



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First **التعليم أولاً**



Inspection Report

Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

Inspection Date	5 – 8 May 2014
School ID#	49
Licensed Curriculum	Nova Scotia (Canada)
Number of Students	929
Age Range	4 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Annmarie MacInnes
School Address	PO Box 27161, Tourist Club Area, Abu Dhabi
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School Website	http://www.agsgrmmr.sch.ae
Date of last inspection	3 – 6 June 2012

The overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A High performing (overall effectiveness grade 1, 2 or 3)

Band B Satisfactory (overall effectiveness grade 4 or 5)

Band C In need of significant improvement (overall effectiveness grade 6, 7 or 8)

The School was judged to be:	BAND C;	GRADE 6
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The main strengths of the school are:

- by the time students leave school they have achieved standards in line with international expectations
- teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed to the welfare and education of their students; they enjoy good relationships with students, and manage behaviour well in most lessons
- the school is starting to benefit from the impact of the appointment of a counsellor and learning support teacher to strengthen the quality of pastoral care, guidance and support.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the need for expectations for students' academic progress to be higher given their starting points on entry to the school
- the curriculum to be adapted to meet the needs and interests of students and support ambitious academic achievement
- the achievement of students in Arabic, Islamic education, and Social Studies and the curriculum coverage for these subjects to satisfy requirements
- introduction of regular and consistent monitoring of all teaching and learning that is linked to teachers' professional development needs
- assessment to include consideration of prior learning, especially in planning appropriate challenges or support to match the needs and abilities of all students
- robust data analysis and comparisons to external benchmarks to inform planning to accelerate the academic progress of students

Introduction

The school was evaluated by 4 inspectors. They observed 60 lessons and other activities, reviewed students' written work and studied school documents. They had discussions with the director, principal, vice-principal, other members of staff, students, and parents. They also considered the 266 responses to the parents' questionnaire.

Description of the School

The school opened in 1995 as a villa school, moving to its present site in 2008. Its website states that it is 'committed to providing an excellent education environment to all students' with a view 'to help all students develop their full potential cognitively, affectively, physically and socially and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for them to continue as thinking, learning, physically active, valued members of society'. The school offers a Nova Scotia (Canadian) curriculum, and the majority of teachers are recruited from Canada.

There are currently 929 students, of whom 60% are boys. There are 78 children in the Kindergarten (KG), 436 students in Grades 1-5, 259 in Grades 6-9, and 156 in Grades 10-12. All classes are mixed. Just over half of the students are of Arabic heritage: 10% Emirati, 10% from Canada, the remainder mainly from Egypt, Syria and the USA. Most students are Muslim. The school is heavily oversubscribed and selects students on merit following an entrance test. 11 students are assessed as having special educational needs (SEN) and 44 are identified as having difficulty with the English language.

Annual fees range from AED 19,236 per annum in Kindergarten (KG) increasing to AED 40,656 in G12.

Ownership of the school is shared by its board of governors. The day-to-day functions of the board have been delegated to the former principal. The current Principal has been in post for three years.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Standards and progress in most subjects are satisfactory. Students meet curriculum expectations in Islamic education, they do not make enough progress in Arabic or social studies. Academic progress across year groups and subjects is variable and constrained by a lack of sufficiently ambitious expectations. This is a key feature of the school that leads to many students failing to achieve more than adequate standards by the time they leave.

Children entering the school in KG currently are assessed to be above average in terms of ability. They are not stretched to attain the high standards which many are capable of, as they move through the school. They acquire good speaking, listening, and writing skills in English, despite the majority of students speaking it as an additional language. Progress in reading is slower. Their satisfactory and improving progress in English enables them to adequately access the curriculum in other subjects. Students' acquisition of basic numeracy skills is improving. This skill level is not utilised sufficiently to move on to more demanding numeracy tasks, consequently students do not reach sufficiently high standards in mathematics. In the upper grades in science, students reach good standards in physics and chemistry.

In Arabic, students make inadequate progress particularly in spelling, writing and knowledge of grammatical conventions. Progress is particularly slow in the lower grades because the curriculum is not matched to students' needs, as both native and non-native Arabic speakers are taught in the same class at the same time. In Islamic education students make adequate progress: in the higher grades they can recite verses from the Holy Qur'an though they do not consistently apply the 'Tajweed' (enunciation) rules. Students meet curriculum expectations in social studies; further progress is restricted as the activities provided are not challenging enough.

The school relies on performance in standardized tests set at regular intervals across the school year to assess students' attainment and progress. Leaders do not assess the progress of individual students against individualised learning targets. The school does not have a breakdown of comparative data to enable accurate assessments to be made of how well different groups of students achieve. It is not possible, for example, to determine whether there are any disparities in the achievement of boys and girls, or between students from differing ethnic backgrounds. As a result, data indicates only a general average of progress and attainment.

