



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



Inspection Report

Al Ekhlass Private School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

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Al Ekhlass Private School

Inspection Date	13 – 16 January 2014
School ID#	53
Licensed Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1127
Age Range	3 to 19 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Soha Riad
School Address	Behind Lulu supermarket, Baniyas East 8
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 585 3591
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Official Email (ADEC)	alekhlass.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.alekhlass.ae
Date of last inspection	1 – 4 October 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 C;	GRADE 6
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The main strengths of the school are:

- staff morale is high and there is a shared commitment to provide a good quality education
- the school has a pleasant atmosphere and the working day runs smoothly
- adults and students respect each other and relationships are mutually supportive
- the owner is steadily improving the quality of the building and investing in new resources

The main areas for improvement are:

- the standard of students' work is below international standards in English, mathematics, science, social studies and information and communication technology (ICT)
- teachers do not use assessment information effectively to monitor the progress of individual students or groups
- work provided during lessons does not always match students' individual needs and abilities
- self-evaluation is too positive and the school is not able to closely track progress made towards targets in the school improvement plan
- students' 21 Century skills are unsatisfactory; this is not preparing them effectively for further education and the work place

Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 92 lessons and other activities, reviewed students' written work and studied school documents. They also talked with the Principal, the owner's representative, parents, other members of staff and students. The 80 responses to the parents' questionnaire were also considered.

Description of the School

This school was originally founded in 1987 as a villa school in Abu Dhabi and moved to its present, purpose built site in September 2011. The area surrounding the school is largely residential, close to the motorway. The school's aims are to 'achieve a distinctive educational performance, developing a creative generation of students committed to its values'. The school delivers the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum.

1127 students are enrolled, 99.5% are Muslim and all speak Arabic as a first language. There are 175 children in Kindergarten (KG), 504 in Grades 1 – 5, 233 in Grades 6 – 9 and 215 in Grades 10 – 12. Of these, 675 are boys and 452 are girls; 10% are Emirati and 1% come from other Gulf States. The rest largely come from Arab countries, mainly Syria 20%, Jordan 17%, Egypt 13% and Palestine 9%. Annual fees are in the very affordable to low range from AED 4,860 in KG to AED 14,400 for Grade 12, exclusive of transport, books and uniform. All KG children are admitted regardless of ability. Older students who have studied the MOE curriculum at previous schools are also accepted

The school has formally identified 4% of students as having special educational needs (SEN); these include visual impairment, hearing impairment and physical difficulties. Also, 23% of students are identified as having specific gifts or talents in a range of subjects including Arabic, English, mathematics, physical education, art and drama.

The school does not have a governing body; its work is guided by an 'Advisory Board'. The members of this board are appointed by the owner and represent a cross section of parents and members of the local community. The Principal has been in post since March 2013; she was Vice Principal during the last full inspection. The school subsequently received a monitoring visit during March 2013.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

The standard of students' work is below international standards in English, mathematics, science, social studies and information and communication technology (ICT). Students make unsatisfactory progress in all subjects, apart from Arabic and Islamic education. Students meet ADEC's expectations in Arabic and Islamic education, but do not meet them in social studies.

Standards at the end of KG are below international expectations. Inspection evidence indicates that progress in mathematics and science improves in Grades 10 to 12. This is because the standard of teaching is higher and students are more actively engaged in their learning. Grade 12 exam results for 2012/13 show that standards in all subjects were similar to, or above, other schools that teach the MOE curriculum.

Students' basic skills are satisfactory. They do not build on this foundation to develop more advanced techniques such as being able to use equations to make bar charts. Starting in KG, children learn the letters and sounds of the English and Arabic alphabets and this helps them to develop the basic skills needed to read and write. Some older students can express their ideas verbally; their knowledge of basic mathematics and ability to work and think independently are less well developed. The majority of students are reluctant to write, speak or read English. They have difficulty expressing themselves because their written and spoken grammar is weak and they know only a narrow range of vocabulary.

Students' personal development

Boys and girls enjoy being at school and speak highly of the help and support their teachers provide. They are sensible and polite and relationships between students of all nationalities and with adults are good. They particularly relish taking part in annual celebrations such as UAE National Day and Gulf Child Day.

The majority of boys and girls willingly undertake the work set during lessons; few are curious or innovative thinkers. They follow instructions and are more compliant than confident. Few take the initiative by, for example, making suggestions or posing questions of their own. Their ability to work as part of a group varies: although they value each other's contributions, some students prefer to sit back and let others do the work.

