



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Andalus Private Academy

Published in 2013

Iqraa

Al Andalus Private Academy

Inspection Date	25 th – 28 th November, 2012
School ID#	135
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1392
Age Range	3 – 12 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Sameer Husni Al Saleh
School Address	Falaj Hazza, Al Ain
Telephone Number	(+971) 03 7829980
Fax Number	(+971) 03 7828766
Email (ADEC)	alandulusacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae

Introduction

The school was inspected by five inspectors. The inspectors observed 90 lessons. During their time in the school, inspectors considered the school ethos, the quality of students' learning experiences, the standards they achieve, their personal development and the teaching they receive. In addition to the lesson observations, inspectors observed other aspects of school life such as break and lunch times and assemblies. They held meetings with staff, students and parents. They also examined school documentation and parental questionnaires.

Description of the School

Al Andalus Private Academy was established in Al Ain in 2001 and is independently owned. It is located in an area of the city close to a variety of other schools. The principal has been in post since 2008 and has a well-established senior management team. He has recently appointed subject coordinators for the core subjects. The school aims to provide all students with a balanced education so that they develop academically and personally.

There are 1,392 students in total of which 766 are boys and 626 are girls. Two hundred and forty nine are in the kindergarten, 718 in the lower school, 262 in the upper school and 163 in grade 12. The school has expanded in the past two years to include grades 10 to 12. All students are Muslim, have a common Arabic heritage and originate from Jordan (31%), Syria (23%), UAE (12%), Palestine (12%), Egypt (11%), Sudan (7%) and Tunisia (3%).

Students' families live in Al Ain and many parents work for government agencies. Students are accepted for admission following initial tests, interviews and observations. There are currently seven students that are identified as having special educational needs. In the main, these students have auditory problems.

School fees are low and range from AED 6,925 in the kindergarten to AED 14,000 in grade 12. Additional charges are made for books, lunches, uniforms and transport. The school uses the Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum in Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies. The curricula for English, mathematics and science are based on USA and UK published schemes.

The teaching staff are all Muslim and from Arab heritage backgrounds. Their salaries range from AED 48,000 to AED 70,000 per annum.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band B

Grade 5

Inspectors judged the Al Andalus Private Academy to be in Band B; that is a school that is satisfactory.

There have been significant improvements in the overall effectiveness of the school since the previous inspection and these have had a positive impact on the students' learning. The previous report made suggestions for improvement which covered teaching, assessment, balance in the curriculum and the learning experience of children in the kindergarten (KG). The principal has acted on many of the recommendations and improvements are particularly noticeable in the KG. In addition, new buildings and resources have improved the available space and opportunities for learning and this has contributed to the overall enjoyment of the students in the school.

Students are making better progress and standards by Grade 12 compare very well with other MoE schools. Nevertheless, they fall below international standards because students insufficiently develop higher order thinking skills. Progress is not measured against high quality outcomes. It is assessed against textbook standards. Data on student performance is not held centrally and there is a reliance on internally moderated examinations. Current assessment practices are, therefore, insecure. The transfer of this information from year-to-year may also be affected by the turnover of teaching staff.

Students in the KG now make good progress in numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage the students and make learning fun. They use resources which stimulate the senses and develop manipulative skills. When they leave the kindergarten stage, students are well prepared for this transition and most display confidence and a secure grasp of moral values. Sustained improvement in standards and progress is less well embedded in the rest of the school.

Standards in Arabic are satisfactory. In the lower grades, students recognise different vowels and can use them in words and sentences. They can express their ideas very clearly and confidently and the majority can read fluently. In the higher grades, students are making steady progress. They can retell stories in Arabic, their understanding is good and they can write short essays. Communication skills are not as good and the students' grasp of Arabic grammar remains weak. Standards and progress in Islamic studies are satisfactory and improving. Based on their good basic understanding, most students are able to discuss Islamic issues, provide thoughtful opinions and express their thoughts confidently. Students learn the rules of Qur'an recitation and can apply these procedures.

Standards and progress in social studies are satisfactory. Students have a good awareness of the leadership, history and geography of the seven emirates.

English is the second language for all students. Standards and progress are satisfactory and improving in English. The sound practice in the kindergarten is reinforced in the main school. Students can articulate ideas and opinions in English both orally and in their writing. They are competent at reading comprehension and are able to understand a wide variety of texts. By grade 12, students have become confident speakers who are able to read and write competently. In mathematics, progress is slower in the lower grades but students acquire satisfactory understanding of the four functions and can work with fractions and percentages. Standards in the upper grades are improving and in grade 12, students make better than satisfactory progress. Students in the upper grades show sound ability in problem solving. In science, standards and progress are satisfactory. Students are able to relate their knowledge well to real life examples in their studies of habitats. Students show secure understanding of chemical and biological theory in their laboratory work. Overall, students have sufficiently well developed skills in numeracy, literacy and Information and communications technology (ICT), with thinking skills requiring further development.

