



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



Inspection Report

Aliaa International Private School

Academic Year 2014 – 2015

Aliaa

Aliaa International Private School

Inspection Date	27 – 30 April 2015
School ID#	235
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	635
Age Range	3 to 15 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Alyas Ali
School Address	Al Daher/ Mezyed, Al Ain
Telephone Number	+971 (0)3 884 8992
Fax Number	+971 (0)3 780 9080
Official Email (ADEC)	Aliaaint.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	Aliaaintschool.com
Date of last inspection	21 – 24 April 2014

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 C;	GRADE 6
-------------------------------------	----------------	----------------

The main strengths of the school are:

- the vision and professional expertise of the principal are beginning to provide clear direction
- recent appointments are starting to have a positive impact, particularly in the Kindergarten
- the improved communication with parents and the efforts made to engage them in the education of their children
- the regular professional development organised and provided by the school, to support the development of teaching and learning skills.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science
- the curriculum and lesson planning to adequately caters for students who speak English as an additional language
- consistency in the quality and variety of teaching and the use of assessment for learning
- the quantity and quality of resources in classrooms and specialist areas, particularly in the library
- the intervention strategies and provision of specialist resources to support the learning of students with special educational needs
- clarity of the role of the board of governors in supporting and challenging the school.

Introduction

The school was evaluated by 4 inspectors. They observed 61 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, subject coordinators, students, parents and the representative of the school owner. They scrutinised students' work across the school, analysed 245 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and other senior staff were involved throughout the process and took part in 4 joint lesson observations with inspectors.

Description of the School

The school, located in the Al Daher region of Al Ain, opened in September 2013. The aims are 'to enable each student to achieve their potential within a learning environment that is safe, positive, respectful, inclusive and welcoming. We aim to nurture a passion for knowledge, sport, creativity and vocational skills'.

The majority of the 635 students are from the local area. All students are Muslim, of Arabic heritage, and 65% are boys. The majority of the students are Emirati nationals (86%). The other main groups of students are from Oman (7%) and the remaining 7% are from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The school has recognised 32 students as having special educational needs (SEN), but their specific needs have not been identified. Gifted and talented students have not been identified. The school states that a high proportion of students (70%) have difficulty with the English language.

The school follows the American Common Core Curriculum aligned to the California State standards; science is aligned with the 'Next Generation' standards; the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum is provided for the subjects taught in Arabic. The school has introduced an early learning goals framework for the curriculum provision from Kindergarten (KG) through to Grade 2.

The new Principal had been in post for 2 weeks; he had formerly been the vice-principal for 5 months. A newly constituted senior leadership team comprises the principal, heads of department, KG coordinator and the special education needs coordinator (SENCO). There are 46 teachers in post. The school had a significantly high turnover of staff in the previous academic year.

Annual student fees are in the low to medium range from AED 10,000 to AED 18,000.

The Effectiveness of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the Aliaa International School is unsatisfactory. Attainment in most subjects is below international expectations, with the exception of the subjects taught in Arabic where it is in line with expectations. Children enter the school with very low competence in English and weak numeracy skills. During their time in school, students do not make sufficient progress. This is mainly because neither the curriculum nor lessons are sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teaching is unsatisfactory because the quality of lessons is highly variable. There is a paucity of resources in some areas of the curriculum.

Positive relationships exist between teachers and students, which helps to promote their personal development. Students enjoy being at school which is reflected in the above average attendance rates. The school shows a firm commitment to the care and protection of students. Behaviour is satisfactory; girls are usually more consistent in their behaviour. Students show respect for the values and heritage of the UAE and contribute appropriately to assemblies and the singing of the national anthem. Parents are appreciative of the recent efforts to improve communication with them, particularly about the progress children are making. The new principal and the senior leadership team are starting to provide a clearer strategic direction for the school. After a significant period of turbulence, staff morale has begun to improve. Regular professional development is supporting staff in improving the quality of teaching in some areas.

Students' attainment & progress

Students' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are below curriculum expectations at all grades. Attainment in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies is in line with curriculum expectations. Students of all ages do not make the expected progress in gaining 21st century skills such as critical, creative thinking and problem solving. The major impediment to this progress is their lack of confidence in communicating in English.

