



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



Inspection Report

Al Najah Private School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Al Najah Private School

Inspection Date	11 – 14 November 2013
School ID#	197
Licensed Curriculum	British Curriculum and International Baccalaureate (IB)
Number of Students	2,513
Age Range	3 to 18 years (KG1 –G12)
Gender	mixed
Principal	Barea'a Abu Zein
School Address	PO Box 284, Mohamed Bin Zayed City
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 553 0935
Fax Number	+971 (0)2 553 0934
Official Email (ADEC)	Alnajah.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.alnajahschool.com
Date of last inspection	24 – 25 September 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:

- teachers have high expectations that result in above average academic attainment in the upper school. Most students go on to a wide range of international universities
- English language is spoken fluently in and outside of lessons
- students show mutual respect and tolerance of the many different cultures represented in the school
- the school is open to new ideas, able to manage change and has the capacity to improve
- self-evaluation and improvement planning processes have laid the foundations for an effective school.

The main areas for improvement are:

- progress in Arabic, Islamic Studies and social studies is slow throughout the school
 - teachers are not using assessment data consistently to plan lessons which provide support for different abilities, particularly those with special educational needs
 - the use of assessment data to track students' progress is under developed
 - supervisors have an inconsistent approach to behaviour management and there is no policy for rewards and sanctions.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of 6 inspectors. They observed 112 lessons, break periods, students' arrival and departure, and attended assemblies. Inspectors analysed test and assessment results, data, and school documents and the 423 responses to the parents' questionnaire about the school. In addition they met with the proprietor, school leaders, teachers, students and parents. They examined students' work across the school. The principal was involved throughout the inspection process and completed a joint lesson observation with the lead inspector.

Description of the School

The school was established as a villa school in 1995 by the present principal. It moved to its current location in 2008. Previously there had been two campuses. It continues to grow in numbers and is seeking permission to expand further. It is located in (Mussafah) Mohammed Bin Zayed city, a suburb of Abu Dhabi. The school's vision statement is "to inspire learners of today to be global citizen leaders of tomorrow."

The students are from middle class families representing over 43 different nationalities. 94% of students are Muslim and 72% are Arabic. 8% of the students are Emirati. 39% are from Egypt. The next largest groups are from Syria, and Jordan.

Of the 2,513 students, there are 1,427 boys and 1,086 girls. Recent growth has raised primary numbers (Grade 1 to 5) to 1342, middle school (Grades 6 to 9) to 406 and upper school (Grades 10 to 12) to 292. The Kindergarten (KG) has also expanded, and now has 473 children. The school has identified two students with special educational needs (SEN). The principal and vice-principal have been with the school for 18 years. Last year, four new vice principals were appointed.

Students are prepared for Cambridge, Edexcel and International Baccalaureate (IB) examination boards and the Ministry of Education (MoE) tests for Arabic and Islamic Studies. The curriculum uses English text books. In addition, the school has International Baccalaureate (IB) materials for a small group of grade 10, 11 and 12 students. The KG uses texts produced by the school from a range of sources.

Admission is via an entrance examination. School fees fall into the medium to high categories, ranging from AED 12,650 in KG to AED 25,860 for grade 12 per annum. The school is fully staffed with 122 teachers. It has seventeen new teachers this year. Many are recruited by the principal from the UK and Ireland. The principal is directly responsible to the owner and a new board of trustees

which is being established. Educational consultants from Taaleem Edison have been working with the school, since its last inspection in September 2012.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Standards are high in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) courses in the upper school. Results in June 2013 show students of Al Najah score A* AND A for mathematics and science at significantly higher averages when compared to UK independent school averages. 58% of Al Najah students scored A* in physics compared to UK independent school average of 32%, and a UK national average of 8%. Results for Advanced level (A2) and Advanced Supplementary (AS) examinations are well in excess of international averages. Students score highly in all core subjects. Performance in MoE tests are also well above expectations. In 2012, in IGCSE mathematics, 1 Al Najah student scored the highest marks in the world. All grade 12 leavers gained university places last year. The school also has good results for the start of the new IB diploma course.

Across the school as a whole, progress in Arabic, Islamic Studies and social studies is unsatisfactory, and standards are below expectations. In Arabic, children in KG 2 can read Arabic phonics and simple words from three letters. Students can recognize the long and short vowel. In grade 9, students are able to read different passages but their Arabic classical language is poor. Written work has many grammatical mistakes. In grade 12, students can read different paragraphs. They struggle with grammar. Islamic studies students in grade 3 understand the requirements for 'Tajweed' (enunciation). In grade 5, they know the conditions of praying in a group. In grade 12, students do not demonstrate strong understanding of the Quran, when debating.

