



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Bashair Private School

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Iqraa

Al Bashair Private School

Inspection Date	19 th - 22 nd November, 2012
School ID#	089
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1236
Age Range	3 – 17 years
Gender	Mixed KG-G5, Girls only G6-12
Principal	Rime Esam Al Rhibani
School Address	12 East, Main 21, Mussafah, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by five inspectors. They observed 91 lessons and interviewed students, staff and the school's owner. They analysed questionnaire returns from parents and scrutinised key policy documents, the school's self-evaluation form (SEF) and its school improvement plan (SIP). Inspectors also spent time observing assemblies and the movement of students around school at breaks and at the beginning and end of the day.

Description of the School

Al Bashair Private School is situated in Mussafah. It moved there from city-centre villa premises in 2006 and has steadily expanded to the point where there are now 1,399 students on roll. There are 287 children in KG, 886 primary and 226 secondary students. Boys make up 37% of student numbers and girls 63%. Kindergarten (KG) classes through to Grade 5 have both boys and girls, but only girls continue from Grade 6 to Grade 12. A majority of these older students are from professional families. Students come from both the local area and Abu Dhabi city and their social and economic backgrounds are very varied. The school aims to become one of the "most renowned in Abu Dhabi, for its educational provision, based on Islamic principles and the best international standards." While most courses follow the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum, the school has designed its own programmes for English and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), following American high school models.

All students are Muslim and Arab. 48% are Emirati with most others coming from the Middle East and North Africa, notably Syria (20%), Jordan (12%), Palestine (4%) and Egypt (3%). Entry is by tests and students' attainment on arrival is generally above average. No student has identifiable special educational needs.

The school does not have a governing body. The school's sole owner deals directly with the principal and agrees priorities and funding requirements with her. Fees range from AED 16,050 to AED 28,850 per annum, including transport and book costs. Salaries range from AED 46,000 p.a. to AED 108,000 p.a., with most close to AED 80,000 p.a.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 3

Inspectors judged Al Bashair Private School to be in Band A, that is a high performing school.

This is now a good school that gives good value for money. The last inspection found the school satisfactory. It praised many things but asked for more

challenging work to be set for able students and better tracking of progress. Child protection and several health and safety issues were not in order and strategic planning was weak. Since then, significant improvement has been made. Attainment is higher because of better assessment and tracking. Because the quality of teaching has risen, both the most and least able students make much better progress. The curriculum now matches students' needs. All health and safety and care issues have been resolved. The leadership and management structure is now more appropriate for a large school. There is greater skill in planning. Less progress has been made on expanding extra-curricular provision and on building links with the local and wider community.

Standards and progress are good. In all subjects, attainment far exceeds UAE levels and in most subjects, standards also exceed international benchmarks. Girls score more highly than boys and Emirati students perform less well than others, but all groups exceed local and wider norms. In Arabic, good foundations are laid in the lower grades and the older students read with real understanding and communicate well in clear standard Arabic. Their command of Arabic grammar is very good. In social studies, students have a good understanding of the geography and history of the UAE as well as its values. Similar standards and progress are found in Islamic studies. Students across the age range show much greater competence than expected in Islamic concepts. They use the Holy Qur'an as a source of knowledge and their recitation skills are very good. Many can see that the prophet should be their role model and can relate what they study in school to their own experience.

Standards in English at the end of Grade 12, in primary and KG are in line with international benchmarks and well above MoE averages. In Grade 12, for instance, students work independently and collaboratively, using sophisticated research and higher-order thinking skills. Students in Grade 5 can summarise stories and discuss the differences between declarative, exclamatory and imperative sentences. Standards in KG are very good. The youngest children work independently or in groups and can read, write in sentences and use punctuation correctly. Progress in English is good overall partly because there is strong differentiation in the majority of lessons. Progress is especially good in KG.

In mathematics, older students' standards exceed international benchmarks by a small margin and are well above MoE averages. They can solve complex algebraic and calculus problems in Grades 11 and 12. Primary standards are in line with international benchmarks and above MoE averages. Students are able to apply mathematical skills to new contexts through hand-on activities. Progress is good overall, reflecting good teaching. Stimulating classrooms and differentiation in

both teaching and resources ensure good progress for students of different abilities.

Standards in science are good. At the end of Grade 12 and Grade 10, they are well above MoE averages and a little above international ones. In physics, for example, students produce high-quality definitions of acceleration and motion. Standards in lower primary are broadly average and are above average in upper primary. Grade 6 students, for example, gave very clear explanations of the adaptation polar bears make to their environment. Research skills, particularly the use of ICT, are especially good.

Personal development is good across the school and is especially impressive amongst the older girls. Some boys in primary lack a little self-discipline, but most are mature for their age. In KG, the children are respectful, lively and eager to engage with each other and with visitors. Good independent research skills and collaboration are seen across the school, along with higher-order thinking skills. Students are considerate and caring towards each other and there is strong harmony between the many different countries and cultures. Positive attitudes to school are reflected in above-average attendance rates. Students understand the key values of the UAE and demonstrate many of these in their conduct. Leadership and organisational skills are less well developed because there are too few opportunities for students to serve the school or wider community.

