



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



Inspection Report

Al Bashair School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Al Bashair School

Inspection Date	3 – 6 March 2014
School ID#	89
Licensed Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MOE)
Number of Students	1293
Age Range	3 to 17 years
Gender	Kindergarten (KG) - G5 mixed G6 - G12 girls
Principal	Sawsan Tarabishy
School Address	12 East, Mussafah, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 553 1666
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Official Email (ADEC)	albashair.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.bashair-sch.ae
Date of last inspection	19 – 22 November 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 B;	GRADE 5
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The main strengths of the school are:

- parents, students, staff and the owner have a high regard and support for the principal and share her commitment to work together to fulfil the aims of the school
- students gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the UAE heritage, culture and Islamic values
- students' motivation to learn and succeed is reflected in their behaviour and relationships
- students develop satisfactory basic literacy skills in Arabic and English.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the use of validated assessment data and the tracking of students' progress across the school to raise standards and improve progress in all subjects
 - facilitation of shared leadership throughout the school
 - the quality of teaching and learning so that lessons are consistently effective from kindergarten (KG) to grade 12.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of 5 inspectors. They observed 98 lessons, break times, students' arrival and departure and attended assemblies. They analysed test and assessment results and scrutinised students' work across the school. They considered the 390 responses to the parents' questionnaire and many of the schools' policies and other documents. They conducted meetings with the owner, senior staff, teachers, students and parents. The principal was involved throughout the inspection process and completed 2 joint observations with the lead inspector. The Arabic Coordinator and the English Head of Faculty (HOF) also completed a joint lesson observation each.

Description of the School

The school was established in 1993 in a villa. It moved to its present site in Mussafah, Abu Dhabi in 2006. It is over-subscribed with a waiting list. The school administers Ministry of Education (MOE) examinations, International English Language Testing System (IELTS) in grade 12, and internal tests. The aims of the school are to provide a high quality education in-line with ADEC's goals by providing a rich environment in which to achieve the highest levels, and to equip students with 21st century skills.

All 1293 students are Muslim of which 46% are Emirati, 21% Syrian and 13% Jordanian with the remaining 20% representing 26 other countries including Yemen and Palestine. There are 458 boys and 835 girls. Mixed gender classes operate from kindergarten (KG) to grade 4, separate boys' and girls' classes in grade 5 and girls only from grades 6-12. There are 284 children (134 boys and 150 girls) in KG, 753 students (324 boys and 429 girls), in grades 1 to 5 (Cycle 1), 184 girls in grades 6-9 (Cycle 2) and 72 girls in grades 10-12 (Cycle 3). The school has not identified any students with special educational needs. 177 students are identified as talented in art, sports or information and communication technology (ICT).

The school uses ADEC's admissions policy. Most classes are large in number as parents successfully appeal for their child's admittance. Tuition fees range from AED 11020 in KG to AED 22200 in grade 12. Extra charges are made for books, uniform and transport. The school has a very high turnover of staff. In 2013, 25 teachers left and 37 joined. The present principal joined the school in September 2013. She has a vice-principal for student affairs. The school currently has a vacancy for an academic vice-principal.

The school owner is also chairperson of the governing body which consists of herself, the principal and 2 parents. There is a student council and a parent council. An ADEC school improvement partner has worked with the school for 2 years. The last inspection was in November 2012.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

The previous inspection report judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be good. Currently standards and progress are in line with or near to those expected internationally and by ADEC in all core areas, which is a satisfactory standard overall.

Children enter KG with basic literacy skills which are in line with expected levels in English and Arabic. They make slow progress in KG which is in part related to inadequate subject knowledge in English among KG teachers. As they move through grades 1 to 5 progress in literacy skills in English and Arabic becomes more rapid and standards in this area improve to become a strength which facilitates student's access to the wider curriculum. This contributes to students' satisfactory progress from grade 1 – 12 in all core subjects.

Grade 1 students in English, read and order words accurately, for example 'the doctor helps us'. They use phonic cues to write English words they are unsure of, for example 'dkt' for doctor. Grade 5 students can accurately read a short text. Boys are less confident to speak in English than girls.

Grade 1 students in Arabic, write independently and can for example read a simple sentence about community helpers. Grade 6 students reach the standards expected by ADEC for this age group. They speak, read and write short texts fluently. In grade 7 students can use tenses correctly when writing longer passages. They have a sound, balanced view about life within the UAE culture and Islamic values. They can read and adopt the meaning of Hadith, and recite verses from the Holy Qu'ran using the correct enunciation. They demonstrate an understanding of Muslim manners and the etiquettes of Islam.

