



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Maali International Private School

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Iqraa

Al Maali International Private School

Inspection Date	21 st - 24 th May, 2012
School ID#	044
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	American and Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1667
Age Range	3 – 17 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Khadijah al Sayyer
School Address	East 12, 66 Street, Sector 21, Musaffah, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 6 inspectors. The inspectors observed 70 lessons, daily assemblies, the arrival and departure of students and their movement around school. They conducted interviews with the owner, the Principal, other leaders and staff at every level. Students were interviewed formally and in conversation. In addition, inspectors reviewed all key policies and planning documents and a sample of students' work.

Description of the School

The school was originally a Villa School in Al Bateen, Abu Dhabi City. Its current premises were opened in September 2009 and students moved in stages from the old site. All were located on the present Musaffah site by September 2010.

The school's vision is to become a place of excellence, amongst the best in Abu Dhabi. It aims to provide a healthy and stimulating environment for students and staff and it wants students to become responsible, mature citizens. The vision also focuses on using modern facilities to raise standards and help students be adaptable and well prepared for the future.

There are 1667 students, 924 of whom are boys and 743, girls. 311 of the total are Kindergarten (KG) children, with 806 students in Grades 1-4 and 550 in Grades 5-12. There are mixed classes from KG1 to Grade 3 and separate boys' and girls' classes for Grade 4 to 12. From Grade 5 upwards students follow either an Arabic curriculum or an American textbook curriculum.

99% of students are Muslim. Of these, 64% are Arab. UAE nationals make up 27% of students. Jordan, Sudan and Egypt each account for about 10% and the remaining students come from Palestine, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. The school offered no statistical data about students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or those deemed Gifted and Talented (G & T).

Admission is by entrance examination to each grade. The school's fees range from AED 6,600 per year in KG1 to AED 17,400 in Grade 12 of the American stream. Those following the Arabic stream pay less, with a maximum of AED 15,000 in Grade 12.

Teachers' salaries average AED 4,500 per month with a range from AED 3,000 to AED 15,000. The great majority are close to the average. The school board consists of its owner and partners in his company. They run this school and two others. For some purposes, such as the appointment of consultants and training programmes, work in the three schools is coordinated.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 7

Inspectors judged Al Ma'ali International Private School to be in Band C, that is a school in need of significant improvement.

The school has made far too little improvement since the last inspection and its overall effectiveness is currently poor. It is failing to meet ADEC's minimum standards and is an unsafe and unfit environment. The school needs to take urgent action if it is to continue to operate.

There are no substantial successes in its actions following the last inspection. The report directed the school to provide a healthy, safe environment. It aspires to this in its mission statement, but has not yet created these conditions. The move to the new premises answered some of the previous report's concerns but new concerns have replaced them. The premises do not look like new accommodation because of the poor state of decoration and cleanliness. The playgrounds have poor quality dusty surfaces, no seating and too little covering from the sun. The swimming pool is permanently out of commission and the gymnasium often unavailable for physical education. Health and safety issues concerning fire exits and outside drinking water facilities break regulations. Many classrooms are too small and make good provision impossible in KG and difficult elsewhere.

The last report required higher standards, but they are still far too low. The school has not put in place the pre-conditions for improvement, especially a new curriculum, more effective staff training, improved resources and improved attitudes to learning. It is still not an accredited centre for internationally recognised qualifications and has no systematic programme for recording or promoting access to higher education.

The third key area requiring change was leadership and management and this has not improved. It is poor and shows little capacity for taking radical decisions and implementing new practice. Roles are not clear and accountability is too often avoided. Development planning remains ineffective. Monitoring and auditing do not lead to change. For example, a recent health and safety audit has key recommendations which the school has not acted upon. Monitoring of lessons for instance does not lead to teachers receiving specific guidance on how to improve students' progress. The owners have not improved the salary scale for staff, so it remains very low. As a result, staff turnover is high. The specific request to provide an adequate and accessible prayer room and establish regular use has only been partially met and only in the week before this inspection.

Currently, therefore, the school continues to fail its students and lacks any major areas of strength. It does have examples of good practice that could serve to

show the way forward for the school as a whole. For instance, a small number of lessons seen illustrate just how well students perform when challenged by high expectations and allowed to be actively involved. In discussion with visiting inspectors, many students displayed excellent attitudes and behaviour. Recitation of the Qur'an in Grades 1-4 was good and Arabic writing very impressive in one Grade 1 class.

However, the school's ongoing weaknesses are very extensive and completely outweigh its strengths. The key weakness is leadership and management. Its shortcomings, in turn, allow the other significant problems to go unchecked. These are found in progress, the personal development of students, teaching, the curriculum, buildings and resources.

Overall, standards and progress are very unsatisfactory. Students' basic skills for learning are weak, especially their independent thinking skills. In Arabic, writing and speaking skills are underdeveloped. In Islamic Studies, too many students have difficulty in reading verses from the holy Qur'an and explaining how its teaching should affect their lives. In UAE social studies students show too little depth of knowledge about the country's origins and its culture. Standards and progress in English, mathematics and science are hindered by poor assessment arrangements. The school's examinations are all internal and only record percentage marks. This does not allow the school to compare performance with that of other schools and see how much higher standards are internationally. Nor does it permit the setting of challenging targets for individuals or groups of students. In KG, children are not taught to develop speaking skills in English. Older students write neatly but are weak at analysing texts. In mathematics, progress is held back by the frequent use of tasks that are undemanding. Science students are well below international standards and their progress is very unsatisfactory because they spend large amounts of time copying from text books. They have a poor grasp of scientific principles and how to apply them.