Students' personal development

Most students have positive attitudes, enjoy school and are increasingly growing in confidence. They tend to be well behaved, both in lessons, and around the school. There is a robust approach to misbehaviour. Students know the difference between right and wrong, have keenly developed notions of morality, and develop a keen sense of justice. They are fully aware that others may hold different opinions. They are tolerant and respectful of differences in culture and religion. They are aware of the tradition and values of the UAE; they do not show the same degree of respect when the national anthem is played each morning.

There is limited opportunity to take on leadership roles and show initiative. The system of allocating house captains is not strongly developed. Informally, students do show leadership potential during lessons; they are willing to help others who are struggling, for example, with understanding a new concept.

Most students know what constitutes a healthy life style, and many are keen to take part in sport, but facilities are limited, and some do not engage in sufficient physical activity. Most develop the social and personal skills that will prepare them adequately for the future.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching is variable between subjects, and within year groups. The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge in English. It is strongest in the senior school, generally secure in most subjects and across all grades. Good classroom relationships between teachers and students exist in almost all classes, and behaviour is well managed. Teaching methods do not consistently engage the attention of all students. In the better lessons, teachers' questioning skills challenge students to give detailed, fluent and informative responses.

Teachers do not benefit from a formal system of identifying and sharing best practice. There is insufficient data as to the progress of students with SEN, or in relation to those students who have talents and gifts. This limits the data on which teachers would usually base their planning to meet the different needs and abilities of students. Assessment does not take into account prior learning, especially in planning appropriate challenges or support to match the needs and abilities of all students. Written work is usually not marked, neither is feedback given on a regular basis to inform students how to improve their learning or presentational skills.

Teaching is not sufficiently adjusted to accommodate the learning of students whose first language is the working language of the school, or, in Arabic, those students who are native Arabic speakers. There are not enough opportunities for reading comprehension activities to benefit second language learners. Lesson objectives are not focused on outcomes, and are not shared in order to enable students to know the purpose of the lesson and whether they have achieved it.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum has not been sufficiently adapted to enrich the learning experience of students. Not enough time is devoted in the timetable to Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. Curriculum planning is not based on an overview of students' needs that ensures progression and continuity across grade levels and phases. It is not sufficiently focused on providing activities planned to support all learners' abilities including those who speak English as an additional language. Children in the KG are not provided with activities that allow them choice. These activities are too teacher directed, and children's ability to develop independence and creativity is restricted as a consequence.

The school provides a sufficiently broad and balanced range of subjects and options. A recent assessment of the school's provision by the Nova Scotia curriculum board found that the school satisfied their curriculum expectations and criteria. The curriculum is extended by a comprehensive choice of after-school activities offered twice a year for ten weeks for all grade levels.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school has a positive ethos towards caring for its students. The pastoral system is improving due to the recent appointment of a counsellor, who has developed contacts with universities, and provides appropriate guidance on careers and next steps in education. It has been additionally strengthened through the addition of a learning support teacher.

Rewards and sanctions are not applied consistently across the school. Some students are excluded for smoking and fighting, and some are repeat offenders. Bullying is rare, and is dealt with appropriately when it happens. The child protection policy is understood, and staff have had appropriate training to raise awareness of their roles and responsibilities.

All staff are appropriately checked for their suitability to work with children and young people. A central register is properly maintained with their personal and professional qualifications, and entitlement to work in the UAE. Muslim students have been provided with a suitable prayer room, and have opportunities for

prayer. Medicines are stored safely, and the school maintains a clean and well-stocked clinic.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The quality of the buildings and premises are satisfactory. Over the years the board has invested in a number of improvements to the buildings, including a new swimming pool last year. The potential for development of the buildings is limited by the school's confined space within a tight boundary. Plans are in progress to add more classroom accommodation above some of the present buildings. ICT has been updated but the school does not now have a dedicated ICT suite. There are not sufficient science laboratories to cater for each of the three science subjects taught at the school.

Older students can play safely on a padded play area under a protective canopy, The recommendation in the previous report that the KG play area should be padded, and that a padded area be placed under the climbing wall, have not been implemented. The accommodation is too cramped for the number of students in some classes. Students frequently work in the corridors, leading to the risk of tripping over students sitting in groups in passageways, and the placing of their bags randomly around them. Arrangements for the safe use of chemicals and other noxious materials in the science laboratories are secure.

The school's resources to support its aims

The quality of the school's resources is still inadequate. Teachers are well qualified and are a significant strength of the school. There are not sufficient staff to cover all needs, and teachers are too frequently pulled from different grade levels to cover absences.