There are limited opportunities for students to adopt personal responsibility and many girls lack confidence when talking to visitors. Nominated students serve on the school council or may become a Girl Guide or Boy Scout. These roles are not

effective forums for change; students' principal role is to monitor behaviour on the buses or during the breaks and assembly. Attendance is good at 97%.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is too variable to be satisfactory. In too many lessons the whole class simply follows the textbook, page by page. Therefore, the majority of students learn the required facts. They do not develop the analytical skills needed to interpret information, make connections and form hypotheses. For example, Grade 11 and 12 students cannot apply their knowledge to everyday situations. They find it difficult to read maps and cannot suggest solutions to current issues, such as the potentially negative effect of technology upon society and the environment.

Teachers provide few opportunities for independent research and critical thinking. During lessons, students' contributions are often limited to a few words. Some teachers are now using a standardised lesson planning template that requires them to specify learning objectives and activities for students of differing abilities. This practice is inconsistent and as a result, students of all abilities often undertake the same work and do not know the purpose of the activity. Students often sit and work in groups but the lack of resources, for example in science and mathematics, means that only a few are able to use equipment and the others observe passively.

Teaching and learning in Grades 10-12 in Arabic, Islamic studies, mathematics and science is better for both boys and girls. This is because teachers make lessons interesting and provide work that challenges all abilities. For example, Grade 12 students can express themselves clearly when discussing the impact of the Arabic language on society. In mathematics students successfully assimilate new concepts. For example, some Grade 12 boys undertake work such as differential calculus and formulaic calculations at a level close to international expectations. .

During English lessons, many reading books are poorly matched to students' needs and interests. They are often either too easy or too difficult and many are not age appropriate. For example, during a Grade 12 English lesson, some boys were reading stories and nursery rhymes that are intended for pre-school children; others were making a token attempt to read 'Robinson Crusoe'. Students' limited vocabulary and weak comprehension, results in very slow progress.

Teachers do not apply clear criteria when identifying students who have SEN or specific gifts or talents. As a result, a high proportion has been identified as being especially able while the issues faced by students with SEN are not considered severe enough to require any extra provision during lessons. Teachers do not

routinely provide work during lessons for gifted and talented students that is specifically planned to meet their needs. The most able are often used to support less able classmates during lessons; this slows their learning and results in unsatisfactory progress.

There is still work to be done regarding assessment. Teachers routinely compare students' termly or annual exam results with their previous marks. This system measures the relative standard of individual students' work over a long period but does not effectively monitor their on-going progress. Teachers use Ministry exams at the end of each school year and they also devise in-house tests at the end of each topic. These tests do not provide useful information as they often lack challenge and very many students obtain full marks. Students do not undertake self and peer assessment and teachers' marking in books is often restricted to ticks. They provide very limited constructive feedback and do not provide targets for improvement. This limits students' understanding of what they need to do in order to improve.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum is now broader: drama has been introduced for boys in Grades 6 to 9 and music is provided for all students up to Grade 6. There are several heritage areas within the school and students develop a satisfactory understanding of UAE culture and community values.

The KG curriculum implementation includes very few opportunities for children to choose their own activity or learn through investigation and structured play. Children usually remain seated during lessons and their school day revolves around single, whole class activities. For example, during English and mathematics lessons seen, children repeatedly shouted out the name of a letter or number. The KG curriculum planning and delivery does not build adequately on prior learning in mathematics, Islamic education and English. For example, children in KG 1 were learning the name of the letter 'K' and children in KG2 were undertaking exactly the same activity, with the letter 'I'. Reading skills are not adequately developed as teachers do not simultaneously teach the accompanying sound. In response to the previous inspection report, some students are undertaking more creative activities. For example, Grade 3 students made a hat of their own design in order to commemorate the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birthday.

The curriculum is delivered largely through the use of textbooks and focused upon the acquisition and recall of facts. The curriculum in English provides few opportunities for extended reading and writing. Opportunities for students to develop their problem solving and ICT skills are rare. The science curriculum provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for older students to undertake

practical work. Both those who are more able and those with SEN make slow progress because the curriculum planning and delivery is poorly matched to their needs. There are some additional activities for the most able, such as preparing attendance data for the social workers, participating in community competitions or playing football at Abu Dhabi Ladies Club.

A satisfactory range of additional activities enriches the curriculum. KG children enjoy themed days, such as 'Yellow Day'. In addition, teachers organise an interesting range of practical activities for older students each day during morning break. These include opportunities to play volleyball, undertake quizzes or watch scientific demonstrations. There are no extra-curricular clubs or sporting activities for girls and they undertake no activities with their peers in other schools.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school provides a calm environment within which most of the students mature into responsible young people. Students say they feel safe and that adults effectively deal with any incidents of bullying. Child protection procedures are clear and staff and students agree there is no corporal punishment. While the pastoral system underpins their satisfactory personal development, it is less successful in supporting their academic progress. This is because teachers do not use assessment information to provide individual targets for improvement and students do not receive clear guidance on how they can improve their work. In addition, the level of academic support provided to students with SEN and gifts and talents is unsatisfactory. Students receive limited career guidance.

