



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



Inspection Report

Al Ain American Private School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Al Ain American Private School

Inspection Date	24 – 27 February 2014
School ID#	131
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	952
Age Range	3 to 14 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Rana Karmouta
School Address	P O Box 20120, Al Ain, UAE
Telephone Number	+971 (0)3 767 5030
Fax Number	+971 (0)3 767 1711
Official Email (ADEC)	alainamerican.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.alainamericanschool.com
Date of last inspection	13 – 16 May 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:

- students' positive attitudes towards the school and their commitment to learning
- satisfactory attainment and progress in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies
- the high degree of emphasis placed on providing a safe, clean and healthy environment in the school
- efforts made by the school's owner and its staff to develop the school premises

The main areas for improvement are:

- attainment and progress of students, particularly in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the quality of teaching and use of assessment to address inconsistencies in the varying degrees of attainment and progress
- implementation of behaviour management strategies, in particular for boys in grades 6 – 8, to mitigate the negative impact on their attainment and progress in lessons
- the provision of classroom resources to support students' learning and curriculum delivery in English, mathematics and science
- the provision of opportunities for students to develop independent and collaborative learning skills
- the accuracy and rigour with which the school evaluates itself and sets appropriate targets for improvement.

Introduction

Al Ain American Private School was inspected by 4 inspectors who observed 92 lessons and met with students, teachers, parents, school leaders and the school's owner. Inspectors observed students' arrivals at and departures from the school, assemblies and break times. They reviewed and scrutinized students' work, attainment data and other documentation provided by the school. In addition, almost 225 responses from parents to a questionnaire about the school were analysed.

Description of the School

The school is situated in central Al Ain and opened in 2007. Its vision is to provide 'Every child, every opportunity' so that students acquire skills for lifelong learning and become responsible, adaptive and productive citizens.

There are 952 students on roll organized into three sections: Kindergarten (KG) catering for 358 children; primary classes catering for 491 students and middle school classes with 103 students. Students are taught in single gender classes from Grade 5 onwards. Almost all students are Muslim and speak Arabic as their first language. Almost 60% of the student population is boys. Students from UAE make up the majority of the population at 76%. Remaining student proportions are from: a wide range of different countries including Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Oman, Syria, India, Romania and Qatar. The school has identified 4 students with physical and emotional special educational needs (SEN). All have dedicated shadow teachers who are employed by students' parents. An additional 76 students have been identified as having learning difficulties.

The school offers an American curriculum, supplemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Islamic education, Arabic and social studies. Almost all assessments are internal except for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) tests taken by Grade 5 students in 2013. For entry into classes in Grades 1 -8, students are only admitted after undergoing an entrance test to ensure they are able to access the curriculum in English. Entrants to KG classes have to attend an activity session to assess their readiness for school.

The senior leadership team consists of the principal, an academic adviser and a KG adviser. The school's owner has created an advisory body made up of four teachers, the principal and a small group of parents. There are 67 teachers and an additional 24 classroom assistants who support KG and Grade 1 classes. In addition, there are 14 administrative staff and 5 security and care staff. Student

tuition fees are in the medium to high category, ranging from AED 14,000 in KG classes to AED 25,800 in Grade 8 classes. This includes transport and stationery costs.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Attainment and progress are unsatisfactory in comparison to both schools following the same curriculum and international standards. Across all subjects, there is too much variation in the attainment and progress of students in different grades and classes. Internal assessments show a disparity between boys' and girls' attainment across all subjects, particularly in Grades 6 - 8. Attainment and progress in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies are satisfactory. They are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, science and ICT.

Initial efforts have been made to compare students' attainment with international standards by entering Grade 5 students for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) tests in the past year. These show students working well below international expectations in English, and below similar schools in mathematics. The school uses a wide range of internal assessments to record students' attainment and progress. It has not used the data gathered to set appropriate targets for all students.

By the end of their time in KG, students have acquired satisfactory listening, speaking and early reading skills, and most know letter names and sounds. They are able to count and carry out single digit addition using one to one correspondence. Students make less progress in developing the ability to explore the world around them or to make independent choices.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic and Islamic education are satisfactory. In Arabic, by the end of their time in school, most students are able to read with confidence, use appropriate grammar rules and analyse poetry, taking into account the poet's perspective. Students' writing skills, particularly in older classes, are limited. In Islamic education, most students are able to recite verses from the Holy Qur'an and Hadith at age appropriate levels.

Students develop basic computation skills in mathematics and by Grade 8 many are able to use mathematical vocabulary accurately, apply formulae correctly and solve equations. They have limited problem-solving skills and many are not able to apply their learning to real life situations. In science, students make better progress in the KG and Grades 1 -4. By the end of Grade 4, students have developed a secure understanding of the human body and how it functions.

Progress is less secure in Grades 5-8 due to the limited opportunities provided for students to develop their practical and investigational skills.

Students' attainment and progress in English are unsatisfactory. Many students develop confidence in speaking and listening skills; their progress in writing is limited due to the overemphasis on worksheet activities that require no more than single word or short sentence responses. Reading is often limited to short sentences in the textbook with too few opportunities to read for pleasure. Only a few students, mostly girls, are encouraged to develop extended writing skills. By Grade 8, there is a substantial difference between the attainment of boys and girls, with boys working at least one year below their chronological age.