Students' personal development is very unsatisfactory. A significant number of students, especially Grade 5 to Grade 12 boys, are poorly engaged in school life. They act boisterously around school and sometimes in lessons. The curriculum and teaching methods fail to interest these groups of students because provision is poorly adapted to their needs. There are few opportunities for them to serve the school on a regular basis. For example, there is no prefect system, or mentoring programme in which they could help younger students improve their reading. The school council is inactive. The school has no operational rewards and sanctions policy. Staff apply rules inconsistently and substantial praise is rarely used.

Teaching is very unsatisfactory. There are times when individuals, following their own aspirations, teach imaginatively and with skill. However, this is rare. Too many lessons lack interaction between staff and students and offer very limited scope for independent learning. In KG there is no structure for lessons to allow children individual choice. Across the school, the majority of lessons are undifferentiated so frequently the most able finish early and the less able find it hard to start. Teachers rarely use plans for individual lessons and this hampers the ability to keep pace strong and the focus on promoting progress. Presentations by students are rare. When they happen they are very effective.

The curriculum's central weaknesses are that it lacks coherence and is not adapted to this school's specific needs. It does not offer continuity and progression for students with a very wide ability range, poor command of language and poor levels of motivation. It is not linked to rigorous assessment tests so lacks urgency and focus. The American curriculum follows American texts but it does not integrate teaching with the use of challenging American tests such as the IOWA tests. Nor does the curriculum offer differentiated work, with high level tasks for more able students and proper support for the less able. The curriculum does not indicate how staff can use practical tasks or additional resources, such as Information Technology (IT) or pictures, to bring topics alive. The language needs for access to the curriculum are not taken into account. The Arabic curriculum has similar shortcomings and the dominance of textbooks and worksheets is even greater. The exceptions, such as some exciting Grade 1 Arabic provision, only serve to confirm what most of the curriculum lacks.

Procedures for ensuring the protection, care guidance and support of students are poor. There are serious statutory breaches in this area of the school's work. The school does not have its own Child Protection (CP) policy, only a generic guidance document. The required CP training for staff has not taken place. Arrangements for ensuring that all adults working on the school site pass suitable moral test are unsatisfactory. Information should be in a single document, not dispersed between several. No record of whole staff training on health and safety was available during the inspection. Health and safety matters were reviewed by the school recently, but the school has as yet taken no action to address several key items identified in that review. This leaves further statutory requirements still unmet. The licences for both the nurse and school clinic have expired. Many staff are caring individuals and shows this in their manner with students and their efforts to help them. Their efforts are countered by the failure of the school's leaders and managers to implement effective policies and procedures.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises is poor. Much of the school is dirty and neglected and the air conditioning fails to work in extensive parts of the

premises. The air-conditioning failures include the IT laboratories, which become too hot to be used. With the swimming pool closed and the gymnasium often set aside for non-teaching purposes, major facilities go underused. Too many rooms are small. In KG it is not possible for teaching to offer children the freedom to move between different stations in the classroom. Nor can they move freely between indoor and outdoor spaces. Specialist accommodation for science is too limited. Much wall space lacks any decoration or display of students' work. It is not an environment in which students and staff function well. Students show little care for the buildings by the vast quantities of litter they leave after break. Several health and safety failings specified below make the premises unsafe.

The resources for learning are poor. IT equipment is far too limited, especially with regard to projectors and whiteboards. Books and physical resources for KG and for reading materials across all grades are in short supply. The two small libraries are open at various points in the day. Their books are dated and few students use them independently. Spending on resources overall is far too limited and badly hinders students learning.

Leadership and management are poor and this largely explains the shortcomings set out above. The school lacks clear strategic vision and sense of direction. There is disunity amongst the senior leadership team and consultants working in the school. The owner and his colleagues have not resolved this. The energy and drive to transform good intentions into effective action is missing. Improvement planning is weak because targets and the strategies to meet them are not appropriate. Staff turnover is high, partly because wages are low, but also because teachers do not always receive guidance and support from their senior colleagues. The impact of poor senior leadership and management is felt in all aspects of school life, but leads directly to numerous breaches of statutory requirements. Middle leaders report that their initiatives are not welcomed by the Principal.

Value for money is poor, because the school is not ensuring adequate academic progress and secure personal development for students. Nor does it provide a suitable and safe learning environment. The capacity for current leaders and managers to bring about marked improvement is poor.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Immediately deal with the statutory failings listed below
2. Radically upgrade leadership and management by:
 - i. providing a strong Principal and effective senior leadership team;
 - ii. creating clear strategic vision and unity of purpose;
 - iii. producing improvement plans that are focussed, realistic and fully implemented; and
 - iv. ensuring senior leaders are highly visible and influential around school throughout each day.
3. Raise teaching quality by:
 - i. urgently providing good quality retraining on how to set high expectations of students and what strategies are needed to help them progress well in lessons; and
 - ii. improving pay levels and salary structure to boost recruitment and retention of good teachers.
4. Create an assessment system that generates higher expectations by:
 - i. using international examinations and tests for assessment instead of internal examinations.