



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



Inspection Report

Al Isra'a Private School

Academic Year 2014 – 2015

Al Isra'a

Al Isra'a Private School

Inspection Date	27 – 30 April 2015
School ID#	141
Licensed Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MoE)
Number of Students	1092
Age Range	4 years and 8 months to 18 years (KG – Grade 12)
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Ghalia Mohammad Al Lakta
School Address	Al Khabisi, Al Ain
Telephone Number	+971 (0)3 761 2155
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Official Email (ADEC)	Alisraa.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	-----
Date of last inspection	22 – 22 May 2013

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

The main strengths of the school are:

- students' progress in those lessons that are effectively taught, especially in secondary mathematics and science
- the strong allegiance students have to their local culture and their appreciation of UAE heritage
- the above average attendance. Students are motivated to come to school, to participate in lessons and are positive about their teachers.

The main areas for improvement are:

- a long term strategic plan through which clear direction is provided to move the school forward quickly and consistently
- the development of 21st century skills throughout the school
- students' attainment through the rigorous assessment of their progress so that work is closely matched to their abilities and needs
- a review of current bus transport procedures to improve students' punctuality to school
- provision of sufficient essential resources and appropriate facilities to enable students to gain their full curriculum entitlement.

Introduction

The school was evaluated by 5 inspectors. They observed 76 lessons and met with the principal, a member of the board of trustees, subject leaders, social workers, teachers, nurse, parents and students. The inspectors observed assemblies, break periods, and students' arrival at and departure from the school. They considered test and assessment results, scrutinized students' work across the school, analysed 106 responses to the parents' questionnaire about the school and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The vice principals were involved throughout the inspection process and senior leaders observed 6 lessons with inspectors.

Description of the School

Al Isra'a Private School opened in 1995 and is located in the Al Khabisi area of Al Ain. The aims of the school are to be '*a pioneering educational establishment*' that combines '*tradition and modernity, inspired by the past, reflecting the present and embracing the future*' and to '*create a well educated generation with high moral values*' who are '*committed to faith and education*'. The school offers the MoE curriculum. The school has stopped using External Measurement of Student Achievement (EMSA). The school participated in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is for the first time this year.

Of the 1092 students, 491 boys and 601 girls are on roll. The secondary school is girls' only, while the rest of the school is mixed gender. Boys and girls are taught together up to Grade 3. There are 30 students in KG; 544 students in grades 1 – 5; 388 students in grades 6 – 9 and 120 females in grades 10 – 12. Almost all students, (98%) are Muslim and around 3% are Emirati. The main nationalities represented include Syrian (23%), Jordanian (17%), Egyptian (16%), Palestinian (16%), Yemeni (10%), Sudanese (8%), Somali (2%) and Pakistani (2%). There are further small proportions from Morocco, Mauritania, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon. The school indicates that 109 (9.5%) students have some degree of special educational needs (SEN). The majority of these have language, literacy or general academic learning difficulties. The school has identified 12 students as being gifted or talented, particularly for artistic talent or creativity. Additionally, 10 of these gifted and talented students are taking courses in preparation for the International English Language Test System (IELTS).

The school has 61 teaching staff, including 2 support teachers. Also employed are 3 teaching assistants, 8 administrative staff, 2 nurses and 1 security guard. Currently the school does not employ a SEN teacher or coordinator. The principal has been in post for 17 years. There is one academic vice-principal who has been in

post for 3 years, a social worker and 2 academic supervisors (for boys and girls). This group forms the senior leadership team but there are a further 10 subject or phase coordinators. While many staff have taught in the school for a number of years, during the past 2 years, 15 new teachers joined the school and 14 left. 37 teachers are graduates and the rest hold teaching diplomas. School fees are affordable, ranging from AED 4,400 in KG to AED 8,900 in Grade 12.

The Effectiveness of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness

Al Isra'a Private School is in need of significant improvement. Across the curriculum, students are not making the progress they should or reaching standards expected for their age. Attainment of students in MoE exams fluctuates across grade levels, although recent outcomes show a slight improvement. While teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge, assessment strategies are weak and their expectations of what students should achieve are not sufficiently high. The development of 21st Century skills is unsatisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and the school's ethos is improving. Students show respect for UAE values and have a secure understanding of their heritage and different cultures represented within the country.

The leadership has an inflated view of how well the school is performing. Leaders do not ensure that priorities are acted on to have the desired impact on standards. They do not consistently monitor the quality of teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses. More is required to improve the school's strategic direction, develop teaching and raise students' attainment.