Students' ICT skills and their confidence to work independently or collaboratively are insufficiently developed as a result of limited opportunities provided in lessons. Their thinking skills are often inhibited due to teachers' focus on learning through compliance rather than engaging students in creating their own perspectives.

Students' personal development

Most students have positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school. This is evidenced by the 94% attendance in the past year. Many students are well behaved, sensitive to the needs of others and respectful towards adults in the school. In Grades 5 -8, in lessons and around the school, girls' behaviour is often better than boys. This is due to both how behaviour is managed, and the quality of tasks provided for boys in their lessons.

Students have a good understanding of the UAE and develop good moral viewpoints and a respect for the values of their own communities and of the UAE. Some students participate in the wide range of clubs and sporting activities including rugby, wrestling, fencing, reading and robotics. These provide invaluable opportunities for students to develop their self-esteem and practice leadership skills.

Students develop a satisfactory understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. Children in one KG class were able to evaluate one another's lunch boxes to identify healthy and unhealthy food choices. Students are not always provided with planned opportunities to develop learning and thinking skills or personal qualities such as persistence and flexibility.

The quality of teaching and learning

There is too much variance in the quality of teaching which leads to the inconsistency in students' attainment and progress. In the KG, teaching is satisfactory with teachers using learning centres to promote cross-curricular links as well as provide individual challenge and support. The quality of relationships in many younger classes is positive and leads to purposeful learning for many students. This is not the case in a number of boys' classes in the upper grades, where lessons are usually focussed on behaviour management.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most ensure that each lesson begins with a stated learning objective so that students know what they are going to learn. In a few lessons, teachers return to the learning objective during the plenary at the end to assess whether every student has met the objective. Many teachers' pronunciation in English is unsatisfactory which leads to students developing incorrect pronunciation of words.

In some of the more effective lessons, teachers use a range of different strategies that result in better progress. For example, in one Grade 2 mathematics lesson, good pace, purposeful group work, and a challenging task led to most students understanding that repeated addition is the same as multiplication. The opportunities provided in such lessons, which also allow students the time to reflect and discuss their learning, result in accelerated progress for all students. The use of such a range of strategies is not commonplace in lessons. Most lessons are teacher led and dominated with students having limited opportunities to make decisions, discuss or reflect on their learning. Many teachers are over reliant on textbooks and worksheets. This does not encourage the development of students' critical thinking skills through discussion, independent problem solving or research tasks.

There is inconsistent use of assessment to check students' understanding in lessons. Many teachers rely on questions that require single word, correct factual responses. Open-ended questions are rarely used to challenge students' thinking. Some teachers have a limited view about what students can achieve and as a result, more able students are not regularly provided with sufficiently challenging tasks to enable them to make the progress they are capable of. There is limited use of formative assessments to adapt teaching methods or help students understand how they can improve.

With guidance from the coordinators, diagnostic and summative assessments have been recently introduced to identify less able learners in order to target them for additional support. This initiative is new and not yet embedded into the

school's routines and the impact of the remedial lessons have yet to be confirmed. Some teachers make good use of the professional development provided and apply it in their lessons. Only some of the training, such as the introduction of learning objectives has been applied consistently across the school.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The implementation of the curriculum is unsatisfactory because it is not sufficiently well adapted to meet the individual needs of students. It is based on a range of American textbooks that ensure that there is progression in knowledge across the subjects taught in English. There is limited alignment of the textbooks with the American Core Curriculum standards, which results in gaps in scope and sequence. Satisfactory progression and continuity is provided in Arabic subjects through the use of MoE textbooks. Curriculum planning in these subjects is also limited to textbooks and does not take into account the wider range of practical skills and understanding required for students to become effective learners.

In the KG, the introduction of the Jolly Phonics programme for reading has been effective in developing students' reading skills. Students are not routinely provided with sufficient opportunities to express themselves creatively or make effective use of the new play equipment to develop gross and fine motor skills. The curriculum is successful in helping students develop an understanding of the values and the culture of the UAE through social studies and Islamic education lessons and through the monthly assembly competitions.

In addition to the core subjects, the school provides a wide range of lessons, including twice weekly music, art and physical education (PE). There are a range of extra curricular activities including competition level sports clubs. The school's wrestling team's success in the UAE championships has resulted in a tremendous sense of pride and achievement for the group of boys concerned.

All students have to leave the school in Grade 8 but they are not provided with adequate guidance and support in selecting their next phase of education.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school places great emphasis on the protection of, and care for, all students. There is a positive and nurturing atmosphere around the school. Most senior staff, particularly the Principal, know individual students well and have built good relationships with them. Ancillary staff work hard to provide a clean and healthy environment. The social worker and phase supervisors provide pastoral support

for the boys' classes where behaviour is a cause for concern; there is insufficient focus on meeting their academic and learning needs.

Students are well supervised at all times and the arrangements for ensuring their safety at the start and end of the day are adequate. The procedures for medical care and first aid are satisfactory.

