



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Dhafra Private School – Al Ain

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Iqraa

Al Dhafra Private School – Al Ain

Inspection Date	8 th – 11 th October, 2012
School ID#	139
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Grade 1 – 8 UK National Curriculum and American materials Grade 9 – 12 UK
Number of Students	2,591
Age Range	Kindergarten (KG) – Grade 12
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Elham Al Abed
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Introduction

Six inspectors inspected the school. The inspectors observed 101 lessons. They attended assemblies, observed students arriving and leaving school and watched the students during break times. Inspectors met with the principal, vice principal, subject leaders, teachers, students, and the owner. They also visited the clinic, prayer rooms and specialist facilities. The inspectors analysed data from parents' questionnaires, the school's performance data, self-evaluation and school improvement plan (SIP).

Description of the School

The school opened as a villa school in 1989. It moved to its present buildings on 'School Street' in 2001. Three large buildings, specialist facilities, a sports hall and play areas make up the site. The principal has been in post for 11 years. The school's vision is 'to be recognised as one of the most important educational establishments in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Al Dhafra hopes to achieve a leading position as an outstanding provider of quality education to a vast growing population in the fastest developing country in the Middle East, UAE.' There are 2,591 students at the school made up as follows:

Phase of School	Number of students on roll
Kindergarten (KG)	492
Grade 1 – 6	1,395
Grade 7 – 12	704
Number of boys	1,316
Number of girls	1,275

The proportion of students who are Muslim is 98%, and 91% are from Arab countries. Most of the students, 54%, come from the UAE, while 10% are from Jordan, 8% Egypt, 6% Syria; 3% each come from Oman and Palestine, and a further 3% each are from Lebanon and Iraq. The remainder come from Pakistan and America. Thirteen students have a variety of special educational needs (SEN). The school serves students from a middle class socio-economic background. The school admits students by test and interview. School fees are between AED 10,398 per annum (pa) in KG to AED 20,204 pa in Grade 12. Teachers' salaries range from AED 4,000 to AED 14,300 per month. The average salary is AED 9,150. The Dhafir Group owns the school. A board, made up of the owner, the principal, the school education advisor, the accountant and the owner's two sons manage the school.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Al Dhafra Private School to be in Band C; that is a school that is unsatisfactory.

The school has tackled several aspects of the key issues raised at the last inspection. Improvement planning is sharper, standardised tests are now used, provision for SEN students has improved and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) better supports learning. Standards and progress are satisfactory but the quality of teaching remains uneven across the school and is therefore unsatisfactory overall. Students' attitudes to learning mirror the standard of teaching they receive. The school's owner and the leadership team understand what they need to do to improve the school and have the capacity to move the school forward. The school undertakes self-evaluation and has a school improvement plan (SIP). This plan is satisfactory and includes costing, responsible personnel and target completion dates. Behaviour is satisfactory. The curriculum has some worthwhile elements but, like the teaching, is uneven in effectively meeting students' needs thus making it unsatisfactory overall. Students learn to respect each other's cultures. The school satisfactorily promotes the culture and values of the UAE. Students are cared for and protected. Older students and parents do not think they have a sufficient voice in the strategic running of the school. The school prepares students satisfactorily for the next stages of their education and several attend top universities. The school buildings are well cared for.

Standards and progress are satisfactory overall. Students have good presentation skills and adequate research and problem solving skills. There is considerable variation in outcomes in different sections of the school. Standards and progress are satisfactory in KG, but unsatisfactory in Grades 1 to 6. They are good in Grades 7 – 12. The oldest students achieve well in the UK curriculum, but below average in the American curriculum. Virtually all Grade 12 students successfully enter university to do degree courses. Standards in Arabic are above average, well above average in Islamic Studies and average in social studies.

The school administers a range of internationally standardised tests and examinations that help students to be well prepared for external examinations. Results in the UK external examinations are good. Results for Grade 10 students in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) compare well to world standards. In advanced supplementary (AS) level and advanced (A) level, where students only study mathematics and science, they achieve well. In the American curriculum, students in Grade 11 take the scholastic aptitude test (SAT) 1. In mathematics, results are line with requirements for local universities

but below international standards. Few students take the English SAT1 and results are low. Students using the American curriculum also take the Test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL) test; results meet local university requirements. Around 55% of students reach the higher results expected internationally. The school started to use the International Benchmark Test (IBT) in Grades 3, 6 and 8 in 2011. Results are well below international levels.