Children who start school in the KG have little understanding of standard Arabic; by the time they leave KG they can listen and appropriately respond to teacher directions. Few children have any experience of English prior to coming to school. They make slow progress in most areas of learning including communication and literacy skills, numeracy and developing creativity.

In Arabic, reading and writing are stronger than speaking skills. This development is effectively supported by activities that encourage writing short stories and reading and recapping the content of these stories. In the lower grades, many students struggle to express their thoughts in standard Arabic. In Islamic education, students acquire expected levels of knowledge about Islamic values; they cannot always link this learning to their everyday lives. In social studies, students have an age-appropriate understanding of the history and geography of the UAE.

In English, speaking, listening, writing and reading skills are not adequately developed. Most students are able to identify single words by memorisation and rudimentary phonic skills. Where students are able to identify words they are not able to understand full sentences or explain the meaning from the context. For example, Grade 6 boys did not know relatively simple items of vocabulary that were vital to an understanding of a novel they were studying. Many students in the older grades do not speak English with confidence and their vocabulary is limited.

In mathematics in the lower grades, students' understanding of number concepts and their ability to perform simple calculations are weak. Most are able to recognise numbers but find it difficult to explain the meaning of addition or subtraction even using single digits. In a Grade 3 lesson, on simple multiplication and division, the pace of learning was impeded by insufficient knowledge of tables. Older students have a basic knowledge of manipulating equations and drawing graphs; they are unable to use mathematical vocabulary correctly to explain how problems are solved.

In science, low-level language competence restricts understanding. For example, in the lower grades, children can place animals into their habitats such as land and sea, though cannot match these organisms with their printed names. In the primary grades, students can give examples of solids, liquids and gases and group them according to their state of matter; they cannot explain the characteristics appropriately. At all grade levels investigative skills and the ability to carry out experiments are underdeveloped.

The needs of students with SEN and those who are gifted and talented are not rigorously identified and their progress is unsatisfactory. Similarly, the focus on developing 21st century skills is inconsistent and the promotion of independent learning is limited.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Generally, students enjoy school and conduct themselves appropriately, showing respect for other students and adults. Behaviour is satisfactory; girls are more consistently well-behaved. Relationships between students are positive. They understand there are a variety of cultures in the school and report they have friends drawn from different backgrounds. Students are developing moral viewpoints, which reflect their own cultural backgrounds and Muslim upbringing. They are respectful of UAE values shown by their active involvement in assemblies and singing of the national anthem. Attendance at 95% is above average.

The recently established Student Council provides opportunities for older students to take on leadership roles. In this context, students were directly involved in the creation of the House System, which has a focus on rewarding good behaviour. In the short period of its introduction, it has generated a lot of interest and healthy competition among students. A variety of after-school activities provide further opportunities for students to promote their self-confidence and skills. They are not active in seeking out guidance about future pathways. Students demonstrate they understand the benefits of leading healthy lifestyles through specific activities in the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Over 50% of lessons were deemed to be unsatisfactory or poor. Some emerging better practice was seen, mainly in KG and Arabic. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly secure enabling them to share accurate information. The effectiveness of teaching is impeded by use of inappropriate strategies. Teachers have limited experience of delivering lessons suitably adapted to EAL students. In consequence, there is insufficient emphasis in reinforcing literacy skills. Learning in many lessons is adversely affected by the students' lack of confidence in English.

The quality of teaching varies significantly within subjects and across grades. In KG, some teachers are confident with an interactive group work approach where children explore ideas and promote their own learning through play. Others do not have sufficient understanding of how young children learn best and so the strategies used are inappropriate and ineffective. This is reflected in too much teacher talk and repetitive chanting of facts. In the better lessons, effective use is made of ICT to promote group work and collaborative activities. In general, there is insufficient differentiation in the content of these activities, so the needs of the less able or more gifted students are not adequately met.

English lessons in the higher grades do not motivate students; they utilize a narrow range of teaching methods and inadequate levels of resources. In too many lessons, teachers talk for a disproportionate amount of lesson so restricting learning to the acquisition of knowledge rather than the development of skills. There are exceptions to this; for example, in a Grade 6 mathematics lesson on solving equations the teacher introduced a series of activities to illustrate the idea of balance, which was then transferred into the use of inverse operations. Students were asked to explain their solutions providing an effective cross-curricular link and the reinforcement of literacy.