The school has introduced a child protection policy and all new teachers and staff are provided with training on its application when they begin work. Procedures for monitoring attendance are robust and the school works hard to promote good attendance through good communication with parents. Poor punctuality, due to traffic problems as well as general tardiness, remains a key issue for the school, as it leads to a loss of learning time in lessons. The school has adequate prayer facilities for all students.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

This is an area that has been given great attention since the last inspection. The provision of additional shaded playground spaces, the structural changes to reduce glare, and the replacement of electrical cables, make the school a safe and functional learning environment.

The school's buildings and premises are clean, well maintained and provide adequate learning spaces for most students. Some classrooms are a little cramped for the numbers of students and there is only one science laboratory, which limits access to practical activities for all students. The gymnasium is large and used to teach a few classes at any one time. Kindergarten children have access to large play equipment but this is not used often enough to support the effective development of gross motor skills.

Security is given high priority and the security guards, as well as ancillary staff, ensure that all gates and access doors to the classrooms are well monitored. Procedures for safe storage of chemicals and domestic cleaners are satisfactory, as are the procedures for food safety and hygiene.

The school's resources to support its aims

The range of resources for learning in classrooms remains inadequate. The school has enhanced its resources in some areas since the last inspection; every class now has a data projector. Classroom resources are limited to textbooks and many of these are not current. The restricted range, quality, quantity and variety of resources in lessons lead to textbook and worksheet-based lessons and over reliance on Internet-based resources. This does not adequately support student learning. The air conditioning units in many classes are old and not functioning

adequately. Many desks and chairs are unsuitable for the size and age of students using them, especially in boys' classes.

The KG classes have no access to water or sand play. Science and mathematics lessons do not have access to sufficient practical apparatus for students to manipulate or make meaningful connections with the world around them. Library resources are limited with a poor range and quality of literature. Displays in corridors are poorly planned and consist of identical worksheets or photocopied information.

The school has an adequate number of staff, who are suitably qualified. There is high staff turnover and insufficient attention given to recruiting new staff with appropriate experience and expertise. Support assistants are provided for KG and Grade 1 classes but are not always deployed effectively. They are not provided with appropriate training to help them develop the relevant essential skills required for supporting students in lessons. The school's buses are maintained to a high standard.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's senior leadership team ensures that the day-to-day organisation of the school is effective and priority is given to ensuring students' health, safety and well-being. This is sometimes at the expense of a strategic focus on the improvement of students' learning and academic progress. The owner and the Principal, work together effectively to plan priorities such as the current focus on the recruitment of teachers whose first language is English.

The school's self-evaluation, led by the coordinators, is not based on a robust evaluation of the school's performance. As a result, the judgments do not accurately reflect the school's performance. The school development plan is therefore not based on an accurate understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses and does not focus on improving academic standards. The feedback from lesson observations carried out by senior leaders is not sufficiently detailed to promote consistently good teaching. Information from the observations is not routinely fed into the planning for professional development in order to target identified improvement areas.

The school has only recently introduced a few improvement initiatives. There has been insufficient rigorous monitoring of how these are implemented and whether they successfully impact on student learning. For example, senior teachers have begun to identify low ability students who will benefit from additional support and a range of remedial lessons have begun. There are no planned procedures for assessing the impact of these lessons on the targeted students' progress.

The school has good relationships with parents who appreciate both the quality of communication about their children's learning and the level care.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been insufficient progress on the recommendations relating to teaching, learning and assessment, as well as those relating to improving the quality of leadership and management.

Teachers still do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and how to ensure that all learners in their classes make adequate progress. Assessment procedures are not robust and are not used to inform planning. Resources have not been sufficiently increased in classrooms, or for play based activities in the KG.

The school has addressed all of the identified health and safety issues. There is a new child protection policy and all staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow. With financial support from the owner, the school has made substantial changes to its premises. An outdoor play area has been provided for KG and all classrooms are now fitted with anti glare windows and new data projectors.

The school self-evaluation still lacks rigour and provides an inaccurate analysis of the school's performance. In addition, the school's leadership has not taken effective action to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has demonstrated that it has the capacity to make improvements in some areas. However, it does not have the capacity to make improvements to the quality of teaching and to raise academic standards. This is because the Principal and her senior staff do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to make the improvements required without external support.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve teaching and learning, particularly in English and ICT, by ensuring that:
 - i. lessons include opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively
 - ii. all students are set targets for improvement and are supported in achieving those targets
 - iii. appropriate challenge is provided in all lessons for more able students
 - iv. teachers consistently use a range of questioning strategies that challenge students' higher order thinking skills
 - v. robust assessments are used in lessons to check all students' understanding of the intended learning.
2. Support teachers in developing effective behaviour management strategies to use in lessons, particularly for older boys.
3. Increase classroom resources in order to adequately support the curriculum; particularly access to library resources and scientific and mathematical resources to promote practical and investigative skills.
4. Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - i. self-evaluation is based on more rigorous approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and on a robust analysis of a variety of sources including student data
 - ii. improvement initiatives are monitored rigorously to assess their impact on student learning.

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								