The personal development of students at the school is satisfactory. The school has focused on four areas which include the building of self-esteem, the promotion of social skills, the provision of basic life skills and the promotion of national identity. An area of relative weakness is in the lack of challenge presented to students to develop their abilities to the full. Only occasionally, as in some English lessons, were interpersonal skills, independent learning and critical thinking skills well developed through strategies such as group work. Students have a respect for Islamic values and a good understanding of how to apply these in their behaviour. In assemblies the students sing the national anthem with respect, and are confident when presenting to others. Students demonstrate tolerance of the varied and different cultures within the school. There are good relationships between the teachers and their students. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to build confidence and self-esteem. Students are well behaved most of the time. They have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. Despite generally positive attitudes and enjoyment of school, attendance is low.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Many teachers demonstrate satisfactory and improving subject knowledge. In the best lessons, this is exemplified by strong questioning skills, interactive and interesting activities that engage the learner and the effective use of ICT. There are some weaknesses in teaching, but these

are not so great that students' learning is less than satisfactory overall. Many lessons are no better than satisfactory because of an over-reliance on textbooks. Whereas in a small minority of lessons these dictate the pace of learning, more confident teachers in subjects including English and science ensure that the textbook is augmented with a range of activities and learning styles. Teachers plan lessons with three levels of learning, but they are not yet skilled in determining learning objectives and communicating these to students. For example, teachers outline the content to be covered in the lesson rather than the learning outcomes. Books are generally marked but without the detailed comment that would help students understand what they need to do to improve. The principal has recently appointed subject co-ordinators to improve the quality of teaching so that it becomes more interactive. This is beginning to have an impact, particularly in English.

Overall, curriculum provision is satisfactory. In KG, the provision of 'learning centres' provide children with opportunities to make choices in their learning. The school curriculum is broad and balanced and now includes music, Physical Education (PE) and ICT as discrete subjects. The Arabic, Islamic Studies and social science curricula are limited by adherence to the textbook as, to a lesser degree, is mathematics. The English and science curricula are enhanced by a range of activities and sometimes imaginative use of ICT. The PE curriculum is weaker than other areas because expectations are not high enough. Students are now take arts courses through to grade 9 and are able to specialise in arts as well as sciences at grade 10. This provides them with the opportunities and resources to develop their creativity. For example, a display of students' work in the girls' section was particularly good and demonstrated considerable creativity and flair. Despite attention to differentiation in planning, in practice the needs of the slower learner are often not met within lessons. However, extra support is provided in classes which take place at the beginning of the school day. Extension work for the very able is not very evident within lessons although the school does offer opportunities for these students to participate in competitions and project work, particularly in English and ICT. Although the range of extra-curricular activities is limited, the school has a number of links with both local and international organisations including universities, the police, hospitals, civil defence, NATO, the Red Crescent and 'International Thinking Skills'. These links help to support the curriculum. The school encourages the celebration of the UAE heritage such as National Day.

The school provides satisfactory care for all students. Parents say that they are confident that their children are safe at school. There is a central record of all staff that is up to date. The school has recently introduced a child protection

policy and there are secure procedures to deal with issues such as bullying. The systems to reward good work and sanction poor behaviour are fair. The current provision of expert support and guidance to make career and post-school choices is under-developed. The school has one prayer room designated for use by girls. Boys are encouraged to pray in the corridor. Although there are effective procedures to monitor attendance, the school has not done enough to improve attendance, which remains slow at approximately 85%. The students are well supervised on their arrival and departure from school. However, some students choose not to use seat belts and staff do not always insist on their use.

Some of the school buildings remain unsatisfactory. The new building for the boys' section and the KG has alleviated the problem of overcrowding in the main school. The KG area in particular is well resourced and attractive, albeit the computers in this area are out of date. Some older classrooms in the lower grades remain cramped and there is a need for more fire exits. With the exception of the swimming pool, facilities are inadequate for PE. The school has a rolling programme for the replacement of air conditioning units and light fixtures. New specialist facilities such as laboratories and ICT suites have increased the opportunities for learning.

Resources are satisfactory and are adequate to support the students in their learning. Four classrooms have interactive whiteboards and all have data projectors. Classrooms for specialist subjects are adequately equipped, including two ICT suites. There are two libraries but the range of books is limited. Although the number of teachers is adequate, there are few support staff except in the KG. The turnover of teaching staff is high. School buses are generally adequately equipped but some lack seat belts. The canteen is adequate and hygienic and provides healthy food.

The principal provides strong leadership and a clear strategic direction. He is supported by the leadership team and the new subject coordinators. Clear strategic direction and effective planning, with support from an external consultant, explain the extent of improvement in key areas since the last inspection. Parents are very positive about the ethos of the school and almost all say that school leaders are doing a good job. The proprietor takes a keen interest and involvement in the development of the school and there are thorough systems in place to ensure that the financial management is secure. School fees are low and this is reflected in the salaries of the staff. The turnover of teachers is high. The school has well-judged priorities for improvement, including the need to boost attendance. There is the capacity to improve standards further and the school currently provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Continue to improve the quality of teaching by:
 - i. ensuring that all students are sufficiently challenged and supported;
 - ii. ensuring that lesson objectives and learning outcomes are made more explicit;
 - iii. improving the assessment of students' work so that they understand how well they are progressing and their targets for improvement; and
 - iv. promoting further opportunities for independent learning, practical and investigative work so that students are given greater responsibility for their learning.
2. Improve students' rates of attendance.
3. Continue to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - i. using robust performance data so that standards and progress may be assessed and evaluated against international standards and against those of similar schools; and
 - ii. improving recruitment and retention strategies to reduce the teacher turnover rate.
4. Continue to improve the maintenance systems, the buildings and the safe use of the facilities.
5. Provide prayer room for male students.
6. Ensure all students use seat belts when travelling on buses.