



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



Inspection Report

Al Ittehad National Private School
Abu Dhabi

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Al Ittehad National Private School – Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	5 – 8 May 2014
School ID#	91
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	1226
Age Range	3 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Fatima Ahmed Murshid
School Address	PO Box 107071, Khalifa City A North, Abu Dhabi
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School Website	http://www.ittihadschools.com/abudhabi
Date of last inspection	29 April – 2 May 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 A;	GRADE 3
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The main strengths of the school are:

- a shared strategic vision which enables school leaders to drive change
- teachers' confident use of English in lessons contributes to students' rapid acquisition of spoken language
- students make good progress in Arabic, science and ICT across the school
- practical work in science develops students' enquiry and investigational skills linking theory and real life
- the whole-school promotion of Islamic values contributes to the positive relationships and caring ethos.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the rate of progress boys in grades 5 to 8 make compared to the progress girls make
 - provision in lessons to challenge more able students and to support those who need more help
 - the punctuality of many students.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 100 lessons and met with the principal, the owner, teachers, social workers and support staff, parents and students. The inspectors observed assemblies, break periods, and students' arrival at and departure from the school. They considered test and assessment results and scrutinized students' work across the school. Inspectors analysed 365 responses to the parents' questionnaire about the school. They considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and senior team were involved throughout the inspection process and observed lessons with inspectors.

Description of the School

Al Ittehad National School opened in September 2006 and is part of the Al Arabia group which has partner schools in Al Ain and Dubai. The board of governors includes the owner and other shareholders. The principal has been in post since the school opened. The school's vision is 'to develop a generation that adapts to its future and preserves its heritage'. It aims to 'provide equal chances for all students in a rich learning environment which enables them to develop socially, cognitively and academically'.

The school now has students in every grade and its first cohort of grade 12 graduated last year. There are 1226 students in total: 197 in Kindergarten (KG), 499 in the primary department, 360 in the middle school and 170 in the upper grades. There are 636 boys and 590 girls. Girls and boys are taught together up to grade 4 and separately from Grade 5 onwards. Almost all students are Muslim. 99.6% proportion of students are of Arabic heritage, of which 95.11% are Emirati and there are very small percentages from other Arab countries (Jordan, Syria, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Bahrain and Iraq) as well as individual students from USA, Canada, Somalia, Australia and UK. Only 1 student has been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) related to learning difficulties. Fees start from AED 17,250 in KG to AED 35,362 for the upper school. Admission is by application and selection includes an entrance exam (not for KG).

There are 87 full-time teachers and 4 part-time. The school has a designated development partner who has been associated with the school for nearly two years.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Admissions tests and baseline assessments of new entrants to the school provide clear starting points for students' learning journeys. The school thoroughly analyses data from tests, quizzes, other forms of assessment and from lesson observations to identify gaps in knowledge. Results of international examinations are carefully scrutinised for areas of underperformance. School results in Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) national tests are compared with another high performing school. Teachers prepare action plans to support students' learning and accelerate progress using this information. Students in most grades are working at or around international standards of attainment.

Children entering the school in KG have low levels of communication and numeracy skills. The language-rich classroom environment enables them to make rapid progress. This good progress continues through the primary years so that by grade 4, they reach age-appropriate standards. They steadily acquire skills such as problem-solving, logical and creative thinking, investigation and collaborative working.

Attainment and progress in science and ICT have improved considerably since the last inspection. They are now good throughout the school. In upper grade classes, students are at or exceeding international standards in their work across most subjects. Their competence in English, when analysing text and critically evaluating literature, is impressive. Students make good progress in science. For example, in a grade 11 physics lesson, boys ran a simulation of sound waves in the virtual laboratory to investigate their properties and interactions. Those studying economics and business have a firm understanding of supply and demand and the risks associated with commerce.

Standards in Islamic education and social studies are comparable to those found across the UAE. In English, progress is good and standards are now around those found internationally. In Arabic, standards and progress are good and meet ADEC expectations. Standards and progress in mathematics are good, though more inconsistent from grade 5 to grade 8. The progress of some boys in grades 5 to 8 slows because of their poor behaviour. The progress made by students who struggle with learning and by those who are more able learners is satisfactory and improving.