Students' attainment & progress

Attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. In English and information and communication technology (ICT) attainment is well below international standards. In mathematics and science attainment is below but closer to international standards, particularly in secondary grades where progress is satisfactory. Attainment and progress in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies are below age-related expectations. While 2014 MoE examinations results indicate slight improvements from previous years, lesson observations do not confirm this. In general, progress is faster where teachers have good subject knowledge, appropriate pedagogical skills and student behaviour is managed well.

Children have low levels of English on entry to the school. Their progress is unsatisfactory so that by grade 9, students' skill levels remain low, especially for many boys. Many students do not write neatly or legibly and cannot write extended sentences. Students find reading difficult for all but the simplest of sentences. Girls make faster progress than boys in grades 6 to 9. In secondary grades, students have a stronger grasp of English and are able to extract meaning from text and write coherently.

Progress is more secure in mathematics but gaps in students' basic numeracy skills impede their competence and confidence. Few students in lower grades are able to solve problems. Students' progress quickens when they reach upper

primary and secondary grades, as they become more competent to use and apply mathematical skills. For example, by Grade 10, students have a secure understanding of the applications of *sine* and *cosine* rules. Progress in science is also satisfactory particularly where students are able to participate in well-prepared science activities in laboratories. For example, grade 6 students, working collaboratively on a balloon experiment, are able to explain the phenomenon of air-pressure.

Speaking and listening skills in Arabic are improving. Reading and writing skills are still underdeveloped among most students across the school. In KG, children can distinguish between different letters, prolong vowel sounds (Madd) and can read simple words. In Islamic education most students know that the prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) wife is 'Aisha' and but few know her father's name and their contribution to Islam. In social studies, students' understanding of geography is limited. For example, few Grade 9 students are able to distinguish between climate and weather or can identify the countries that surround the USA.

Students have insufficient experience of using ICT across the curriculum and their progress is very unsatisfactory. Their attainment in art and physical education (PE) is broadly average. Students' skills development is restricted by the number of available resources and the limitations of the premises. Secondary students, stimulated by challenging work, are beginning to develop a range of 21st century skills. In younger grades, skills of investigation, research and critical thinking are under-developed and students are unable to check through their own work accurately.

The progress made by gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory and for students with SEN it is very unsatisfactory. Assessment practices do not accurately measure students' achievement. As a result, planning is not adequately focused on learning needs and the most and least able students, in particular, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Almost all students are well behaved and attentive in class, especially in secondary grades, where they are beginning to develop a range of life skills, including the development of economic awareness. Most students are not successfully acquiring social and personal skills, such as persistence, curiosity, adaptability and, through ICT, research skills to enable them to access the next stage of their education.

While students are respectful to visitors and staff, some younger boys are prone to misbehaving during break times and as they return to classes. The school is

now recording and tracking student attendance more consistently and the school average for February and March 2015 is approximately 97%. This reflects their enjoyment of being at Al Isra'a and the commitment of their parents to supporting the school. Buses regularly arrive after the beginning of the school day which means many students transported in this way arrive late.

Students have a sound understanding of UAE culture and traditions, and the values of Islam. During assembly they show respect for the national anthem and flag. Students lead prayers, recite verses from the Holy Qur'an and take an active role in encouraging fellow students to recognise the importance of respect, responsibility and study. Beyond this, the school provides few opportunities for students to develop leadership skills or to take responsibility in other ways, especially during lessons. Few examples were observed of students leading group work in class, working actively as collaborative learners or taking responsibility for simple tasks to develop interpersonal skills. They are acquiring a satisfactory understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory as it does not promote learning and progress well enough. Most teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, but the methods used to convey knowledge and skills are often ineffective. Teaching strategies are too limited and do not broaden or deepen students' understanding. Lessons are often very predictable, didactic and uninspiring. There are insufficient opportunities for students to experience problem solving or to develop high-order thinking skills. Computers are rarely used by students in lessons to enhance their learning, seek information or deepen their knowledge.

In some of the more effective lessons, teachers authoritatively manage students' behaviour and have clear expectations about what can be achieved. In these lessons, relationships are positive, behaviour is satisfactory and students are typically encouraged to explain their ideas or methods to the class. An example of this was observed in a Grade 10 mathematics lesson, where students effectively led the learning. Similarly, in a grade 8 science lesson, the boys demonstrated sufficient knowledge and understanding to explain how molecules combine. In a minority of lessons, teachers are using creative strategies to interest and engage students, through, for example, introducing UAE heritage and traditions into English lessons. Teaching in secondary grades is satisfactory and generally meets the needs of students.

