



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



Summary Inspection Report

Al Nahda National School – Girls
(Primary School)

Published in 2013

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Al Nahda National School – Girls (Primary School)

Inspection Date	19 th – 22 nd November, 2012
School ID#	025
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	British - Cambridge International Primary Programme
Number of Students	2679
Age Range	4- 12 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Amy L. Simmons
School Address	POBox 815, Al Mushrif Area, Airport Road, Street 21, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by five inspectors. During their time in the school, they observed 103 lessons, met with school leaders, teachers, students and parents. They observed students at break times and when arriving and leaving the school at the end of the day. Inspectors analysed the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) questionnaires sent out to parents. They examined documentation relating to planning, assessment, the curriculum, health and safety, maintenance and the care and protection of students. Students were observed during breaktimes and on arrival and departure from the school.

Description of the School

Al Nahda National School for Girls, founded in 1983, was one of the earliest private schools offering a curriculum delivered mainly in English. The school aims to achieve the best possible outcomes for the development of the whole child. The school is in a mainly residential area in Abu Dhabi city. A new building housing the kindergarten and Grades 1-2 was built eight years ago. Within the school compound there is an accommodation block for teachers.

There are 2,679 children and students in the primary school; 1,116 are boys and 1,563 girls. There is a high number of Emirati students, 42.5% in addition to 46 other nationalities; the main groups being Egyptian, 12.7%, Jordanian, 11.1% and Pakistani, 8.0%. Of these, 98.8% are Muslim of which 83.8% are Arab. There are mixed gender classes from kindergarten through to Grade 4, after which boys attend the boys' school on a separate site. Girls continue to Grade 6, after which they stay on the same site and continue into the secondary school. All students follow the Cambridge International Primary Programme. The school identifies 17 students with special educational needs (SEN) including four with dyslexia, eight with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and four with dyscalculia.

Annual school fees are 14,000 AED for kindergarten, and a range of AED 17,300 – AED 18,300 for Grades 1 – 6. Teachers' salaries range from AED 4,000 – AED 13,600 with 91.2% within the AED 5,001 - AED 10,000 range. The school mainly serves a middle-to-upper socio-economic group. The management structure is defined as a directorship. The director of the girls' school is supported by a principal of kindergarten to Grade 2, a superintendent of Grades 3 – 6 and a superintendent of teaching and learning. The six owners of the school form the board, along with the director general, who is the link between them and the board of governors. This consists of the deputy director general, school directors and representatives from finance, administration, resources and admissions as well as two independent members of the community.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Al Nahda National School for Girls (Primary) to be in Band C; that is a school in need of significant improvement.

The school was previously inspected as an all-age school from kindergarten to Grade 12. Those issues relating to the upper school, Grades 7-12, are not covered in this report. The girls' school director was new in post at the time of the previous inspection and has taken some steps to address the key issues raised at that inspection. For example, teaching in kindergarten has improved as the result of a focus on how young children learn. For the first time last year, Grade 6 students undertook the Cambridge International Primary Checkpoint assessments, which offer an international benchmarking.

Overall, however, standards are unsatisfactory, being below international age-related expectations, and progress is too slow. Taken as a whole, there is little difference in the rates of progress of girls and boys, students with different first languages or students of different nationalities. However, both higher and lower attaining students make even slower progress than others because provision is not well matched to provide support and challenge respectively. Standards and progress are unsatisfactory. Students memorise facts and have too few opportunities to develop practical and investigative skills because they spend most of their time listening to teacher exposition. The development of independent learning, thinking and questioning skills is limited and does not prepare students well for the next stage in their education. Students develop adequate reading skills to enable them to access the curriculum through both Arabic and English. Writing skills are weaker because they have few opportunities to write at any length. They develop good listening skills because they are given extensive opportunities to practise these skills, whereas speaking skills are weaker because there is little focus on their development. Students develop satisfactory numeracy skills and learn to calculate. They do not learn how to apply these skills in real-life situations. Students learn quite a lot of science facts but there are few opportunities for them to apply this new knowledge in practical and experimental work. Despite a good start in kindergarten, students' development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills is limited because they have few opportunities to use the computers in the three ICT suites. Standards and progress in Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies are inadequate because students memorise the lessons of the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum by heart but do not learn to apply them. Standards and progress in other subjects vary greatly between classes.

