MALS) norms to add to the already well-developed assessment processes.

- Use the criteria of an Advanced Thinking School to frame future developments, in order to deepen and extend the understanding and expertise of JPS. In particular, the extension of practitioner research through wider dissemination of the SPARE model of illuminative evaluation may provide a vehicle for further contextualising cognitive approaches to find out what works best, for whom and how.
- Continue to develop and refine the school's website and include a dedicated menu of Thinking School information and accreditation evidence.



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**On behalf of Dr Judith Kleine-Staarman, Director of Thinking Schools @Exeter**

**January 2023**