In mathematics, children can already count accurately to 10 and recognise numbers to 20 in KG. They make satisfactory progress so that in grade 1 they can follow the rule for multiplying a 2 digit number by a 1 digit number accurately. This satisfactory progress continues across the grades. By the end of Cycle 2, they can confidently find areas of cones and use Pythagoras' theorem. By grade 12, they are applying transformations to graphs.

Standards in science are lower than in other core subjects, and are below international standards. Grade 5 students cannot evaluate scientific evidence or pose questions independently. By grades 11 and 12, students make satisfactory progress and can work safely and independently in the labs, devising and carrying out fair tests.

Students ICT skills improve appropriately as they move through the school as they receive more regular access to the schools' technology. Students have some opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills. They have insufficient opportunities to question and reason for themselves in all subjects and at all stages of their learning.

Overall, as students enter the higher grades, attainment and progress improve, partly as a result of more effective teaching and partly as the literacy skills of reading, writing and speaking consolidated earlier facilitate access to the wider curriculum. For standards and progress to achieve the good levels identified by the previous inspection report, the 21st century skills for example of critical and creative thinking found in students work in the best lessons need to be more conspicuous in student attainment profiles across the age range and the curriculum. In addition, more able students and slower learners need to make the progress of which they are capable.

Standards and progress in physical education (PE), art and music are low because there are inadequate resources and facilities to support effective learning.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory and they enjoy their school life. Attendance rates are above average with 91% in KG rising steadily to 94% in cycle 1 and 95% in grades 6-12. Punctuality is affected by traffic problems and weather conditions, such as the fog. Students behave inappropriately when they arrive late to assembly. The school is proactive in developing knowledge and appreciation of the heritage and values of UAE. Originating from 29 countries, students show mutual respect, tolerance and understanding of different backgrounds and cultures. They are sensible and respectful in lessons and confident, articulate and proud of their school. The school offers some appropriate responsibilities to students to prepare them for the next stage of their careers. There is now a student council and students assume a range of duties including organising extra-curricular activities and helping younger students with their reading. Prefects are selected only from grades 3 to 5. Opportunities for students in all grades to assume leadership roles remain insufficient. Students have a comprehensive knowledge and practical understanding of how to live safe, healthy lives.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching has fallen since the last inspection and is currently inconsistent across the school. This is primarily due to the extremely high turnover of teachers.

The most and least able students make insufficient progress in lessons. Teachers rarely use questioning in lessons to challenge more able students or support those less able. Lesson delivery does not always ensure inclusion of time to consider and consolidate learning. Additional teachers and assistants are not always used effectively to support learning and progress in lessons. Teachers, especially those in the lower grades, infrequently use different approaches in their teaching to develop students' critical thinking, questioning and reasoning skills.

Some teaching and learning is good. Most of the more effective lesson delivery is in the higher grades where learning is project based and students are involved in their own assessments. In other areas of the school teaching is no better than satisfactory.

Classroom relationships are good across the school. Paired and small group working is used successfully in some lessons. For example, in a grade 1 Arabic lesson, students worked well in pairs to share ideas. ICT is used appropriately in lessons to aid and support learning. For example, 2 classes in grade 4 have access to software programmes to complete mathematical challenges. This impacts positively on students' confidence in class.

Some lessons progress slowly because teachers wait for every student to complete a task before moving on. Some teachers take a predominantly instructional teacher-led approach and do not encourage students to ask questions. They do not check students' understanding in lessons so that they can adapt their lesson delivery to better match students' differing abilities. Teachers also do not use information from assessments to enable them to plan curriculum delivery more effectively to secure progress through the matching of appropriate challenge to differing learning needs and abilities. Some lessons end abruptly and leave limited time for learning to be checked by teachers. In the lower grades, there is insufficient opportunity provided for students to select their own resources, or to adopt different strategies appropriate to the challenge set, for example to complete mathematical calculations. The new learning centres in KG and Cycle 1 do provide appropriately planned activities to encourage investigative learning. Frequently in the higher grades, technical vocabulary is delivered in Arabic only.

