



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Ain American Private School

Published in 2013

Iqraa

Al Ain American Private School

Inspection Date	13 th – 16 th May, 2012
School ID#	131
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	American
Number of Students	711
Age Range	KG – Grade 9
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Rana Karmruta
School Address	P.O. Box 20120, Al Ain
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Introduction

The school was inspected by four inspectors. They observed 77 lessons, attended assemblies and met with groups of students, the subject leadership team, a group of teachers, the middle management team, and the school's financial staff, social worker and health care staff. They analysed 233 parental questionnaires. The lead inspector carried out three joint lesson observations with the principal. The inspectors considered the ethos of the school, the students' learning experiences, personal development and progress, and the quality of teaching and how well this helps the students to learn. One trainee Emirati inspector also took part in the inspection.

Description of the School

The school moved to its current building in 2007. Its mission is 'To promote a generation that adapts to the demands of the modern age whilst preserving cultural heritage'. The site is made up of one large building and a separate building which houses the KG1 classes. There are two playgrounds, one for boys and one for girls. Across the boys' playground there is a music room and a small canteen. The school is located on Zakher Road about 500 metres from Twam Hospital, off the Al Ain to Abu Dhabi road at the 'Horse' roundabout.

There are currently 540 students in kindergarten (KG) to grade 5, and 171 in grades 5 to 9. Classes are mixed up to grade 4, and then boys and girls are taught separately from grade 5 onwards. Approximately 71% of the students are from the UAE, and the remainder from a variety of mostly Arabic-speaking countries. The vast majority (96%) are Muslim.

Only three students are identified as having special educational needs. They are all in the KG, and all have 'shadow' teachers. Students come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, and this year several have been very late in paying their school fees. Admission is by examination in all grades, although no students are refused entry.

Fees range from AED 14,000 in KG to AED 19,500 in Grade 9. Expenditure per student is AED 12,368. This places the school in the medium fee bracket. Teachers are paid in the range AED 4,000 to AED11,000, which is relatively low.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Al Ain American School to be in need of significant improvement.

The school has started to take some positive steps to address the recommendations made when it was last inspected two years ago. These improvements, particularly to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, have accelerated since the new principal took up post in October 2011. Some impact is evident in KG1–2 and grades 1–3, but this is not yet leading to students reaching acceptable standards. Subject co-ordinators now observe teaching and give feedback to teachers, but some of them do not have the necessary skills or commitment to ensure that the results of their observations are used to improve teaching and extend learning beyond the textbook and workbook. This is because they have not developed a clear understanding of what good teaching and learning looks like. The senior leadership team have carried out a self-evaluation and produced a school improvement plan based on the results. Its main focus is, rightly, to address the issues identified in the last inspection. Targets have been set and success criteria identified, but these are not focused sharply enough on the impact of actions to students' achievement. A key problem is that there are far too few high-quality resources to enable teachers to provide learning experiences that are based on doing, rather than just listening. This lack of equipment is particularly noticeable in grades 4 to 8, where textbooks and workbooks are generally the only resources available. The use of assessment data to identify what the school needs to do to improve is underdeveloped. All the school's tests and assessments are set and marked internally, and as a result the leadership team are unable to compare the students' performance against that of other schools, either nationally or internationally.

Given the extent of the improvements required and the level of profit generated, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money. The new principal has a clear vision for the school and knows what it needs to do to improve. Teachers recognise the differences she has made in a short time. Without better resources for all age groups and a clear and effective development programme for subject leaders and teachers, the school does not have the necessary capacity to improve without outside help.

Compared to international expectations inspectors found standards too low and progress are too slow in science, English, physical education (PE), and art. They are satisfactory in Arabic (both reading and writing), social studies, Islamic studies and mathematical computation. In all subjects, girls do slightly better than boys because their behaviour and concentration are better. In lessons taught in

English, teachers' modelling of the language is often not good enough to promote the necessary skills for students to access the American textbook-based curriculum. In science, the students do not have opportunities to develop investigational skills. For example, in a lesson on magnetism only one magnet was available for the whole class. Standards have started to improve in KG and grades 1–3. This is due to the introduction of more 'home room' based teaching, and teachers starting to provide a limited number of different activities that all support the same area of learning. However, children in the KG classes still do not have enough opportunities for play-based learning or to instigate their own learning because teachers do not yet provide stimulating and interesting activity areas for them to explore. In other grades students acquire computational skills in mathematics, but are unable to apply these skills to real-life situations. In all classes students rarely have the opportunity to make choices, or to work independently or in groups to develop their study and collaborative working skills.

The school's assessment systems are inadequate. A series of internal tests are taken, and the results are graphed to show intended progress. The data collected from these tests is not use to plan future learning, and serves little purpose apart from providing a means of giving parents a 'mark' for their children. There is no standardised external testing so it is not possible for the school to make an accurate judgment about how well students are achieving, particularly compared to other schools.

Students like the school and are very loyal to it. They like the way the staff interact with them and particularly appreciate the principal, who they say 'loves' us. The National Anthem is sung with gusto every morning and the flag raised, but students do not demonstrate a good enough understanding of the culture and values of the UAE. Behaviour is good around the school and students show respect for their teachers. Staff deal quickly and effectively with any isolated incidents of bullying or racist name-calling, and any occasional inappropriate behaviour in the playground. In all classes and during social interactions, girls behave slightly better than boys. The school's efforts to involve outside agencies such as the university and the higher college of technology do not currently prepare the students well enough for the next stage in their education.

