



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



Inspection Report

Al Ittihad National Private School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Al Ittihad National Private School

Inspection Date	23 – 26 February 2014
School ID#	124
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	1106
Age Range	3 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Najat Dhaheri
School Address	Falaj-Hazza, PO Box 82469, Al Ain
Telephone Number	+971 (0)3 781 1164
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Official Email (ADEC)	alittihadaa.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.alittihadschools.com/alain
Date of last inspection	20 – 23 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 B,	GRADE 5
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the impact of subject specialist teaching in upper grades is leading to improving progress in mathematics, science
- the improved Kindergarten (KG) provision
- the school promotes UAE values and understanding of different cultures effectively
- the vision, drive and ambition of the vice principal
- the positive relationships are in most classrooms.

The main areas for improvement are:

- development of the quality of teaching and learning, especially in the primary section
 - implementation of effective strategies to retain teachers
 - extension of the range of extra-curricular activities to enhance learning
 - implementation of systems to monitor student progress and teaching to ensure accurate identification for further improvement.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 82 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, subject leaders, teachers, support staff, representatives of the proprietor and students. They analysed test and assessment results, scrutinised students' work across the school, analysed 446 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents.

Description of the School

The school is located in Falaj-Hazza district of Al Ain and opened in 2005. It is owned by Al Arabia for Education Development and is part of a group of 4 Al Ittihad Private Schools in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The school offers an American curriculum for subjects taught in English. It offers the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Arabic, Islamic education and social studies.

Of the 1106 students, 472 are girls and 634 are boys. There are 292 students in the kindergarten (KG), 561 in the primary section (G1–G5), 185 in the middle school (G6–G9) and 68 in the upper school (G10–12). Almost all students are of Arab heritage and Muslim, with 87% of the students from the Emirates and very small proportions of 22 other nationalities. The school has identified 21 students with specific or moderate learning needs and a small number of other students with behavioural, hearing, visual or speech difficulties. The school uses entrance tests. Annual fees range from AED 16,000 in KG to AED 25,800 in Grade 12 which is within the medium to high category.

The school principal is mainly responsible for administrative affairs and the vice principal, also called the Academic Supervisor, manages the academic and education side of the school. The school's visions are to: set high standards for teachers' performance; set and meet high expectations for academic achievement; promote student centred classes; expose all students to technology; develop a safe and friendly environment; and set and meet high standards of leadership to improve learning.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Assessments administered in the school are set, marked and moderated internally. This means that the school does not have an accurate picture of standards and progress compared to either schools following the same curriculum or best international standards. Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work show that standards are broadly in line with international expectations in English, mathematics, science, and with ADEC expectations in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. Students make expected progress in all areas. Girls make better progress than boys in Grades 5 to 11 because they have a better attitude to learning. Students in Grades 11 and 12, sit for Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) 1 papers and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examinations to access University places. In 2013, most of the small number of Grade 12 students were offered a place at university.

All students learn English as an additional language and most have little or no English when they start school. Students in KG make good progress in their knowledge of letters and sounds. This helps them to make rapid progress in speaking and listening skills in English. There are insufficient opportunities for students throughout the school to develop reading skills in English. Standards in knowledge acquisition in science and mathematics in the upper grades are securely in line with international expectations and progress is improving. In contrast, students do not develop sufficient understanding of mathematical concepts or scientific enquiry skills in science. In mathematics, students make better progress in the higher grades than the lower ones.