In English, standards and progress are satisfactory. KG children follow instructions. They are learning the sounds that letters make and recognise simple words and sentences. Students increase their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills as they move up the school. By grade 12, students show an enjoyment of literature, and can analyse and compare texts. They are fluent when presenting their ideas in discussion or debate. Students speak English with fluency and confidence at age expected levels, both in and out lessons across the school.

Standards and progress for Mathematics and science are satisfactory. In grade 12 they are high. By grade 5, most students can write numbers up to 20 and are accurate in counting sets of objects up to 10. In grade 12, students show a high standard of proficiency in applying rules to problem solving in Trigonometry. In

KG, science is integrated into the curriculum. Students can name common animals and parts of the body. Simple science experiments are carried out in grade 5. Grade 10 are able to describe the chemical and physical properties of alkali and transition metals.

Students are making satisfactory progress in French and physical education (PE). Standards and progress in art, music and ICT are unsatisfactory. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop the higher order thinking, problem solving and research skills. Continuous assessment is not used effectively to analyse and monitor students' progress.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory and improving. They enjoy school and attendance is good. Students' behaviour is sensible and respectful in lessons and around the school. Over 2,500 students from over 43 different nationalities show mutual respect, tolerance and understanding of their varying backgrounds and cultures. English is the main means of communication between students. They are confident, articulate and proud of their school. The older students act as prefects helping to control the movement around the building. Some assist with reading for younger students. There are not sufficient opportunities for all students in all grades to assume responsibilities and leadership roles. Students do not have a comprehensive knowledge and practical understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teachers across the school generally have good subject knowledge and have high expectations for students which are appropriate for their age and ability. In the upper school in particular teaching is intellectually challenging. Students in all grades undertake independent learning activities. They research and give presentations confidently.

In KG, teaching is now appropriately child-centred. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Learning and creativity are developed through play and a range of activities in the classroom. Vibrant and stimulating displays support learning. There are missed opportunities to use outdoor space. Lack of physical space restricts child initiated activities.

Recently introduced lesson planning templates ensure lessons are well structured, have learning objectives, and include a range of timed activities. These are beginning to impact on the effectiveness of teaching. In nearly all lessons there is group and peer work. Collaborative learning is taking place and students of all ages work well together.

Teachers mark books regularly. The marking does not tell students how to improve, nor help them reach their targets. Assessment data is not being used to monitor progress. It does not match learning to the needs of all students.

In primary and middle grades, there are few opportunities for critical thinking. Lessons do not challenge the more able students nor support weaker ones. There is a limited range of differentiation strategies used by teachers. In some lessons, especially In Arabic, Islamic Studies and social studies, teaching is narrow and relies on text books. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is not used to support learning in all subjects.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The focus on the core subjects has been very successful over several years in producing high examination results. The school is now widening the curriculum, with a thematic approach for KG and primary school, integrating the skills of the core subjects. Art, music and French have been introduced into the primary school curriculum. PE is taught from KG to grade 12. There have been significant changes to the KG curriculum since the last inspection. It is now based on the Early Years development curriculum. It encourages active, creative, social and physical learning through play. There is a successful IB diploma course taught in the upper school where student numbers are still small. Grade 10 students are now offered additional AS subjects in accounting, business, economics, film making and French.

The school has some links with universities and lacks partnership with a range of other external partners could be extended. An enrichment programme is being developed by the newly appointed extra-curricular activities coordinator. Students are now more involved in different extra-curricular activities. An example of this is the participation of the senior students in the MUN "Model United Nations." This is a high quality opportunity for students to develop leadership and public debating skills. The curriculum does not meet the learning needs of students with additional needs, be they gifted and talented or weaker students.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school has a positive ethos. It cares for and supervises the large number of students extremely well. Students say they feel happy and safe and parents agree. Absences are followed up by phone call or text messages on the same day. There is a clinic, with a doctor and nurse on hand to treat students. A prayer room is available for students. It is shared with teachers. Career guidance is appropriate. Most university representatives visit the school and advise grade 11 and 12 students on their choices. Students have the opportunity to visit exhibitions and careers events.

