



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Hamadanya Grand Private School

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Iqraa

Al Hamadanya Grand Private School

Inspection Date	15 th – 18 th October, 2012
School ID#	140
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	614
Age Range	3 – 15 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Aysha Al-Attar
School Address	Asharaj Roundabout, Al Khalidia, Al Ain, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by three inspectors. They observed 40 lessons, interviewed staff, students, the owner and the senior leadership team. They scrutinised the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan and other key policy documents and data. Inspectors also observed the beginning and end of the day, breaks and assemblies.

Description of the School

The school moved to its current premises in 2008. It is seeking permission to extend accommodation on this site. Its vision is to 'provide education that combines national identity with internationally excellent standards'.

There are 614 students at the school, including 72 Kindergarten (KG) children, 259 in Grades 1-3, 206 in Grades 4-8 and 77 in Grades 9-11. There are 280 boys and 334 girls at the school. Children are admitted to Kindergarten (KG) following an interview with parents, while older students wishing to be admitted are considered in the light of their personal records and academic performance at previous schools. The majority of students are of Arab heritage and all are Muslim. About 15% are Emirati with the others coming from a wide range of Middle Eastern and North African countries, especially Syria (16%), North Sudan (14%), Egypt (9%) and Jordan (7%). The school does not identify any student as having special educational needs.

The students' socio-economic backgrounds are generally average and below average. Fees range from 6,600 AED per year in KG up to 11,500 AED in Grade 11. Teachers' salaries are low. The full range is from 6,000 AED to 70,000 AED per year, but most earn between 35,000 AED and 50,000 AED per year.

There are two owners, one of whom is essentially a 'sleeping' partner. The active owner deals directly with the principal and contributes as a member of a seven-strong board of governors.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Al Hamadanya Grand Private School to be in Band C, that is, a school that is in need of significant improvement.

The previous inspection of May 2010 judged the school to be very unsatisfactory. It urged the owner and staff to deal with many serious health and safety issues; to improve academic progress significantly, to establish better quality protection and care for students, and to radically upgrade leadership and management. There is now some better teaching but this is restricted mainly to upper grades. The better progress in these grades means that students are able to gain

acceptable scores in the Ministry of Education (MoE) tests, but in comparison to international standards, attainment remains low. Some health and safety failings have been rectified, but new ones have emerged. Little has changed in protection, care, guidance and support. Leadership and management at senior level have not grown stronger; they are ineffective due to a succession of short-lived appointments. Four principals have come and gone since the last inspection. The current post holder and new vice principal have been in place only two months. They show some awareness of the school's strengths and weakness but underestimate the latter. They do not fully understand which strategies for improvement are needed.

Consequently, this inspection finds that the overall effectiveness of the school remains very unsatisfactory. There has been little improvement in standards. Personal development remains limited by the lack of opportunity for students to take initiative and work independently. There is much unsatisfactory teaching in the KG and the lower grades in particular, so that students make slow progress for the first few years of their time at school. The curriculum remains very unsatisfactory, with too little breadth and adaptation to students' needs and very little extra-curricular provision. Protection, care, guidance and support have too many statutory failings and are very unsatisfactory, while buildings and premises still fail to support students and staff sufficiently well. Leadership and management are very unsatisfactory. The school fails to provide satisfactory value for money.

Students' performance in core subjects is below the best international standards. Children in KG arrive with below average standards in all subjects. Overall, from that starting point, the progress that students make and the standards they attain are unsatisfactory. In some subjects, students make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in relation to MoE standards. By the time students leave school, they attain above MoE averages in Islamic studies, and are average in Arabic and social studies. Students can recite the Holy Quran skilfully, at the appropriate speed and using a range of reciting rules. In social studies, students were adept at using latitude and longitude and could discuss environmental issues well. In other subjects, including English and mathematics, students make slow progress until they reach the upper grades, when the pace quickens as the result of better teaching. In English, students' spoken English improves in the upper grades, and they are confident in researching and drawing conclusions from text. In maths, students in primary display limited competence in number work; their speed and skill in calculations and problem solving improves over time. Better teaching and more use of the limited laboratory space helps older students make better

progress. In almost all subjects from KG through primary, students have limited opportunities to develop their research and critical thinking skills.

Personal development is satisfactory in important respects but unsatisfactory overall. Behaviour is good, but opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and contribute to the school are too few. Students and KG children are very positive about their school. They enjoy learning and are keen to participate. Some of the teaching in the lower school inhibits their development of independence. When given the opportunity they demonstrate good social and presentational skills. A few play a lively and enjoyable part in assemblies. This willingness to help is not fostered sufficiently to have a meaningful impact on students' personal development, nor is there scope to widen their experiences through extra-curricular activities.

Teaching is unsatisfactory. Staff in KG work hard and are dedicated to the children with whom they work, but do not understand how young children learn. Across the school, the very limited range of learning experiences leads to student demotivation, disinterest and a slowing down of learning. Teachers dominate almost all of the lessons and do not plan for the range of different abilities in their classes. In these lessons, some students finish early and have nothing to do, while weaker ones struggle to progress. In the better lessons, students are given a much more active role, answering questions, presenting to the class and working in pairs or groups. Most of the better teaching is in Arabic, Islamic and social studies. Most of the better teaching was found in the upper school.