Last year, 94.73% of students passed the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT1) at grade level. This was the first cohort to take these international examinations before leaving the school. These grade 12 graduates achieved well enough to

meet the entry requirements for universities in the UAE and abroad. Good records are kept of students' leaving destinations. Many return to visit the school and see their former teachers.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is good. They speak positively of the care, guidance and support they receive from staff. Attitudes to learning are good and students are polite and courteous when addressing adults and each other. They behave well around the school and in lessons. The few exceptions to this are in some classes in grades 5 to 8 where the behaviour of boys gets in the way of their learning. Students clearly enjoy coming to school and speak very positively about the facilities and the progress they are making. They have learnt the school song and sing it enthusiastically at assemblies. Students' attendance is above average at 96%. Punctuality in the morning is not as good as it should be.

Students develop a strong sense of right and wrong through their interactions with adults. This is supported by the monthly focus on moral values. When asked, they can explain and give examples of what these mean in everyday life. They are gaining a good understanding of the multi-cultural nature of the UAE and show respect for the traditions and values of Islam. As they progress through the school, they have a growing awareness of their identities.

Students take advantage of the various opportunities provided to develop leadership skills. They act as class monitors, take roles in the student council and some have the confidence to lead parts of lessons. The school "Co-op" in the cafeteria is a successful student initiative. This gives students first-hand experience of operating a small business. It generates profit which they partly donate to charity. The concept has been further developed into a 'Future Entrepreneur Day' where business ideas can be tested and showcased.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and it is good overall. Teachers know their subjects well and they confidently lead the learning in the classroom. Students are encouraged to ask questions. Some teachers regularly supplement the textbook and worksheets with questions, tasks and examples of their own. Learning objectives are usually shared so that students are clear about what they will be doing and what they will learn. Occasionally, teachers restrict individuality in students' work by being too prescriptive about what outcomes they are looking for.

Students are encouraged to think critically, work successfully in pairs and groups and develop independent learning skills. This is most noticeable in the upper

grades and where teachers plan appropriate activities in lessons. There are fewer opportunities for enquiry and investigation in lessons lower down the school. Teachers use English widely and confidently in many lessons. This is a major reason why students make rapid progress in their spoken English.

Teachers continue to benefit from professional development and this has improved classroom practice. In particular, lesson plans often include some challenge for more able students. Many lessons move forward with good pace. The most successful lessons include active participation by students, practical work and stimulating tasks. These are enjoyed by students and are especially appealing to boys.

Assessment is regular and teachers know their students well. Identification of those who need support in Arabic, English and mathematics is accurate. In KG2, plans to share strategies amongst support staff, class teachers and parents are reviewed regularly. The majority of children enter grade 1 having made good progress and with age-appropriate skills. Additional qualified teachers work with KG classes and offer limited withdrawal in grades 1 to 5 to boost literacy and numeracy.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum implementation has considerable strengths and few weaknesses. It is based on US Common Core standards. The Harcourt "Journeys" series of texts is used well to support learning in the core subjects. A skills programme leading to the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) qualification enriches the curriculum in ICT. Subjects taught through Arabic, meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education. Art is taught throughout the school.

The culture, heritage and values of UAE society are strongly represented and promoted in all grades. They are reinforced by the school's own 'value of the month' which provides a focus for students' reflective thinking. The programme of extra-curricular activities is broad and enriches students' experiences. These include sports, environmental activities and many competitions in science, spelling and writing. Participation is high. The school makes full use of its wide range of external partners such as the Emirates Foundation and the Lema (robotics) programme to supplement the curriculum.

In some classes, students who learn more slowly find it difficult to follow the same programme as others. Similarly, more able students are sometimes not well served by the curriculum they receive. Students develop independent learning skills through practical activities in science and ICT. Working in pairs and groups promotes personal qualities such as co-operation, learning to share and team work. In the high school, students have acquired skills in critical thinking and

research. These skills, together with their competence in spoken English, prepare them well for further study and the world of work.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school has a very positive ethos towards the care of its students. There are many effective procedures in place to ensure students are safe, secure and remain healthy. The role of class advisers and social workers in providing pastoral support, monitoring attendance and checking progress is central to the school's work. Reliable attendance data shows improved figures since the last inspection. Insufficient attention is paid to improving punctuality in the morning.

Students appreciate the emphasis placed at school and class level on the value of relationships. Adults encourage them to be kind and courteous towards their peers and promote reconciliation on rare occasions when disputes arise. The promotion of Islamic values and UAE culture has a high profile throughout the school and especially in assemblies.