The attainment and progress in Arabic of Arab students are good while those of the very small minority of non-Arab students are below average. Attainment and progress in Islamic studies are very good because of the thorough focus on the Holy Qur'an. In other core subjects of social studies, English, mathematics and science, standards and progress are satisfactory overall with better progress in the secondary grades. Students develop satisfactory basic skills in literacy and numeracy in KG and Grades 1 – 6. In English, students across the school develop good speaking skills. Skills in reading and writing are good for students following the British curriculum. In the American curriculum, these skills are satisfactory. In Grades 1 – 6, students' wider mathematical skills are unsatisfactory. Progress in mathematics is good in Grades 7 – 12 with the majority of students attaining the standards expected internationally. This pattern is repeated in science where more experimental science and focus on examinations accelerates progress. There are no marked differences in the achievements of boys and girls. The progress of students with special needs is satisfactory. Insufficient challenge for high attaining students in lessons means that they are not making the level of progress that they are capable of.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students behave well in lessons and on the playgrounds. In Grades 1 – 6, some students misbehave because the teaching does not meet their needs. Students show a good understanding of the different cultures that make up the school. They respect each other's views and opinions. Mutual respect between students and teachers underpins teachers' effective behaviour management strategies. Students understand the needs of others and they raise money for the Red Crescent and visit the local hospital to talk to patients. The school nurse gives talks to encourage healthy eating and lifestyles. The school deals effectively with any issues of bullying and cyber bullying. Older students receive guidance on their choices of further education and feel well prepared for their future lives.

The impact of teaching is unsatisfactory as it is inconsistent across the school. The quality ranges from unsatisfactory to good, with all the best teaching in the oldest grades. The erratic effectiveness of the teaching fails to motivate students to become avid learners until the final grades when there is a marked improvement. Teaching in KG is satisfactory; learning is mainly from text and workbook

resources which teachers adapt to meet children's needs. Children mainly work on their own while teachers interact one-to-one to support learning. Opportunities for children to choose independent play-based activities are limited, so not all children develop the personal skills of sharing and turn taking. In Grades 1 to 6, teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge but their teaching style is overly didactic. They stick too rigidly to the textbook, without taking account of students' different abilities and needs. This approach leads to poor student engagement and, sometimes, disruptive behaviour. It slows the rate of learning for more able students in particular and prevents opportunities for on-going assessment. All students do the same activities, with those who finish first given limited extension activities. In Grades 7 – 12, teaching is better and in Grades 9 – 12 it is good. At this level, teachers show good subject knowledge and use this effectively to motivate students. Their high expectations of these students challenge and extend them well. Good questioning involves the students and provides some assessment opportunities. Learning moves at a good pace leading to good achievement. Opportunities for independent and problem-solving skills are still underdeveloped. Assessment and marking are weak across the school and do not provide clear guidance to students about how to improve their work.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory; the impact on learning is too variable. Only in the upper grades do students securely develop independent thinking, research skills and some collaborative learning. It is satisfactory in KG as it ensures children get off to a sound start in the acquisition of English and mathematical skills. However, the KG curriculum is narrow and a lack of equipment does not support an activity-based UK curriculum. This is because teachers adapt a book-based curriculum to the needs of the children. In Grades 1 – 6, teachers do not make full use of the range of strategies available within the teachers' planning books and place too much reliance on textbooks. Therefore the needs of students, particularly the more able, are not effectively met. The curriculum is more effective in Grades 7 – 12. The range of activities and the nature of the tasks motivate students to learn. Older students benefit from experimental and open-ended tasks in the laboratories and specialist rooms. The use of ICT satisfactorily supports learning. The syllabuses for external examinations are covered well and examination results in the UK curriculum are good. The number of subjects offered at examination level limits curriculum breadth. National Day celebrations and assemblies promote the culture of the UAE satisfactorily. SEN students receive appropriate support in classrooms. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory but limited. Parents pay for these and the constraints of the bus timetables limit the number on offer.

