



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Awa'il Private School Al Ain

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Iqraa

Al Awa'il Private School Al Ain

Inspection Date	30 th October – 1 st November, 2012
School ID#	136
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education; English taught with British materials
Number of Students	334
Age Range	KG – Grade 10
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Aziza Mohammed Ahmad
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Introduction

A team of four inspectors inspected the school over three days. They observed 53 lessons, held 17 discussions with staff and students, scrutinised test data and students' work, and considered parents' responses to a questionnaire about the school. The inspectors considered the school ethos, the quality of students' learning experiences, personal development, progress and the teaching they receive.

Description of the School

The school opened in 2004 in the Falaj Hazaa district of Al Ain. It serves students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including many who are disadvantaged. The school's aim is to provide the students with an education based on values and principles, including national values, which are reflected in the students' behaviour. It intends to increase the students' academic standards and to foster love of their country.

The school has grown since the last inspection, when the student roll was 217, and has added Grade 10. There are 172 boys and 162 girls in all. There are 43 students in Kindergarten (KG), 117 in primary grades 1-6, 161 in middle grades 7-9 and 13 students in Grade 10. The school applies admission tests in Arabic, English and mathematics. It enrolls students who score 50 and above, but requires those with a score between 50 and 60 to take remedial classes, for which parents pay AED 200 per month.

All the students are Muslim and are of Arab heritage. Thirty-eight percent of students are from Egypt, 16% are from the UAE, 15% from the Sudan, 13% from Syria, 6% from Jordan and 2% from Iraq. There are further small percentages from several other countries. Most of the staff are Egyptian.

Five students have special educational needs (SEN). Of these, one has sight impairment, another has hearing loss, one has physical disability, one dyslexia, and one speech and language issues. Twenty-seven students are identified as needing support with Arabic.

A school board, made up of the owner, principal, vice principal, accountant and teachers oversee the school. The fees are AED 5,000 in KG rising to AED 10,000 in Grade 10. Teachers' monthly salaries range from AED 2,000 to AED 2,700.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Al Awa'il Private School to be in Band C; that is a school in need of significant improvement.

The last inspection, in April 2010 found the school to be satisfactory, but at risk. It recommended the following actions:

- i. Provide a strategic plan with all key aspects and measurable outcomes;
- ii. Develop the role of middle leaders to include monitoring and tracking of students' progress and give them greater opportunities to contribute to strategic decision-making;
- iii. Improve the breadth of the curriculum, develop students' creative, independent learning and thinking skills, and provide challenging activities for all students; and
- iv. Provide a formal child protection policy and externally audited annual accounts.

The principal and vice principal, have made clear efforts to address the first two recommendations since the previous inspection, although some elements have only been acted upon this year. A strategic improvement plan is in place, focusing on many of the key concerns, including teaching and learning. Parents are more involved, including through a parent council. Subject co-ordinators have been appointed. Analysis of test data, monitoring of lessons and some professional development on aspects of teaching are taking place. They are having very limited impact in improving learning and progress because overall expectations are low. Senior leaders do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and lesson evaluations lack insight about how to improve. In addition, poor resources throughout the school undermine what can be achieved. The last two recommendations have not been addressed. The curriculum remains narrow and a child protection policy is not in place because senior leaders are unclear about its purpose.

Standards and progress in the core subjects are broadly in line with Ministry of Education (MoE) expectations, particularly in Arabic and Islamic studies. They are below international standards. The school sets tests based on MoE textbook expectations. It does not provide any international level standardised tests. The internal test results are analysed to identify students within different mark ranges, including those who fall below 60 and who are identified as underperforming. Remedial classes are provided for these students in Arabic, English and mathematics after school on three days each week, and charged for. The tests results are not moderated or standardised and the results are generally high, particularly in Arabic and Islamic studies. They are in line with those in similar MoE schools but below international levels and well below in English.

Students make broadly satisfactory progress in Arabic and are improving in Islamic studies. In Arabic, students in lower grades can write simple sentences. As they move up the grades, they can discuss topics related to the curriculum. By Grade 10, students can write short essays which meet test requirements. In Islamic studies, students understand different versions of the Holy Qur'an and

Hadith. Some can memorise verses and take pride in reciting them, using appropriate rules or ‘Tajweed’. Students’ progress in English, mathematics and science is unsatisfactory. In English, students are not confident in speaking spontaneously. They are learning to recognise letters in KG but their phonic knowledge is not well developed. As they move up the grades, progress in English is slow because students have limited opportunities to apply the grammar they learn in extended speaking, reading and writing activities. In mathematics, students acquire a basic understanding of number. By Grade 5, students can do long multiplication and show a grasp of number bonds. They are not able to apply their learning flexibly or use a range of strategies to solve problems. Progress in science is restricted to a knowledge focus, for example in Grade 9, about the digestive system. Students develop very limited practical skills through experimentation because there are few resources and the laboratory is not fit for purpose.

Students’ personal development is not fostered well. The students like school and behave well for the most part. They sing the national anthem with enthusiasm in assemblies and are gaining a satisfactory understanding of UAE values and culture. The students undertaking a ‘police’ role take pride in exercising their duties in assemblies and at other times. Overall, there are few opportunities for the majority of students to practise leadership and responsibility. The students are not gaining an adequate understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Many bring fizzy drinks and less healthy food to school. After breaks, there is often litter around the playground. Students are not routinely involved in recycling waste and other materials. They engage in a limited range of extra-curricular activities, some of which, for example, to the mall and funfair, do not have a clear educational purpose. Students are gaining inadequate preparation for the next phase of their lives.