Support and advice are provided at points of transition from one section of the school to the next. This ensures that students experience a smooth induction to the next stage of their education. Students in grade 12 are given comprehensive information about university admission requirements at home and abroad. There is a dedicated section of the library for prospectuses and support with making online applications.

Medical staff run a health education programme which monitors students' wellbeing and provides substantial advice about healthy eating. The KG children's council shared their ideas on healthy eating with other classes. Student safety is a high priority in all practical activities, for example in science laboratories and the swimming pool.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school's buildings and premises are good and support learning well. Classrooms and other internal areas are spacious enough for the number of students. There is a good range of facilities for students to use and enjoy. The large canteen areas are pleasant places for students to eat and socialize. Buildings are kept clean and well maintained. There are lifts and ramps to enable access to ground and upper floors.

Staff are diligent over all matters of health and safety. There is an active committee which ensures that students are safe and secure whilst at school. There are good arrangements to ensure that intruders cannot gain entry and all visitors and staff are required to carry identification.

KG children have limited access to outdoor space in which they can explore. This restricts the development of skills such as critical thinking and collaboration. Displays of work and the celebration of children's achievements are prominent in the KG department. They are less evident in some upper grade classrooms and do not enrich the learning environment.

The school's resources to support its aims

The schools resources support learning well. They are particularly well used for practical activities, such as physical education, science, art and ICT. Specialist rooms, laboratories and other facilities are generously equipped with appropriate equipment and materials. The school library is very well stocked with books, especially in Arabic. The number of non-fiction texts has been increased and clearly categorised.

Students enjoy using computers. They apply their IT skills in all years and in most subjects. Classrooms have a projector, computer and internet access. In some lessons in the middle school, resources used by teachers are limited to texts and worksheets. This narrows the breadth of students' learning experiences and detracts from their enjoyment.

There is a full complement of qualified teachers to cover the curriculum and teach all classes. They benefit from regular, effective professional development which focuses on identified areas for improvement. Food storage and serving arrangements are hygienic and healthy. Buses are well maintained and most have CCTV installed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has a shared strategic vision, which is to be amongst the best schools in Abu Dhabi. In order to achieve this, the school principal and her leadership team continue to drive forward with their improvement agenda. Regular assessment of students' progress and the monitoring of teaching and learning enable the leadership team to know the school well. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and was compiled with contributions from a wide range of staff and governors. Because of this, the school development plan includes relevant and well-considered targets for improvement. Resources are well managed and aligned to school priorities.

The Board of Governors has members with suitable expertise in education and finance. The chairman expresses his support for school leaders and visits regularly to attend events. He embraces the concept of becoming a "critical friend" and sees this as a future role for the Board. Parents expressed similar strong support

and appreciation of the principal and the school. The school listens to their views, and those of the student council, when making decisions.

School leaders are aware that the behaviour of some boys in upper primary and middle school grades is not good. In some lessons, they cause disruption to learning and this is affecting progress. To date, insufficient attention has been paid to this.

Effective professional development is provided for teachers with a focus on classroom practice and targets are set for improvement. This has benefitted teaching across the school and helped to increase the rate of students' progress. Opportunities are provided for teachers to observe each other and share best practice. The leadership of subjects is not consistently good as a few co-ordinators lack experience. The school's many links with external partners and organisations, including universities, enhance provision and help graduates to move on successfully.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has paid serious attention to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Each one has featured in the school development plan and much progress has been made in addressing them. In addition the school identified two priorities of its own. These are improving students' standards of English and training staff in 21st century skills. Inspection evidence shows that substantial progress has also been made in these areas. The principal and her team have consistently and efficiently acted on previous recommendations. Their capacity for making further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the behaviour and progress of boys by:
 - i. ensuring greater supervision of corridors, stairs and communal areas in the boys section of the school
 - ii. providing professional development for teachers on strategies to motivate boys and keep them engaged in their learning
 - iii. sharing good practice from within and beyond the school on activities and resources that appeal to boys' interests and competitive spirit.
2. Improve punctuality to school by:
 - i. working with parents to ensure that students leave home in good time to get to school
 - ii. encouraging better punctuality through the school's rewards systems and raising awareness of its importance with students.
3. Further improve teaching and learning by:
 - i. planning activities in lessons that challenge more able students, including beginning their work at a more demanding level
 - ii. providing resources that help struggling learners and set tasks which provide suitable scaffolding to their learning.

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								