The tracking of individual progress is not sufficiently robust. In some mathematics lessons, there is an effective use of whiteboards for students to write their solutions on so the teacher can check for understanding. In most lessons, there is insufficient use of a plenary at the end of the lesson to check for understanding and clarify any gaps in learning. The quality of marking in books is usually very unsatisfactory. The marking, where it exists, is often cursory and does not give any indications of how students could improve their work. The poor quality of presentation in most students' notebooks is accepted, thus demonstrating low expectations of students. Students are not set targets for improvement. School has not been able to use the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) to assess students' skills in English and mathematics due to limitations in the ICT resource.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The implementation of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. It is not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of those who find learning more difficult, the more able or those who speak EAL. This is a key reason why these students make unsatisfactory progress. The delivery of the curriculum does not motivate students and does not sufficiently prepare them for life beyond school. The range of extracurricular activities is adequate. These include a range of sporting activities and other additions such as a chess club and subject oriented clubs, related to mathematics and science, which enhance learning.

The curriculum content is appropriately broad and aligns with the American Common Core Standards. The needs of students are more appropriately met by the implementation of the KG curriculum; greater continuity and planned progression is more evident in its delivery. The focus on early learning goals is met through a variety of learning centres, which allows children to choose and supports early steps in independent learning. An established curriculum committee has effectively adapted subject programmes to reflect a more thematic approach up to Grade 4; a more active approach is evident in these medium-term curriculum plans.

The curriculum provision appropriately develops students' personal qualities. It promotes understanding of the values and the variety of cultures within the UAE through social studies, assemblies and celebrations. The support for students with SEN is at an early stage of development; some individual intervention strategies are being implemented. The needs of more able students are not addressed.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students is satisfactory. The school provides a safe and secure learning environment. Students report that teachers truly care about their personal and academic well-being. They confirm that all adults at school treat them kindly. A detailed child protection policy is in place and staff have been trained with regard to their responsibilities under this policy.

The school has appropriately designated a member of staff to be in charge of health and safety. School records show regular daily checks are made and maintenance licenses and inspections are up-to-date. The school transportation is new and fully equipped with safety materials. Bus drills are regularly conducted. Periodic fire and evacuation drills are satisfactorily conducted and a systematic log is kept of the evacuation time. The school has a well-resourced clinic that is staffed by licensed nurses who keep appropriate medical records.

All relevant procedures are in place to keep students safe. Visitors are appropriately screened and identified before allowing access. Communication systems, which include prompt contact with parents maintain and encourage regular attendance. Parents value the steps taken by the school to ensure the safety and protection of their children.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The building and premises are adequately maintained. Most of the classrooms are tidy and appropriate in size for the number of students. The classes in the KG provide enough opportunities for the promotion of role-play and investigative play. Students remain within the classroom base during most of the school day so there is no subject ownership by teachers. In consequence, there is very limited, poor quality display that does not provide a stimulating learning environment.

An extensive closed-circuit television (CCTV) system provides effective security. Large canopies provide suitable shade during assembly and break time. The range and quality of specialist facilities is variable. There are 2 science laboratories and the library provision is spacious; it has the potential to provide a good learning environment. The provision for physical education is very unsatisfactory. The indoor space for physical education is a converted classroom and in consequence is not fit for purpose to adequately develop students' physical skills. The outdoor

provision is similarly very limited. Pitches are poorly marked and the ground is uneven. This situation significantly reduces the range of physical skills that students can develop. Separate prayer rooms are provided for the KG, girls and boys and the school encourages the use of these rooms.

The school's resources to support its aims

The schools' resources are unsatisfactory. Classrooms have an inadequate stock of relevant resources to promote active and independent learning. Interactive whiteboards are a feature of all classrooms; this resource is underutilized. Students have access to an ICT suite containing 30 computers but their use is compromised because relevant software cannot be used; for example, the organization and setting up the MAP program for evaluating mathematics and English skills. Classrooms do not have adequate technology for students to practise independent learning skills.