Some improvements to teaching have been made since the previous inspection. Through professional development, teachers are beginning to introduce 21st century skills into lessons; this remains at an early stage of implementation.

Opportunities for collaboration, independent learning and problem solving are very limited. In some classrooms, a lack of space impedes the application of such methods. In most lessons, there is a heavy reliance on textbooks as a resource. In general assessment practice, including student self-assessment, is weak. The marking of students' work is inconsistent. Most teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to adjust work so that it is matched to students' abilities. As a result, the work is often too easy for more able students and unsuitable for slow learners. Almost no planning goes into meeting the needs of lower ability students or those considered to have special educational needs.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The manner in which the curriculum is implemented is unsatisfactory. It does not promote or sustain students' academic progress and compares unfavourably with best international practice. Teaching largely depends on MoE texts and materials produced by teachers. The provision does not adequately meet all students' needs. Amendments to the curriculum to address the needs of students with SEN and those who are gifted and talented are very unsatisfactory. The deficiencies in the premises, impact the provision for art and PE and it remains inadequate.

The delivery of the curriculum is restricted by limitations in the available resources, cramped classrooms and the narrow range of pedagogical strategies. The KG curriculum offers very little active, child-led learning. Throughout the school, ICT is not used effectively to support learning in other subjects or to develop research skills. Wider skills such as critical thinking, independent learning and problem solving are not systematically planned. The school is beginning to address these weaknesses through professional development of teachers. Students are not well prepared for the next stages of their education or their working lives.

Islamic education and social studies develop students awareness of Islamic values and an understanding of the various cultures represented in the UAE. They also ensure that students have a satisfactory understanding of UAE heritage and traditions. The school has a number of links with external partners, for example, the universities of Al Ain and Abu Dhabi and Um Al Emirat government school. The impact of these links on enhancing students' learning is not yet evident. There are few visits and no extra-curricular clubs to enrich or extend students' learning.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

There has been some improvement in this provision and it is now satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are constructive. In lessons, students appear happy and exhibit positive attitudes. Parents say that they

appreciate the commitment of senior leaders and social workers to the well-being of students. A student council has very recently been established and members are selected according to their achievement and/or good attitudes. Council members provide students with a voice through suggestions about how to improve the school. A range of policies and procedures are now in place. For example, a behaviour management policy has been initiated and through this students recognise rewards and sanctions relating to their behaviour. The impact of this is variable because teachers do not always consistently apply them. The school applies a clearly defined child protection policy and all staff are aware of safeguarding procedures. Pastoral care for students is inconsistent because of the very unsatisfactory provision for students with SEN.

Appropriate checks are made on adults involved with the school and records are kept of necessary information. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained with due diligence. Student absence is followed up swiftly which helps to ensure that attendance remains above average. Punctuality is a serious concern due to the late arrival of the buses, which has not been addressed by school leaders. Academic support and guidance is still at an early stage of development and the school does not provide students with sufficient careers advice or information about the next stage of their education. The quality of the first aid facilities and arrangements for the storage of and dispensing of medicines are adequate. There are effective arrangements to promote students' health and welfare. While there is a prayer room, a dedicated time for students to pray is not built into the school day.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The quality of the school's buildings and premises are very unsatisfactory and, despite the introduction of a grass soccer pitch, has not improved since the previous inspection. The school's accommodation presents a significant barrier to students' learning and their curriculum entitlement. PE provision is hampered by the lack of an internal sports hall and the soccer pitch is not shaded. The building has no ramps or lift to the second floor to assist those with physical disabilities. There are insufficient toilets for the number of students on roll. Many classrooms are cramped and not conducive to effective teaching and learning. The quality of lighting, ventilation and cooling varies from adequate to inadequate. While relatively new, the science and ICT laboratories are too small to comfortably accommodate required resources as well as student numbers. The art room and library are inadequate.

The school has CCTV cameras covering the interior and outside areas. It is not a secure environment with only one guard on duty at entrances and in corridors.

The matter of the single security guard has not been addressed since the previous inspection. School maintenance is unsatisfactory and there are health and safety hazards. Damaged external concrete surfaces, loose tiles and uneven walkways all contribute to unnecessary risks for students during breaks and as they move around the building. Evacuation routes are clearly marked. Corridors are spacious but stairways are narrow.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are very unsatisfactory and little improvement has occurred since the previous inspection. In all but a few lessons, resources are limited to worksheets or textbooks. These resources are inflexibly used and often too narrow in range to support or extend students' learning through differentiated activities. Consequently, students with learning difficulties often find the work too challenging while more able students find the work too easy. The school has invested in data show projectors, but many classrooms lack this facility. Computers are old and few in number. There is no internet access to enable students to develop skills in research and independent inquiry. Some KG resources have improved. They remain inadequate to support activity-led, enquiry-based learning which young children need. There are too few resources in the library to help students deepen their knowledge. Resources in practical subjects such as science, art and PE are inadequate to support skills development. There is insufficient investment in resources to support the necessary improvement to the school.