The personal development of students is unsatisfactory. Although relationships and behaviour are generally good in classes, there is misbehaviour in the weaker lessons across a range of subjects and grades. This is linked to the poorly planned activities that students are given, failing to take into account their different abilities. Behaviour in Arabic lessons in particular is unsatisfactory and this is directly linked to the quality of provision, with didactic teaching and poorly planned activities so that students often sit doing nothing and become bored. Personal development is also limited because, with the exception of kindergarten, there are few opportunities for students to work together and learn how to collaborate as a team. Overall, therefore, they do not develop the higher order skills they need to move confidently to the next stage of education. In better lessons, students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Older students are articulate in English and confidently participate in assemblies and take on responsibilities around the school. Despite the limited space around the school, children generally play well together in a calm and orderly environment. However, the school has not done enough to engage students' personal responsibility. They learn how to keep themselves safe and about healthy lifestyles, but frequently they do not practise what they have learned by eating healthily and they leave litter for others to clean up after them. Students engage in different cultural activities leading up to National Day celebrations and throughout the year. They recite verses from the Qur'an confidently and raise the flag. Arabic teachers reinforce aspects of culture throughout the year. Displays show a range of subjects including UAE culture and that of other Arab countries.

Teaching is very unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in the kindergarten. Teachers show a good understanding of how kindergarten children learn. Some stimulating and interactive teaching was seen which engaged the children and accelerated their learning. The environment in kindergarten is attractive and stimulating and the displays support learning effectively. In the primary grades, although most teachers have good subject knowledge, many lack the teaching skills necessary to teach their subjects, particularly in Arabic and some practical subjects across all grades. In almost all lessons, teachers use textbooks as the basis for their teaching and follow the recommended teaching methods and pace. As a result, the pace of work is not well matched to the needs of the students. Little consideration is given to those students who work at a slower pace or those with special educational needs, so that they do not have sufficient time to complete tasks to a good standard. In only a small number of lessons do teachers provide different tasks for less-able and more-able students. This hinders further progress for a large number of students. Teachers rely heavily on exposition and rarely give students the opportunity to work together, share ideas and practise language skills. Although

some teachers use questioning to check students' understanding, it is rarely used to exercise higher order thinking skills or to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, teachers use the Internet as a resource, for example, showing short video clips to motivate students. The interactive whiteboard is not well used because teachers do not have the skills to use it. More generally, ICT resources are not well used to enhance learning. Teachers' assessment is poor. Teachers are unclear about lesson objectives and do not communicate these to students. Marking takes the form of ticks or crosses with little comment to tell students what they need to do to improve their work. In most lessons teachers have high expectations of behaviour and most students concentrate on their work but there are areas of weakness, particularly Arabic. .

The curriculum is very unsatisfactory. It does not have a well defined structure that specifies clear, age-related objectives for all core subjects that can lead to purposeful assessment of students' progress. Across a wide range of subjects, strict adherence to the textbooks leads to a narrow approach to learning with students having little opportunity to develop independent learning and higher order thinking skills. In Arabic lessons in particular the curriculum is very limited, with too much teacher talk and unchallenging tasks for students. The school has made a start in planning for cross-curricular links to make the curriculum more coherent. The curriculum for phonics and mathematics in the kindergarten is engaging because lessons are interactive, multisensory and offer children hands-on, practical experiences, but the lack of space limits opportunities for play and exploration across the areas of learning. On the positive side, students are given the opportunity to attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities including swimming, Qur'an club, computer, cooking and a range of sporting activities.

The school provides unsatisfactory care for students because there are weaknesses in security arrangements and with regard to elements of health and safety. There is inadequate maintenance of equipment and enforcement of policy on issues such as healthy eating and litter. Some equipment such as alarms and extinguishers had been broken by students. There is a child protection policy in place which staff understand and follow. Staff show a genuine interest in students' well-being and this engenders a positive ethos in the school. Rewards are mostly used well as incentives for good behaviour and attendance but teachers do not use sanctions consistently when students misbehave. Students say they feel safe in school and they value the support which the supervisors and other staff provide. Staff supervise students at break to ensure a safe environment in the kindergarten and main school. Children in kindergarten are also supervised as they arrive and depart but there are potential hazards in the immediate vicinity when children are dropped off and collected by parents.

Attendance is usually satisfactory, but falls off at times such as the start of holidays and when families perform Hajj. Many students arrive late and the school is introducing incentives to improve punctuality. The school provides suitable places for prayer.