The teaching expectations are not high enough. There has been some professional development on teaching methodologies but little impact can be seen in lessons. This is because some of the teachers have since left the school. Many teachers set inappropriate learning objectives for lessons, outlining an activity to be undertaken rather than the understanding or skills to be developed. Teachers are not secure enough in their understanding of how to adapt teaching for students’ different abilities. When combined with a severe lack of teaching materials in most lessons, this means that teaching is restricted narrowly to textbooks. The whole class is taught the same thing regardless of students’ abilities. This results in students with special needs struggling and making little progress while more able students wait or repeat work they already understand. In better lessons, teachers have warm relationships with students and use some

variety of activities to engage interest. In a better English lesson, the teacher enabled the students to speak and converse, reinforcing the learning with some reading and writing. She used her own resources to augment activities. Very few lessons use questioning which demands high order thinking. Some teachers set group tasks but these often lack challenge and require little co-operative effort or outcomes. Teachers apply formative tests on a regular basis but these are not used effectively to target teaching at students' learning needs. Some teachers mark students' work but do not use criteria or provide feedback on how to improve.

The curriculum is not broad enough. Sufficient time is provided for Arabic, Islamic studies, social studies and other core subjects. Students get less than the recommended time for physical education (PE) and the quality of the content is severely impoverished by lack of even basic equipment. There is no music in the curriculum and a minimal amount of art, one period a week, with too few resources for an adequate programme. Students have a weekly period of information and communications technology (ICT) and this provision is better because of a new computer laboratory. The KG curriculum is very limited by lack of the practical resources needed for young children's conceptual development and no opportunities for play-based learning. No subject choices are available for older students. There is some extra-curricular provision, such as a visit to the police forensics lab for some students interested in that as a career choice, and to local university fairs. While the after school remedial activities are taking place teachers supervise all other students in classrooms. Some teachers make efforts to engage students in purposeful activities during this time but not all do so.

The students feel cared for and safe and say there is no bullying. They are confident that if troubled they have several adults they can go to for help. The social worker provides support to students but lacks formal records of her involvement with individuals and their parents. The lack of a child protection policy means that staff are not sufficiently aware of how to identify and respond in a case of suspected abuse. Older students have few opportunities for self-reflection, to research occupations or discuss the subjects they should study for different career choices. Arrangements for checking and tracking attendance and punctuality are not systematic enough as the school is not sufficiently aware of individual or overall patterns.

There are significant limitations in the accommodation and the resources. Most of the classrooms are of adequate size; some for lower grades are cramped. A new computer laboratory is available this year. Overall, there is a lack of specialist accommodation, which seriously undermines the curriculum and teaching. The library and science laboratory are small, ill-equipped and unfit for purpose. There

are very few art and PE resources. The playgrounds, both for KG and the rest of the school, are not sufficiently shaded to enable them to be used well for play and sport. There is no prayer room. The school lost eight teachers in the last two years, some leaving during the academic year, for a higher salary. A number of safety concerns were drawn to the school's attention during the inspection. These include a lack of first aid boxes on buses, some classroom doors which stick and are difficult to open, lack of electrical maintenance records, evacuation signs not wholly clear, and broken or unwanted items left around the edge of the site.

The school board is supportive, but as it is made up of school staff and the owner, it is not able to provide an independent 'critical friend' role to help the school move forward. The principal and vice principal's efforts to improve the school are hampered by the severe lack of funding and resources and their own need for further training in leading for improvement. Whilst a subject co-ordinators' role is in place, the staff concerned lack training in the role. Further, not all the roles are filled at present. The English co-ordinator left during this term for a higher salary elsewhere. The owner has kept the school fees relatively low, at around AED 1,000 below the approved rates across the grades, in recognition of the challenge families face in paying them. This policy contributes to the underfunding of the school and impacts on the outcomes. Teachers' salaries are correspondingly low, which leads to unstable staffing. Parents responding to the questionnaire about the school are mainly positive. A few indicated they would like more information about their child's progress or disagreed that the school valued their opinions. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money and lacks adequate capacity for sustained improvement without support and adequate resourcing.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Provide a more robust system for checking all aspects of school safety and attend to the items raised in the inspection without delay – see below.
2. Improve leadership and management by:
 - i. aiming to increase standards and expectations to international levels;
 - ii. providing training for leaders in how to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching by its impact on learning; and
 - iii. providing a salary scale and incentives to recruit and retain high quality teachers.
3. Improve teaching and learning by:

- i. increasing the books and material resources available to teachers in all classrooms;
 - ii. training teachers in how to provide a range of activities that adequately meet the needs of different ability groups; and
 - iii. providing more skilled support for students with special educational needs.
4. Improve the curriculum by:
 - i. providing more breadth in the subjects available to students, including from Grade 9 onwards;
 - ii. increasing equipment and learning resources for KG, science, PE and art; and
 - iii. ensuring the after-school period for students not taking remedial classes has a clear purpose.
5. Improve the care and support of students by:
 - i. providing better arrangements for tracking student attendance and punctuality, including: taking the register earlier each day; tracking persistent lateness and absence; providing ongoing analysis of whole school patterns; and
 - ii. maintaining formal records of contacts by the social worker with individual students and their parents.
6. Improve buildings and premises by:
 - i. providing more specialist accommodation, particularly science laboratory and library;
 - ii. increasing shading on the playground for KG, and sport area;
 - iii. ensuring no unwanted items or debris are left around the site, including the roof.