Procedures for the recruitment of staff are thorough and all the necessary checks are undertaken and recorded. The school clinic is clean and there are suitable arrangements for the administration of first aid and the dispensing of medicines.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

Over the last two and half years, the school has significantly improved several indoor and outdoor areas. The site is large; when the school relocated, the boys' section had not been used for several years. The premises are now clean, security is good and closed circuit television has been installed throughout. The fabric of the building is satisfactory and all the required health and safety checks are undertaken.

There are a sufficient number of classrooms and they are broadly adequate in size for sedentary students. A few of the classrooms are rather cramped for the number of students and some have limited daylight. KG classrooms are too small to allow freedom of movement. Students stay in their classroom base during much of the school day and, for many, their environment is tired and jaded. There are few vibrant displays of students' work that actively promote learning. The art

room, 2 science laboratories and library are too small to comfortably accommodate a whole class, inhibiting active learning.

There is sufficient outdoor space. Since the last inspection, large canopies have been installed to the outdoor assembly and recreation areas. The grassed pitch provides a safe area for boys' football and a low perimeter wall has recently been added. There is still no indoor area for boys' physical education lessons and no suitably floored outdoor area for girls' physical games such as netball. There are only hard paved surfaces and these have the potential to cause serious injury should a student fall or trip. There is no lift to the first floor and this would present problems should a student with physical difficulties enrol at school.

The school's resources to support its aims

The school is adequately resourced and there is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and other staff. Since the last inspection, the school has invested heavily in improving the range, quantity and appeal of learning resources. For example, there has been significant investment in ICT resources and KG 'baby gym' equipment. It has also appointed 2 Academic Advisers, who are jointly responsible for managing all aspects of the education provided from KG to Grade 12.

The quality and quantity of books within the library has improved, but there are still a limited number of English and Arabic reading books. The lack of equipment in science also prevents all students from being able to participate in practical investigations. Teaching assistants in KG are not used effectively as their role in supporting learning is unclear.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Staff morale is high and all adults share a determination to provide the best possible quality of education.

The owner does not visit the school; the Advisory Board and the owner's personal representative provide the Principal with good support. Following the recommendations of the last report, the Academic Advisers and Principal have worked as a team to take the appropriate actions in order to bring about some of the required improvements.

There is still a long way to go. The Principal's strategic vision is beginning to have an impact on the school. She provides good leadership and motivates staff effectively. This is putting the school on the right track and she is working constructively and strategically with the Academic Advisers and school improvement partner. Parents are largely pleased with the work of the school although some would like more information about their children's progress. While

the Academic Advisers undertake regular lesson observations and provide feedback, they do not then follow this up to check that their advice has had an enduring impact on individual teachers' practice.

School development planning does not include sufficiently clear objectives and measureable success criteria. Self-evaluation continues to be too positive. The school over-estimates itself to be good or very good in all areas. In addition, leaders are not systematically monitoring the educational impact of investments made and actions taken.

Progress since the last inspection

Since the last report, there have been some improvements to several aspects of the school's provision; these include the teaching, buildings, resources and the curriculum. The school has responded to the last inspection report in a number of ways:

- the Acting Principal has been appointed Principal
- 2 full-time Academic Advisers have been appointed
- professional development is starting to have an impact upon classroom practice
- CCTV cameras have been installed
- the girls' assembly area has been re-paved and painted
- additional computers and projectors have been purchased and wireless internet provided throughout the school
- music and drama have been introduced to some classes
- some teachers are providing group work and opportunities for more active learning
- resources in KG have improved, primarily with respect to physical education

Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in several areas. The impact of initiatives taken to raise the standard of student's work and progress is limited. The school is therefore not able to demonstrate that it has sufficient capacity to improve without external support.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise the standard of students work in English, mathematics, science, social studies and ICT by:
 - i. planning lessons systematically to include clear learning outcomes and success criteria that are relevant to students' needs
 - ii. ensuring teachers use assessment information to monitor students' progress and quickly identify those who are falling behind
 - iii. adapting the curriculum and work provided during lessons to meet individual learning needs, including those with SEN and specific gifts and talents
 - iv. providing additional resources and by making more effective use of the available resources.
2. Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - i. ensuring self-evaluation is realistic and clearly linked to ADEC school inspection criteria
 - ii. including more sharply focused and measureable targets and success criteria within the school development plan
 - iii. devise and implement robust procedures to systematically review, evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching and learning and constructive use of resources.
3. Develop students' collaborative, critical thinking and problem solving skills so that they are well prepared for lifelong learning and are able to take their position within higher education and the work place.

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 accommodation 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								