After a period of a significantly high turnover of staff, there are currently sufficient teaching staff, administration and support staffs to support the delivery of the curriculum. The appointment of a principal, KG coordinator, a SENCO and a range of Heads of Department's have appropriately enhanced the staffing complement.

The library stock is inadequate. It does not have the range and quality of books to support the thematic approach being adopted through curriculum initiatives. The limitation in resources means that the library is not used as a base for independent learning and research. Science resources are basic and limited in number. Procedures to maintain buses in a safe and reliable condition are appropriately adhered to. The provision for storage and consumption of food is hygienic.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. This is because the school leadership and management have had insufficient impact on the key recommendations made by the previous inspection report. There has been little improvement to students' academic achievement, the reasons for inadequate teaching have not been tackled satisfactorily, resources still do not adequately support delivery of the curriculum, and the requirements of those with specific learning needs are still largely unmet. The governing body does not meet its duties and responsibilities effectively enough.

The very recently appointed principal and newly established leadership team have made a promising start to improving the quality of teaching and learning. They have a clear vision and strategic direction for the school. The enhanced senior

leadership team (SLT) demonstrates a shared understanding of the priorities for the school. There is an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching and academic progress. The whole staff was effectively engaged in producing the school self-evaluation document (SEF) and judgments on the quality of the school's work are largely realistic. The associated school development plan (SDP) reflects all features of the previous inspection report and addresses these issues through relevant action plans. There is a lack of clarity about the role of the board of governors. They are involved too much in the day-to-day operation of the school; governors do not fully appreciate their strategic role in holding senior leaders to account for the quality of education.

The school has a systematic process for evaluating the outcomes of lesson observations, which focuses on basic teaching skills and competences. The outcomes of the procedure have identified specific gaps in teacher skills, such as formative assessment and activity based learning. These examples are beginning to be addressed through ongoing regular professional development. The outcomes of the inspection and joint observations with staff, showed that senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are broadly accurate. Staff indicate that they now feel more supported and in consequence, morale is starting to improve.

The school has improved communication with parents and has been able to elicit sufficient interest so as to create a parent's council. Parents say they are more informed about their children's education and matters relating to school life. The parental questionnaire indicated general satisfaction with the work of the school.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection. The very high turnover of staff at all levels has created high levels of 'turbulence', staff anxiety and lack of direction. The board of governors has not clarified its role in appropriately supporting, challenging and holding senior leaders to account.

The newly appointed principal has begun to bring a semblance of stability to a deteriorating situation. The shift to greater transparency in decision-making and the actions taken to involve staff, students and parents are having a positive impact. The principal has a very realistic view as to where the school currently is in terms of its provision for students. That view is in line with the judgements of this inspection.

The senior leadership team has been expanded to effectively include recently appointed heads of department, a KG coordinator and SENCO. These managers now have an active role, which has had a positive impact in curriculum planning

and increased support for teachers. These improvements are very embryonic and can be seen most clearly in the KG.

The school, in particular the governors, has not demonstrated the satisfactory capacity to sustain or build upon the very recent improvements that have been initiated. The school will require significant external support and monitoring to ensure that it provides at least a satisfactory standard of education by the time of the next inspection.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise academic achievement, particularly in English, mathematics, science and ICT by:
 - i. adapting lessons to meet the needs of those with SEN, the more able and those who speak EAL
 - ii. providing opportunities in all lessons for students to speak English for a variety of academic purposes
 - iii. modifying curriculum plans to a focus on meeting the needs of students who speak EAL, particularly in developing literacy skills
 - iv. providing feedback to students on their academic progress; ensuring written work is marked and personal improvement targets are set
 - v. disseminating the emerging better practice evident in the KG across all other subjects and phases
 - vi. improving the quality of both classroom and library resources to effectively promote active and independent learning styles
 - vii. providing high quality relevant professional development for staff and monitor the impact of this on the quality of teaching.
2. Ensuring that governors fulfil their roles adequately by:
 - i. not being involved in the school's operations on a day-to-day basis
 - ii. supporting the new leadership team in ensuring that the very recent improvements are allowed to flourish
 - iii. understanding their role in strategically holding senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and academic achievement.

Inspection Grades

Performance Standard	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
	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								