Some teachers model incorrect grammar. In KG, in particular, teachers' knowledge of English is not always secure. Errors also occur when modelling counting and writing English numbers from right to left. Marking of students' work is irregular. It gives insufficient guidance to students on how their work can be improved. Targets are rarely set for students to know what they need to do to succeed.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum implementation is satisfactory overall. Currently the implementation of the MOE curriculum is not always appropriately adapted to meet the needs of students of all abilities. It does not provide sufficient opportunities for the development of 21st Century skills such as critical and creative thinking and independent research, especially in the lower grades. Curriculum delivery is in Arabic except for 2 lessons per week of science from grades 2 to 7.

The curriculum does support a sound understanding of the UAE. There are a number of recent additions and adaptations to enhance the curriculum implementation since the last inspection. There are now appropriate 'tools' activities in KG to encourage investigation and independent learning. This initiative was introduced 3 years ago. There is already some evidence of its positive impact on learning through the children's increased perseverance to their tasks. The school uses a suitable range of textbooks and has recently introduced a published scheme into Cycle 1 to support the English curriculum. Again this is in the early stages of implementation, and it is too soon to measure the impact on learning. The school has also introduced an effective e-curriculum into grade 4 through software programmes, and psychology and IELTS programmes from grade 11. Currently standards in ICT are satisfactory and improving since the introduction of modern resources and the focus on project based learning. More opportunities are provided from grade 6 to develop higher order thinking skills and problem solving.

There are limited opportunities for PE activities for all students. Provision for gross motor skills and the use of the outdoor environment for KG children is unsatisfactory.

The school has extended the extra-curricular timetable with, for example, 'Park Days' and ice-skating. There is a very active eco-club through which one student was invited to speak on television. Some appropriate links to external organisations are in place. Links with universities remain insufficient. There are only a few activities for students to engage in during break times.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

Protection, care, guidance and support of students are satisfactory overall. They are no longer judged to be good because the system to sustain students' academic progress is unsatisfactory.

The school has a welcoming and positive environment. Students say they feel safe and cared for both at school and while travelling on the buses. The school carefully follows up absences on the same day by phone call or text. The system to improve punctuality is ineffective. Students are appropriately encouraged to use the available prayer facilities. The clinic is small with only one nurse and 2 assistants to provide health care for the large number of students.

Careers guidance is appropriately structured. Speakers from a local university are invited to the school and students visit exhibitions and careers events. The behaviour policy is successful. The rewards and sanctions policy is fairly administered rewarding individuals and whole classes through enjoyable extra-curricular activities. Students entering competitions are well supported by their peers.

Assessment procedures have limited capacity to inform curriculum planning, or to check students' progress over time to ensure students make appropriate progress in all subjects across the school. There is limited validated data to collect, analyse and use to set targets for students' standards and progress benchmarked against international standards. There is insufficient assessment to inform planning to match the needs of different abilities. The school does not identify the specific needs of SEN students with learning difficulties, or those who find learning easy. There is usually no extra provision or support for these students in lessons, which limits their academic progress. Some teachers do identify slower learners. The support for these students outside the classroom is effective.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The buildings and premises are satisfactory. They are no longer good because the school is over-subscribed and many classrooms are cramped and unable to support active learning. Outside areas are too small to provide effectively for the numbers of students.

The buildings provide a safe, clean and hygienic learning environment. A health and safety committee monitors this in addition to the maintenance of the building and premises. Fire alarms are regularly tested and evacuation procedures carried out. The outside play area is partly shaded and has newly installed large play equipment. There is also a small astro-turf pitch and a basketball court. The 'free' play area provides a limited resource with no seating. KG classrooms have no

direct access to the outdoors. The small indoor space for assemblies and physical activities in KG is inadequate for gross motor skills development. The school has good science and library facilities. Plans are in place to improve the areas available for PE. The prayer room is too small for the number of students.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are satisfactory. Teaching staff are qualified and agreed by ADEC. Staffing is generous and includes 2 teachers in each KG class. The school struggles to retain its staff. Almost all teachers are new to the school. This is a significant change since the last inspection when the low teacher turnover rate was noted as a strength. Specialist resources are well used to support learning, especially in science and ICT. All classrooms have data-projectors. Interactive whiteboards are appropriately sited in the ICT labs where they are used effectively. Internet access is good. KG and Cycle 1 have learning centres with a suitable range of active learning materials. All of the schools' 30 buses are safe and well maintained. Half have recently been upgraded to include CCTVs for added security. Displays around the school are of varying quality. Classrooms have insufficient English displayed to support the acquisition of key vocabulary across all subjects.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the last inspection was judged to be good. Since that time the principal and the vast majority of the teaching staff have been replaced. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory.