The school has made a considerable investment in updating ICT facilities, including the placing of smart-boards in every classroom. The teaching of ICT is too often hampered by technical problems and the unavailability of computer stations or laptops for students. Only three mobile storage cupboards are shared across the school, laptops are scarce and students often have to bring in their own from home. The library is very unsatisfactory, many classroom displays are in need of updating, and classrooms are frequently very untidy by the end of the school day. Although the school is regularly cleaned, some stairways and corridors remain grimy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's leadership has failed to make necessary improvements quickly enough since the last inspection. The previous report found that the school did not have a clearly defined middle tier of management to take responsibility for

making improvements across all subject areas. This has been partially addressed through the appointment of a vice-principal who has taken responsibility for the senior grades. The vice-principal does not have responsibility for monitoring and directing improvement in teaching to raise standards in the senior school. The principal still has too much responsibility for management areas that should have been delegated to more junior leaders. The school has reorganised the administrative structure, the various departments have a clear line management system, designated roles, and are well organized. The appointment of a registrar is a welcome addition to the management team.

The self-evaluation document is inaccurate as it is over generous in its judgments on the quality of the school's work. It is based on a limited analysis of data, and lacks reference and comparisons to international standards. The school development plan does not accurately identify appropriate priorities or set a sufficiently ambitious agenda for improvement.

Senior leaders, including the board members, have failed to take necessary measures to improve teaching sufficiently. The school has recruited a young and vibrant cadre of talented teachers from Nova Scotia; they have not been provided with the continuing professional development, or leadership support, that they need in order to thrive. Senior leaders do not carry out sufficiently regular, effective classroom observations. They do not evaluate teaching methods and lesson observations are not aligned to professional development. School leaders do not analyse results to assess the extent to which teaching helps students move towards meeting or exceeding standards. The school therefore does not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching or students' academic progress.

Progress since the last inspection

The previous inspection noted a decline in the quality of the school's effectiveness and recommended improvements to: the quality of teaching, leadership, students' understanding of the UAE's culture and values, and aspects of health and safety. The school has not made sufficient progress in successfully tackling any of these areas. The school does not show significant signs of improvement and has continued to decline. It has failed to establish a much-needed tier of middle leaders to take responsibility for key areas of management in teaching and learning. As a result, neither the quality of teaching nor the speed of academic progress have improved.

The previous report recommended more rigorous assessment practices to track students' individual needs and achievement. It suggested improvements to lesson planning and delivery to ensure development of higher-order thinking skills. It also

asked for greater variety in learning activities, and expansion of ICT facilities and skills development. These areas have not been sufficiently developed. The school has invested in improving ICT but it is still barely adequate, and does not always work efficiently and is used mainly for display. Some resources have improved, and others have deteriorated. Priorities have been set, but the implementation has not been followed through. The school lacks a clear, focused strategic plan for development.

The school has not demonstrated that it has the satisfactory capacity to make improvement without significant external support.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. As a matter of urgency the school's governing board should realign leadership and management responsibilities by:
 - i. appointing middle leaders in key areas. Each of the main subject areas should have a designated coordinator with line management responsibility to oversee improvements in each subject area
 - ii. ensuring that the vice-principal takes more responsibility for assessment, evaluation, and school improvement planning.
2. Rectify the inadequacies in the implementation of the curriculum by:
 - i. adjusting the timetable to ensure that curriculum requirements for provision in Arabic, Islamic education, and social studies are met
 - ii. planning activities that adequately support all learners' abilities, including those who speak English as an additional language
 - iii. providing children in KG with activities that allow them to make choices, and develop their independence and creativity.
3. Raise expectations of the academic standards students can achieve by:
 - i. forensically analyzing student progress data and comparing against international benchmarks
 - ii. using data to set appropriately challenging targets
 - iii. ensuring teachers use data to plan activities that stretch the most able and support those who find learning difficult
 - iv. regularly and systematically monitoring teaching and learning and linking the outcomes to teachers' professional development.

4. Make more effective use of assessment to identify underperformance by specific groups of students.
5. Improve the use of resources by:
 - i. ensuring that there are sufficient staff to cover all classes, including the absence of teachers
 - ii. ensuring that the significant investment in ICT has sufficient impact on student's learning
 - iii. improving the range and quality of resources in the library, both in English and Arabic.
6. Attend to the health and safety matters noted in this report.

Inspection Grades

	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
Performance Standard	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory & Improving	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Poor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Standard 1: Students' attainment and progress								
Standard 2: Students' personal development								
Standard 3: The quality of teaching and learning								
Standard 4: The meeting of students' needs through the curriculum								
Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students								
Standard 6: The quality of the school's buildings and premises								
Standard 7: The school's resources to support its aims								
Standard 8: The effectiveness of leadership and management								
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall effectiveness								