Standards and progress in subjects taught in Arabic are at least in line with schools following the same curriculum. They are better in KG and in lower rather than the upper grades. Standards in writing In Arabic are variable across all grades. In Islamic education, students gain satisfactory knowledge about many Islamic concepts. In social studies, students gain sufficient knowledge about the history of Islamic countries. They do not develop higher order thinking skills sufficiently to be able to analyse or research in subjects taught in Arabic.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory overall. Students settle well in KG and engage positively in lessons. Relationships between students and adults are mainly constructive throughout the school. In most lessons, students' behaviour is acceptable, especially when they find tasks interesting and expectations are made clear. Attitudes to learning are variable when behaviour management strategies

are not consistently applied. A minority of students, especially boys, can be noisy and boisterous at break and in corridors; this can also delay learning at the start of lessons. Most of the students want to learn, and answer questions confidently. They are welcoming, polite and courteous to visitors. Students show a good level of respect for, and understanding of, the values and cultures of the UAE. They have a reasonable understanding of the benefits of leading safe and healthy lifestyles. The school council provides an effective forum to share ideas. Students are prepared adequately for their future in education. Attendance is above average at 96%.

The quality of teaching and learning

Most teachers, especially in specialist subjects in upper grades, have secure knowledge so explanations and learning are accurate. In the best lessons, students are keen, willing to participate and want to learn. Teachers are starting to provide opportunities for students to work in groups. This is not a well established practice across the school because students sit in groups but often work independently without practising collaborative skills. Teachers are also starting to plan tasks that offer suitable challenge to different abilities.

Staff turnover has been high and professional development for teachers, especially in collaborative learning strategies and providing active tasks that offer suitable challenges to different abilities, has had limited impact. This means that the quality of teaching varies across the school and between subjects and classes. There is some good teaching, especially in higher grades. There is little opportunity to share this good practice.

There is often not a good balance between independent and teacher-led activity. This limits the opportunity for students to develop their higher order thinking skills. In many lessons, tasks do not precisely meet the needs of different groups, especially those of higher attainers. In a large number of lessons, classroom practice does not reflect planning so work is set for the whole class and this can limit progress, especially for more able students. Teaching assistants in KG provide satisfactory support for students' learning. Marking is regular; it does not provide sufficient feedback so that students know what to do to improve their work.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum implementation prepares students adequately for their future in education and work. It is suitably broad and balanced. The school has recently developed a thorough and ambitious curriculum map based on skills development. Teachers have started to use this to plan lessons for KG and Grades

1, 2 and 3 in English and mathematics. Teachers do not use these lesson plans very effectively in all lessons as they have not had sufficient time to become used to the new methods. The plans for literacy in KG are too ambitious and many of the tasks and learning objectives do not always accurately match the developmental needs of the students.

The curriculum provides some good opportunities to link science and mathematics skills and develop higher order thinking. These 21st century skills of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and independence are not consistently developed in other areas. Students gain adequate information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They get little opportunity to apply them in other subjects as there are no ICT resources in classrooms. Small numbers of students participate in a narrow range of extra-curricular activities to enhance their learning. Post-16 students develop satisfactory work related skills through work experience programmes related to their future ambitions.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school provides a safe environment for students. Robust checks are made on all adults that work in the school, and there is a central register to confirm that they are approved by ADEC. There are rigorous child protection procedures in place. Attendance procedures are good and attendance is above average at 96 %. The school has extensive systems to check on students' progress and personal skills. These are used effectively to identify students who need additional support. The data is not accurate enough to compare outcomes with best international expectations. The school has thorough policies for behaviour and bullying; they are not always applied consistently. Students say there is little bullying and the school deals with instances promptly.

Parents consider that the school offers a good level of care for their child. Security at the gate is adequate and prevents any unwanted intrusion. Staff are up to date with child protection training and are clear about how to respond if they have any concerns. The clinic is hygienic, well equipped and qualified nurses deal very well with day-to-day medical problems. Students say that they feel well supported in lessons. The school has adequate facilities for prayer: there are 2 prayer rooms, one for boys and one for girls. Students receive suitable guidance about choices for Post -16 courses and potential career choices.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The buildings and plot are of sufficient size and adequately support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. The facilities are maintained in acceptable condition. Most classrooms and corridors are spacious and clean. The specialist

facilities in ICT, physical education (PE), science, art and the library are fit for purpose. There are 3 ICT suites, 2 science laboratories, a sports hall, a swimming pool and an art room. Procedures to keep the school secure are good. The health and safety office has a good awareness of the relevant issues. Regular checks ensure that electrical and safety equipment is safe and well maintained. Very regular water checks are conducted in the swimming pool to keep students safe. All hazardous materials are stored securely, including in the clinic.