The current principal joined the school in September 2013 with a clear vision, and a commitment to make the necessary improvements. She is held in high regard by the school community, is constantly visible around the school and works effectively with the vice-principal for student affairs. Together they ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The principal's priority on appointment was the securing of documentation and policies which are now in place. For example, the self-evaluation form (SEF) and school development plan (SDP) have been completed appropriately using the ADEC format. The SDP includes priorities well matched to the SEF and addresses improvement points from the previous inspection. This is a positive start for future planning.

Almost all the teaching staff is new. They have replaced the established teachers who have left the school since the last inspection. The principal has not been able to monitor all 99 teachers herself. This is one reason why the SEF is not robustly accurate. Another reason is that insufficient data is collected, analysed and used to inform SDP action points.

The system for checking teachers' lesson planning and the impact of teaching on students' learning is not robust. Lesson observations are not focused sufficiently on improving teachers' practice or measuring the impact of teachers' professional development aimed at improving students' progress and standards. The information from lesson observations is not used effectively to set targets for improvements.

The principal has had a limited time to formally strategically plan so does not currently provide adequate strategic direction for the school. Leadership and management do demonstrate the capacity to bring about marked improvement with additions to the leadership team and with continued external support. The current school development plan is an appropriate tool to begin to redress the loss in performance experienced by the school since the last inspection.

A health and safety committee, governing body and student and parent councils are established. The owner is committed to improvement. She has authorised budgets to refurbish and extend the gymnasium and to recruit an academic vice-principal. Teachers' salaries are paid promptly. The school is very popular and parents regularly appeal against decisions not to admit their child.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been an extremely high staff turnover since the last inspection with 85 of the 99 teachers new to the school. The present principal joined the school in September 2013 and works effectively with the vice-principal for student affairs. The school currently has vacancy for an academic vice-principal. This situation is limiting school improvement, for example in curriculum planning and in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

The principal has embraced the need to make improvements. She has enhanced the curriculum with psychology, introduced an English scheme of work for Cycle 1 and established an extra-curricular activity programme. She has set up an active governing body and involved them appropriately in the school's self-evaluation and SDP. The SDP includes tight deadlines for action plans. These successful changes since her appointment at the school illustrate her clear understanding and sufficient expertise to implement the necessary improvements.

The school has made inadequate progress towards using more sophisticated data linked to international benchmarks. Leadership and management are currently working towards establishing systems to match students' standards and progress against international benchmarks. Student and staff targets for lessons and long term progress are rarely set.

Improved community links include more partnerships with charities, and also better links with parents through a parent council. Links with a wider range of universities remain insufficient. The school has provided leadership opportunities for some students to contribute to school life. Students in most grades still have insufficient opportunities to assume leadership roles.

Overall the school has made insufficient progress since the last progress. The school now has sufficient capacity for further improvement given continued support from the school improvement partner and the appointment of an academic vice- principal and Arabic head of department to further strengthen the leadership team.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Establish the use of validated assessment data and the tracking of students' progress to raise standards and improve progress in all subjects by:
 - i. introducing standardised tests to measure attainment accurately and enable comparisons to be made with other schools
 - ii. establishing baseline attainment data for all students especially on admission and regularly assessing progress using internal and external measures that are moderated and validated
 - iii. tracking individual students' progress and taking appropriate action to ensure at least satisfactory progress
 - iv. using assessment information to set appropriately challenging targets for students in all core subjects so they understand when they have succeeded and what they need to do to improve further.
2. Improve the quality of leadership by:
 - i. appointing an academic vice-principal and an Arabic head of department
 - ii. securing clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the leadership team
 - iii. completing rigorous and accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning feeding into the self-evaluation and improvement planning process to increase the proportion of lessons delivered as good or better to at least 40%
 - iv. setting up a database to record and track career destinations for students.
3. Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- i. ensuring lessons are structured to include time to consider and consolidate learning objectives
- ii. delivering lessons with tasks to provide challenge for all ability groups
- iii. ensuring effective deployment of additional teachers and assistants in classrooms
- iv. using a variety of teaching styles to develop critical thinking, questioning and reasoning skills.

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								