Despite some improvements, overall the quality of teaching is not good enough to enable the students to make the progress they are capable of. Lessons are too often solely reliant on commercially-produced textbooks and work books, particularly for older students, and this places too much emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge as opposed to the development of learning skills. Teachers in KG and the lower grades are beginning to address this. When a variety of activities are offered, with sufficient resources to support them, students'

learning skills are more effectively developed. Behaviour in classes is good. In the older grades students are passive in their learning and sit quietly whilst the teacher talks for the majority of the lesson. When given the opportunity to be active learners, for example in robotics, they show that they have the skills necessary to work, plan and learn in groups. In some cases, the teachers' limited knowledge of English means that they cannot model the use of the language well enough to improve the students' language skills. This significantly slows students' progress, because many struggle to read the textbooks, worksheets and work books provided.

Sufficient time is dedicated to the teaching of all subject areas to meet MoE requirements. However the American based curriculum is delivered almost entirely through the use of text and work books and as a result does not provide sufficient breadth and balance to enable the students to develop the necessary skills to become effective learners. The school identifies students who have special educational needs and those that are gifted and talented and produces individual plans to address their needs. However, there is very little evidence of these plans having any impact on students' learning in classrooms. Teaching is rarely adapted to meet individual needs and the narrow focus on prescribed textbooks does not allow this to happen, especially for the older students. Social studies lessons give students an understanding of life in the UAE and of family, community and cultural values. However, students have too few opportunities to put this understanding into practice through community involvement and charitable work beyond the school. On National Day last December the students celebrated each other's cultural heritage, but this celebration was isolated rather than part of an on-going programme to develop cultural awareness. All students have to leave the school at the end of grade 9, and do so inadequately prepared for the next stage in their education. The school keeps a record of the reasons any students leave before the normal leaving age, and asks parents to comment on the quality of education their children have received but it does not use this information to help form policy or improve teaching and learning.

The protection offered to the students is a cause for concern. There is no child protection policy; although in conversation students say they can turn to any adult for help and support. The social worker provides a pivotal focus point for students' well-being, but operates very much on a case-by-case basis in the absence of appropriate supporting policies. The school has carried out checks on the suitability of all staff with ADEC and keeps a record of these to show when clearance forms are sent off and received. The behaviour policy is effective, and students understand the sanctions and the rewards that encourage good behaviour. There is a student council, but it meets infrequently and is not as yet

having any impact on the day-to-day life of the school. Corporal punishment is not allowed or used.

The buildings are fit for purpose, although some areas look tired and are in need of refurbishment. For example, not all the air-conditioning units are fully effective, some rooms are cramped, and the grassed area has worn away in places, exposing the sand below. Health and safety issues identified during the inspection are noted separately at the end of the report. The gym is of sufficient size, but its occasional use for other activities limits the amount of time available for PE. The music room and science lab are both cramped and poorly equipped. A security guard checks the identity of people entering the school, and his colleague ensures that parents do not obstruct the entrance when they park cars to drop off students.

There are sufficient qualified teachers, but they are not given sufficient help to develop their skill to ensure that students make the progress they are capable of. The school has not invested in sufficient resources to support its aims and the shortage of equipment is particularly evident in grades 4 to 9, where in most lessons the only resources are textbooks and workbooks. Some rooms have now been equipped with data projectors. When these are used well they enhance learning, but in too many lessons they are merely used to project video clips from 'You Tube' or as a substitute for a whiteboard. All classes in KG and grade 1 have a full-time classroom assistant, but this valuable resource is largely wasted because their roles are not clearly defined. They are often used just to ensure students go to the bathroom correctly, or circulate informally to help with work as needed rather than to support the learning of targeted groups of students. The library does not contain sufficient books, especially for the older students to develop their study skills. The school buses have set belts fitted, but these are not routinely worn by all students. The school does not have any maintenance contracts, but work is carried out as needed by external contactors. The canteen is clean and licensed, and provides a suitable outlet for the food provided by the school.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality of education, and thus students' achievement, by:
 - i. expanding and enhancing the curriculum with a wider variety of activities, particularly so that students can engage in practical tasks that encourage them to apply their learning;
 - ii. increasing the level of resources available to teachers to promote discovery and play-based learning in KG;
 - iii. introducing a reliable, standardised system for assessing students' progress; and
 - iv. using results from these assessments to enable teachers to plan programmes and lessons that closely match students' ability levels (particularly the more-able students and those who find learning difficult or have special educational needs).
2. Raise the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - i. providing training for all staff to ensure that they have a clear understanding of exactly what high quality teaching is like, and then ensure that more effective practice is implemented in their classrooms; and
 - ii. making better use of classroom assistants to support and improve learning.
3. Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
 - i. improving leaders' and managers' skills in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and take firm action to address underperformance
 - ii. making leaders and managers responsible for improving teaching and learning
4. Produce and implement a formal child protection policy.
5. Urgently address the health and safety concerns and ensure that:
 - i. storage of chemicals in the science laboratory are locked and secure;
 - ii. ensure suitable shade from the sun in the outdoor play area;
 - iii. ensure all electrical wiring is covered and electric sockets are protected and secure from children's reach.