The school buildings and premises are very unsatisfactory and do not support teaching and learning well enough. The accommodation for kindergarten and Grades 1-2 does not meet Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) standards and private school laws and does not support the curriculum. There is no outdoor learning environment and all classes are based on upper floors. Physical education (PE) is conducted on hard tiled surfaces in corridors. There are adequate washrooms for kindergarten to Grade 3 and for Grade 4 boys but not for older girls. Public spaces are littered and show the age of the building. Classrooms are mostly of sufficient size; some are tight for classes in upper years. There are four large gymnasiums with just enough equipment. The two music rooms have minimal equipment. The school has its own swimming pool in the infant basement, but the pool is not suitable for younger students because it does not separate shallow and deep and there are no depth markers.

Health and safety practice is very unsatisfactory. Hazards are only dealt with when they are reported. They are no risk assessments to ensure potential hazards are systematically identified and resolved. Fire safety checks are contracted out and evacuation drills are carried out appropriately. During the inspection, some fire doors and emergency exits were locked, and so would hinder evacuation during an emergency. At the beginning and end of the school day, traffic in front of the school is chaotic and poses a danger to students' health and safety. Electrical equipment is not tested regularly. While the perimeter is generally secure with high walls and secure gates, procedures at the beginning and end of the school day allow the uncontrolled entry of large numbers of unidentified adults into the school. One gate is not secure because many people have access to keys and access is not monitored. The school has not identified staff to take responsibility for all health and safety matters; few records are kept.

Classroom resources are barely adequate. The only resources used by most teachers are textbooks, of which there are sufficient numbers. There are few practical resources to support mathematics and there is very little equipment in the single science laboratory. ICT equipment is in good supply, with the systematic introduction and use of digital projectors and interactive whiteboards, which supplement the well-stocked ICT laboratories. The library is well organised and is just large enough with 17,500 books for students in Grades 3-6; there is limited non-fiction for younger readers. All junior teachers have degree level qualifications but some infant and early years teachers are not suitably qualified.

All three fridges observed in the junior cafeteria were too warm and staff appeared to be unaware and unconcerned about this. The arrangements for school transport meet requirements. .

The director of the girls' school has brought about some changes since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new superintendent to improve teaching and learning. Although practice in kindergarten is greatly improved, changes to practice have not been swift enough in other grades. The health and safety issues require urgent attention. There are action plans for most areas of improvement, but these are not sufficiently focused or achievable, do not have clear success criteria and do not provide the framework for rigorously objective evaluation about impact on outcomes or changes to practice. This prevents leaders from having a true and realistic picture of the changes required to increase progress and raise achievement. Consequently, leadership and management of the school are judged to be unsatisfactory with insufficient capacity to bring about improvement. Value for money is unsatisfactory. School leaders welcome external evaluation of their plans and have recently been accredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). As a result of this new approach, two independent members of the community now sit on the board of directors offering an impartial support and challenge to the school

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise teachers' expectations and improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that school leaders:
 - i. monitor teaching and disseminate a clear understanding of what good quality teaching and learning looks like;
 - ii. develop the skills of middle and senior managers so they can model best practice of teaching and assessment for learning strategies, particularly the use of differentiation; and
 - iii. take action to improve teachers' basic skills and to enable them to accurately evaluate the progress students make.
2. Improve the quality, structure and depth of the curriculum by:
 - i. developing a coherent curriculum which provides continuity, progression and development between and within year groups and is delivered in a motivating and creative way that is not bound by a narrow textbook approach;
 - ii. developing a clear set of age-related learning outcomes for all core subjects; and

- iii. focusing on the development of higher order thinking skills through probing questioning and emphasising independent and life-long learning skills.
- 3. Improve the standard of health and safety by:
 - i. reviewing how the use of the kindergarten and Grade 1-2 building can best support the learning of all young children and students;
 - ii. establishing clear lines of responsibility and accountability in the management of health and safety so that it becomes strategic and proactive;
 - iii. improving the management of students' arrival and departure at all school entrances and gateways; and
 - iv. ensuring no classroom doors or fire doors are locked during school use to enable effective emergency evacuation.
- 4. Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - i. reviewing development plans to ensure that the right priorities are identified and that there are clear success criteria and timescales; and
 - ii. drawing on external support to provide on-going challenge and support to school leaders.