The quality of teaching is good. It is typical for students in all grades to experience briskly paced, challenging, well-differentiated lessons, with significant opportunities for active participation. Teachers know their subjects very well and use a variety of approaches to engage students in learning. They are good at long-term and short-term lesson planning, and the purpose of each lesson is clear, though not always specific. They make good use of the wide range of resources available and effectively diagnose where students are in their learning, often providing meaningful feedback. Teachers are adept at differentiating instruction so that all learners can succeed. Good skills in managing behaviour are evident in the positive conduct of students, with mutual respect shown between teachers and students. The low teacher turnover rate is a testament to the positive environment at the school.

The formal curriculum is good. It inspires and motivates students and has significant elements of project-based learning, collaboration and an emphasis on thinking skills. All programmes guide staff to differentiate effectively as standard practice. Independent learning is a feature throughout. ICT is widespread and highly effective, both as a discrete subject and as an integral part of other lessons,

particularly science, mathematics and social studies. Planning is strong, more so than in other MoE schools, but not as closely correlated as it could be with data about students' individual needs or targets. The KG curriculum is very good. It is broad, balanced and very imaginative, meeting children's needs both academically and socially. Students are exposed to a wide range of strategies, including learning through play. Learning activities are wide-ranging and stimulating. Extra-curricular activities are adequate but limited, with a few good quality clubs, such as Taekwondo and the Eco Club, and some valuable visits. However, this aspect is far less developed than in other good schools. Similarly, there are some, but too few, links with other schools and the wider community.

The school now provides a safe environment for its students. The vetting of all staff at recruitment is very thorough. The new child protection policy is clear and appropriate and the principal has ensured that all teachers are familiar with it. There have been no recorded incidents of child abuse, but the school counsellor and all staff know how to act should it occur. Children also know who to speak to if they have concerns. A comprehensive central register is maintained, listing all adults and the required information. There is a good system for recording attendance and following up absences. Protection from bullying and harassment is effective, nurtured by the atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the school. This is underpinned by good policies and time spent in assemblies and lessons clarifying expectations of students. The reward and sanctions policy is appropriate: not all staff reward in the same way, but sanctions are applied consistently and are considered fair by students. First aid facilities and arrangements are comprehensive. The quality of the informal guidance offered to students is limited. It is satisfactory and helps most students make key decisions, but there is no systematic programme.

Buildings are attractively designed and in a good state of repair. They offer a stimulating learning environment for students and a pleasant workplace for staff. They are sufficiently large to support good delivery of the curriculum and are well supplied with specialist indoor and outdoor facilities. Staff and students have made great efforts to enhance many areas with attractive displays and in the KG 'well' with excellent cushioned play coverings. The school takes seriously its responsibilities towards health and safety and all requirements in this area are fully met, including the regular testing of equipment and safe storage practices for food and hazardous materials. Key staff have responsibilities for health and safety and for student transportation and bussing. A security company provides a constant security presence.

The school is very well resourced. Classrooms have a good supply of core and supplementary textbooks, materials for activity-based learning, laptop computers, projectors and whiteboards. KG classrooms are extremely well equipped. Indoor and outdoor play areas are sufficient for the provision of sports and play-based learning. The library and science labs are well resourced and are used well by students and teachers. The good quality of resources strongly promotes the effective delivery of the curriculum and enables staff to teach imaginatively.

The school is successful in so many respects because it is well led. The principal plays a crucial role in setting the tone: she is calm, has high expectations of colleagues, students and parents and operates with the utmost integrity. Others copy her example and help make the school the peaceful and happy place it is. Over the last two years, she has concentrated her energies on improving teaching, and here the quality has improved greatly. Other focus areas, such as health and safety and care for students, have been radically improved. Later than ideal, money has been spent to create a leadership team. With the workload now spread, the pace of change has quickened and new ideas and approaches are being adopted. The school is now even more thorough in monitoring teaching and providing targeted training as a follow-up. It is now confident at self-evaluation and improvement planning. The capacity for further improvement is good. The late start on implementing some recommendations is evident: there remains much to be done in expanding extra-curricular provision, for example, although impressive plans are in place for next term. Management systems still lack the systematic and efficient approach needed. For instance, data is used to plan in broad terms but not in sophisticated detail. Target-setting is embryonic and has only a tenuous link to international benchmarks. More broadly, oversight by and guidance from the proprietor, although regular, are informal and there is no independent governing body that can hold the school to account.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Build on its already good performance and seek to become outstanding by significantly expanding the opportunities for students of all ages to contribute to school life and broaden their experience outside lessons. Do this by:
 - i. creating a formal and extensive range of opportunities for service, for instance, as prefects, monitors, buddy readers or staff shadows;

- ii. rapidly implementing existing plans for creating an extra-curricular activities programme, including specific provision for gifted and talented students; and
 - iii. developing a range of links with the local community and wider world, such as the local mosque, business community, artists, musicians, writers and charities, and with other schools and organisations beyond the UAE.
2. Further improving management at every level so that it operates systematically and efficiently in this large and expanding school. Do this by:
 - i. using more sophisticated data to set student and staff targets that are ambitious, finely tuned and appropriate for lessons and long-term progress, ensuring that they are known and clearly linked to specific international benchmarks;
 - ii. setting tighter deadlines and greater accountability for the implementation of all development plans; and
 - iii. establishing an independent governing body to hold the school to account.