The school's resources to support its aims

There are a sufficient number of teachers and support staff who are suitably qualified for their role in the school. Teacher turnover is high and more than half of the current staff joined the school at the beginning of the current academic year. Classes in KG have plentiful resources that are used well by teachers to provide active learning and engage students. Displays on walls and in corridors are bright. Resources throughout the main school are adequate and teachers are starting to use them to provide interactive tasks and support learning. All classrooms have projectors that are used effectively by teachers to introduce tasks and model learning expectations. There is an insufficient range of resources in the lower grades in science. The school has 3 ICT suites that are well equipped with sufficient number of computers for the number of students in each class. No additional computers are available in classrooms so students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop and apply their skills. School buses are well maintained.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The Principal is responsible for the management of the school. Her administrative systems ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to day basis. The Vice Principal is also the Academic Supervisor. She plays a crucial role and has very high ambition, drive and vision to improve the school. She is responsible for students' progress and the quality of education provided in the school. She has developed systems to monitor teaching and students' progress that the school uses to evaluate its effectiveness. She has led the programme of professional development to develop the quality of teaching. The impact of this is gradually becoming evident in many lessons as teachers are starting to use more interactive and collaborative tasks. Progress is slow partly because of the very high turnover of teachers.

The judgements made by the school in the self-evaluation document are too generous. This is mainly because assessment data is not accurate enough and judgements on the quality of lessons focus too much on teaching, not learning. The School Development Plan (SDP) clearly identifies the key priorities for

development that focus on improving weaker areas. Middle leaders have a reasonably accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and support the school's improvement vision. Leadership in KG provides good support for staff.

Most parents are supportive of the school. A significant minority have concerns about the school valuing their opinions, keeping them well informed about their child's progress and the leadership and management of the school. Board members are supportive of the school. They do not hold it to account or play an active role in the educational aspects of the school. The school's finances are managed efficiently and accounts are audited externally.

Progress since the last inspection

The last inspection recommended that the school make improvements in 6 areas: use of testing, sharing best teaching practice, students' writing, independent learning, use of ICT, the behaviour of boys, and staffing and resources in science. It has made some progress in all of these areas. In addition, provision in KG has been enhanced and academic progress in science and mathematics in the higher grades has improved. The school has therefore demonstrated the satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement.

The school has developed extensive systems to track student progress. The data is based on internal assessments and is not sufficiently accurate. The school has provided professional development to improve teaching; the barrier of very high teacher turnover means that the impact is gradual. The school has produced curriculum maps to plan tasks that are skills based, match the needs of different groups and promote independent learning. These are implemented in KG –Grade 3, but not embedded. Provision for ICT has improved. Boys' misbehaviour now only affects learning when teachers do not consistently apply behaviour management strategies. Standards in Arabic and English writing skills are improving slowly.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve teaching, especially in lower grades, to further improve standards by:
 - i. continuing to provide professional development to improve teacher's skills
 - ii. using the strengths in the best lessons to share good practice
 - iii. ensuring that tasks offer suitable challenge to match the needs of all groups, especially higher attainers
 - iv. enabling students to apply their skills and knowledge in real life situations
 - v. improving teachers' questioning to develop students' independent thinking and enable them to answer in depth.
2. Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - i. improving the accuracy of self-evaluation by developing more accurate systems to monitor student progress and the quality of teaching
 - ii. developing more effective strategies to retain good teachers
 - iii. monitoring the impact of behaviour management strategies so that all students consistently sustain good attitudes to learning
 - iv. improving the ability of the Board to hold senior leaders to account by developing their role as 'critical friends'.
3. Improve the curriculum by providing a wider range of enrichment activities that build on students' interests and needs.

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								