The curriculum is very unsatisfactory. It lacks breadth and balance and offers few extra-curricular activities. It meets MoE requirements in most respects but with an emphasis on basic knowledge and understanding rather than higher level thinking skills, including research. Coverage of UAE culture and values is good. The curriculum as a whole provides students with only a narrow range of skills, with very little provision for creativity, experiment or independent study, and so fails to give them the skills they need for work and life. Particularly in the elementary section, there are few opportunities for students to solve problems in mathematics or experiment in science. Provision for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is weak throughout the school. The range of subjects is very limited. Provision for art is scant and no time is given to music. Boys' physical education (PE) has little time and older girls do not receive their entitlement to a PE curriculum. While core subjects have adequate time, there are no schemes of work and thus there is no guidance to staff on teaching strategies, choice of resources, examples of differentiation and how to assess. There is little provision outside lessons, despite attempts to expand this area. A minority of

students create short plays, adding life to assemblies, but the school offers virtually no sport, arts, or clubs and provides few activities or visits.

Protection, care, guidance and support are very unsatisfactory. The great majority of students enjoy school and say they feel safe. Most staff have a caring attitude and students value their advice. Despite the school working hard to create a positive ethos of care, weak systems undermine these efforts. There is no clear child protection policy and what guidance exists is not known, or understood, by staff and students. The school has taken steps to eliminate corporal punishment, dealing decisively with two staff last year, but instances still persist. Registers are taken a long time after students have arrived, leaving the school vulnerable in the event of an emergency occurring early in the morning. Phone calls home, to follow up late arrivals and absences, are delayed. Supervisors are effective in managing behaviour and the advice and guidance of the social worker is appreciated by students. There has been little careers guidance in the past as all students left in Grade 9. Now students in Grades 10 and 11 attend careers exhibitions.

Buildings are well maintained but inadequate in scope. A majority of classrooms are too small, so that teachers find it hard to circulate to support students, and activities such as group work are inhibited. KG rooms are too small for teachers to create different areas for work and play and there is no outdoor play area. The library is too small and often unavailable because of its use as a classroom. There are too few science and ICT laboratories in addition to the lack of visual and practical resources required to support these subjects. No indoor PE space exists and outdoor provision is poor. There is no specialist art room or music room and no canteen or social area for students. These shortcomings lead directly to failings in the curriculum and limit practical expertise in science and ICT. Resources are unsatisfactory. Most lessons operate with only a standard textbook and a whiteboard. This limits the scope for independent research, making it difficult for teachers to provide tasks and materials for students of differing needs. In KG, there is virtually no scope for child-initiated learning or for play and structured learning to flow from one to the other. There are no resources common to all effective kindergartens, such as sand and water areas, construction sets and play-dough for creative work. Where digital projectors exist, staff and students use them well, showing thorough preparation in researching material and good ICT skills. In the few lessons where dramatic visual material is used, students are attentive and motivated. Staff have no budget to purchase items such as posters in social studies, atlases in geography or models and specimens in science.

The school's leadership and management are very unsatisfactory. The process for choosing principals is ineffective, resulting in a succession of short-term tenures.

This discontinuity has meant that most issues raised at the last inspection have not been addressed. The lack of investment in resources seriously limits students' learning experiences in social studies, Science, ICT, reading, and in the early years. Currently, many failings in management systems persist, most importantly, the arrangements for students' protection and care. Leaders have not put in place the necessary procedures for child protection, the elimination of corporal punishment or the secure daily registration of students. Whole-school initiatives have not flourished. There has been no rigorous monitoring of teaching before this term. These factors have led to unreliable self-evaluation and the creation of objectives that are not communicated to staff. The newly appointed principal and vice principal demonstrate the will to improve the school and have already introduced staff training and lesson observation. They still tend to play a supporting role in the school's daily life, rather than a highly visible one where they set the tone and lead by example. The commitment by Middle leaders is high but they remain heavily underused. They are not given sufficient time to monitor teaching, analyse performance of students and teachers and make improvements. School leaders have not shown demonstrable impact on standards and teaching and the capacity to improve remains unsatisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further:

In order to help the school become more successful, it needs to:

1. Ensure that leadership and management provide vision, direction and security by:
 - i. providing continuity of principals and vice principals;
 - ii. having senior staff, who are highly visible and authoritative around school, leading by example;
 - iii. collaborating with middle leaders to make an accurate, realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and creating fresh goals for improvement that all staff know and work towards; and
 - iv. taking immediate action to provide an effective child protection policy, ensuring that corporal punishment has ended and setting up appropriate arrangements for daily registers to be taken in a timely fashion.
2. Improve the quality of teaching across subjects by:
 - i. establishing an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school to inform a programme of training, supporting weaker practice and sharing good practice;

- ii. ensuring that teachers plan activities that vary the textbook activity so they are suitable for less able students and challenging to more able students; and
 - iii. improving teachers' understanding of how to foster independent learning and their questioning skills.
3. Provide a far wider range of resources for teachers and students, by:
 - i. equipping all teaching rooms with digital projectors or interactive whiteboards; and
 - ii. providing the KG coordinator and all subject leaders with a budget that enables them to buy specialist equipment and resources to supplement the set textbooks.
4. Revise the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all students much more effectively. Do this by:
 - i. introducing additional subjects to the timetable for both boys and girls;
 - ii. ensuring that students are provided with opportunities to develop higher level thinking and creative skills, including research and experiment;
 - iii. turning official syllabuses or textbooks into 'schemes of work' that show teachers how to provide for the most and least able and what resources to use; and
 - iv. creating a full programme of out-of-lesson activities, such as clubs, events, visits, and reading support schemes, so that students can enjoy a wider range of experiences and play a bigger part in serving the school.
5. Take steps to provide the promised new buildings, so that classrooms and the library are large enough and sufficient specialist spaces are created, including additional science and ICT laboratories, a gymnasium, art and music rooms, and adequate outdoor sports facilities for boys and girls.