Students receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Staff are properly vetted to work with young people, but the child protection policy is ineffective as it is not shared because of the lack of whole-school meetings. Behaviour is mostly good, reflecting positive attitudes and satisfactory behaviour management in most lessons. Students understand the school's discipline policy. The academic support they receive is satisfactory. They are well supported in their choice of university. Day to day guidance on how to improve their work is less effective. Students do not understand the role of the student council. It fails to give them the opportunity to take part in and influence decision-making. Older students are not given enough responsibilities and their level of maturity is not recognised. The school clinic is well-resourced and nursing staff suitably qualified. Prayer facilities are satisfactory. Students enjoy school. Prompt follow up of any absences ensures attendance is high. Parents receive regular reports on their children's progress but they do not feel they have a voice in the running of the school.

The buildings are satisfactory in most respects. A small minority of rooms are too small and the narrow stairs to the Grade 1 and 2 classrooms mean students struggle carrying their heavy bags. KG rooms are bright, light and airy but the KG playground is not shaded. The play areas are satisfactory but can appear crowded when all the students are out at the same time. The school has good facilities for physical education. Rooms for specialist subjects are suitably equipped and well maintained. Chemicals and cleaning materials are safely stored. Fire drills are held regularly and equipment is well maintained. The security guard keeps a record of everyone who enters the school. Designated personnel carry out regular health and safety checks. The canteens are clean and tidy. Suitably qualified teachers are recruited to ensure they have the necessary subject knowledge. Adequately resourced specialist facilities are available for science and ICT. The library has too few books to enrich Arabic and social studies. Well-maintained buses help to ensure transport to and from school is safe.

The senior leadership team is too small for a school of this size. This hinders communications across the school. Parents are generally supportive of the school and appreciate the 'open door' policy it operates, but the accessibility of senior leaders 'swamps' the principal and vice principal each morning, causing some frustration among parents. The school has satisfactorily evaluated its performance and has a staged and costed school improvement plan. The impact of heads of department is inconsistent; where they have a clear overview, they ensure teaching, learning and progress are good; for example, in English in Grades 7 - 12. In other subjects and phases, in the US curriculum especially, subject leadership does not have sufficient impact on students' progress as it is not well developed and monitoring is infrequent. There are insufficient opportunities for

staff to meet to share ideas and expectations. Salaries are fair and paid on time. A certified accountant has audited the school accounts.

Since the last inspection, the school's leadership has made progress in important areas. There is satisfactory capacity to continue the improvement, but leadership is still not having a consistent impact throughout the school. Standards achieved and the quality of teaching in the secondary school mean that the school does not yet offer satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the leadership and management at the school by:
 - i. strengthening the leadership structure by extending the senior leadership team;
 - ii. developing the leadership skills of the heads of department to enable them to monitor more effectively and improve consistency and quality of teaching and learning;
 - iii. improving the communications in the school to further engage older students in the decision- making processes at the school;
 - iv. improving communication with parents, for example, by establishing a parents' council; and
 - v. establishing a timetabled meeting structure to share expectations amongst the staff and ensure all staff act on them.
2. Develop the curriculum provision to:
 - i. promote student collaboration, independent learning and problem solving skills;
 - ii. expand the range of independent learning opportunities by providing more activities and opportunities for activity and play-based learning in the younger grades; and
 - iii. expand the number of subjects offered at examination level for the higher grades.
3. Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning throughout the school by:
 - i. ensuring teachers mark and assess students' work to enable students to understand the next stage in their learning;
 - ii. differentiating activities in the classroom to cater for the needs of all students especially the more able; and

- iii. making better use of the range of activities in the teachers' guide to provide the right level of challenge and learning opportunities to students of all abilities.
4. Address the following health and safety issues as a matter of urgency:
- i. provide shade from the sun in the KG playground;
 - ii. pillars in Grade 3 – 6 and girls' playground need padding; and
 - iii. implement an alternative strategy to alleviate the risk of students of Year 1 and 2 carrying heavy bags over steep steps.