There is an appropriate number of suitably qualified teaching staff. Some lack the pedagogical skills and understanding to meet students' needs. The school regularly carries out evacuation drills and risk assessments. The school records the time required to evacuate students from the building. Times are improving. Chemicals and cleaning materials are kept in locked storage. While medicines are situated in clinics, they are not kept in secure cupboards during the school day. Records show that buses are well maintained. There are too few buses available to students who require transport. To ensure overcrowding does not occur, buses often make two journeys which adds to student lateness. Staff and bus drivers do not always ensure that students wear safety belts when in the front seats of buses.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership and management to drive forward necessary improvements in teaching, learning and students' progress are very unsatisfactory.

The principal is held in high regard and the school is a cohesive learning community which generally runs smoothly on a daily basis. The school's leadership cultivates an active appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the heritage, values, and aspirations of the people of the UAE. While supportive of the principal, the board of trustees does not contribute to the strategic direction of the school. Parents and students are not involved in helping the school evaluate its work.

The school's self-evaluation document (SEF), largely developed by the principal, gives an inflated picture of the school's progress. This is particularly so with regard to the quality of the school's buildings and premises and the effectiveness of leadership and management. As a result, leaders do not hold a clear understanding of the school's strengths and improvement areas. The school development plan (SDP) identifies some priorities for development. There is a lack of clarity and specificity about how teaching, learning and student outcomes will be improved.

Senior leaders are beginning to observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers. Subject leaders work hard in the day-to-day management of their subjects. They are not effective in strategically leading improvement. They make little use of performance data to improve learning. They do not accurately measure students' progress through rigorous assessment strategies. Leaders' responsibilities for holding teachers to account for students' progress are not sufficiently clear.

Staff turnover and absence have been low in recent years. There are links with a number of external partners who have supported the school's development. The impact of their work has yet to be felt. Professional development focuses on differentiated learning and promoting 21st century skills such as collaborative learning. The full impact of professional development has yet to be evaluated.

Parents express satisfaction with the school but a significant minority would like more information about students' academic progress. A number of parents would like to the school fees to reduce.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Through professional development, external support and guidance some improvements have taken place in teaching. The impact of this remains inconsistent across the school. Staff have successfully improved key features of students' personal development and protection, care and guidance since the last

inspection. Students' behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance have improved. Students' understanding of traditional UAE culture and the values of Islam is now more secure. Lack of investment in resources is a major reason why students are not given appropriate learning opportunities or access to a full curriculum. Improvements to the premises have been slow and key recommendations remain unaddressed from the previous inspection. The principal and senior leaders have not provided clear strategic direction through effective strategies that are quickly implemented. Leadership requires external support to improve the school.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality and consistency of leadership across the school by:
 - i. developing the evaluation skills of all leaders to ensure the accuracy of SEF judgements
 - ii. providing more strategic direction through setting measurable and specific priorities for improvement
 - iii. ensuring the SDP is based on accurate information and identifies roles, responsibilities, timelines for action and success criteria
 - iv. increasing teachers' and subject coordinators' accountability for achieving progress targets
 - v. frequently monitoring priorities and targets to ensure that necessary improvements are taking place without undue delay.
2. Raise attainment and accurately evaluate students' performance by:
 - i. promoting the systematic development of 21st century skills through careful planning and providing a range of frequent learning opportunities in lessons
 - ii. applying rigorous assessment strategies to measure progress more accurately and consistently so that work is better matched to students' abilities
 - iii. setting specific short and medium term targets for all students and ensuring they know how to achieve them
 - iv. accurately identifying students who have difficulties in subjects and arranging for them to receive specific help in those areas
 - v. ensuring higher attaining students are appropriately challenged.
3. Improve students' punctuality to school by:
 - i. reviewing current bus transport arrangements, pick-up and drop-off times for students and investing in more buses

- ii. ensuring that student punctuality is more accurately monitored and followed up with parents where necessary.
4. Improve the range and depth of students' learning experiences by:
- i. reviewing the quality and quantity of current resources to support teaching and learning
 - ii. ensuring that sufficient resources and equipment are available to meet the needs of subjects and lessons
 - iii. improving the premises through a programme of building work and classroom refurbishment to ensure students have access to a full curriculum entitlement.

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								