There is no special educational needs coordinator in post. The pastoral and academic needs of such students are not being fully met. The school lacks a rewards and sanctions policy. This is needed because there is an inconsistent application of sanctions by the school supervisors.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school building is four years old. It is well maintained. It has effective follow-up procedures for all maintenance work. This is monitored by the health and safety committee. The school provides a safe learning environment. It is surrounded by a high fence and checked by a security team who ensure no unauthorised access. Fire alarms are tested every month. New CCTV cameras are being installed around the building. Although there are shaded playgrounds and an Astroturf area, outdoor space is limited. The school has inadequate specialist facilities, such as music and art rooms. There is no indoor gymnasium or assembly hall. The library is small which limits independent research. Lack of these specialist facilities, restrict a broad implementation of the curriculum. There is a large examination hall. The rapid growth of student numbers has resulted in overcrowded classrooms. There are classes of over 30 students and some rooms are small. This restricts movement and makes group work challenging. There are plans for new school premises.

The school's resources to support its aims

There are sufficient qualified teachers and support staff. The school has recently appointed additional support staff including helpers in KG classrooms, a librarian, and a laboratory technician. Staffing and resources to support students with special educational needs are inadequate. All KG classrooms have now been equipped with projectors and mini white boards. Teachers have laptops, internet access and lamination machines. In KG, the play area is newly equipped with jungle gyms and swings. There are stimulating and informative displays in classrooms and corridors. The four science laboratories are equipped and supported by a laboratory technician. The library lacks the resources to support independent study and research for the number of students. The 2 computer labs with internet connection are inadequate for a school of this size. There is not sufficient access for all students. The school has two Astroturf fenced sports fields for football, and training, and two fenced shaded areas. External organisations are contracted to provide additional facilities for sport and PE. The school owns 54 buses which are all regularly maintained and have cameras. Students do not always wear the bus seatbelts.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The principal and the whole school is embracing a culture of change. The school is moving

forward rapidly. Since the last inspection there have been changes in the curriculum, staffing, leadership, resources and teaching and learning. KG has been transformed in terms of the quality of provision and the focus on child centred learning. New leadership structures and clear roles and responsibilities, at senior and middle leadership, are driving school improvement.

Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by evidence identifying both strengths and weaknesses. The self evaluation form (SEF) informs the school development plan (SDP) and the 5 year strategic plan. The SDP is a detailed, structured and feasible plan. It has clear responsibilities for each target, linked to financial resources, and targets are specific and measurable. It is a working document which is driving change.

The owner is committed to the vision of the school. She has authorised spending on a wide range of additional resources, including staffing. Teachers' salaries are paid promptly. The school is in the process of establishing a Board of Trustees. This is a highly popular school. Parents are supportive of the principal and the school. Reporting to and informing parents of students' progress could be strengthened.

Progress since the last inspection

The principal, senior leaders and teachers have embraced change. They are taking advice from outside educational consultants to support developments. The principal has allocated substantial resources and funding. Most of the recommendations in the previous inspection report have been implemented. For example, the leadership have acted to improve provision and teaching in the early years and broaden the curriculum in the primary grades. Not all the improvement actions are yet having impact. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and improving. The capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve progress in Arabic, Islamic Studies and social studies throughout the school by:
 - i. providing professional development for teachers about effective teaching and learning, assessment, tracking and monitoring of progress
 - ii. enabling co-ordinators to visit other schools to view good practice in action
 - iii. employing specialist teachers for Islamic Studies and social studies.

2. Ensure teachers plan lessons which support students with different abilities, especially those with special education needs by:
 - i. appointing a special needs coordinator to lead and manage the identification of and support for children with special educational needs
 - ii. ensuring teachers plan lessons and resources for students who need additional support
 - iii. requiring teachers to identify more able students who need more challenging tasks, questions and extension work.
3. Develop the use of assessment data and the tracking of students' progress by:
 - i. establishing baseline attainment data for all student admissions and regularly assessing progress using internal and/or external measures that are moderated and validated
 - ii. tracking students' progress, identifying any under achievement and taking action to address it.
4. Ensure supervisors have a consistent approach to behaviour management, by:
 - i. providing a policy for rewards and sanctions for the whole school appropriate to different age groups, in consultation with students, parents and staff
 - ii. ensuring a consistent approach to the application of rewards and sanctions and regularly reviewing and evaluating their effectiveness.

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								