



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



Summary Inspection Report

The American International School in Abu Dhabi

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Iqraa

The American International School in Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	25 th – 28 th November, 2012
School ID#	117
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	American
Number of Students	1,267
Age Range	3 – 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Gareth Jones
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. The inspectors observed 93 lessons. During the time in school, inspectors considered the ethos, the quality of students' learning experiences; personal development, progress and the teaching they receive. They met with teachers, students and analysed assessment data and reviewed a range of school documentation.

Description of the School

The school was established in 1994. This is the director's fifth academic year in post. The school is accredited internationally by the Council of International Schools and, in the United States of America, by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. The American International School (AISA) was the first school in Abu Dhabi to be authorised by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IB) to offer their IB diploma programme. It is also the first school in Abu Dhabi to be authorised to offer the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IBPYP).

AISA is part of the Educational Services Overseas (ESOL) group. The school aims to produce reflective, responsible, independent and respectful students who possess strong global citizenship, integrity and an appreciation for lifelong learning. There are 1,267 students of which 649 are boys and 618 girls. The student population is diverse with 72 nationalities represented. The largest proportion, (32%) of students is Emirati, American (16.8%), Egyptian (5.3%), Canadian (4.7%), Jordanian (3.4%), Lebanese (2.5%), British (2.5%) and Pakistani (2.2%). The school population is 68.8% Muslim.

Student applications are considered on an individual basis. Students are accepted if they are focused on continuing their education at a tertiary level. Student entry level is variable, as is their socio-economic background. A small percentage of students are identified as needing special support. This is provided by the Student Support Services Department (SSS). Of the 18 students identified, 8 have behavioural and emotional difficulties, 6 have moderate learning difficulties.

School fees range from 29,078 AED in Kindergarten (KG) through to 40,065 AED for Primary, 44,928 AED for Middle and 52,852 AED for Upper School students. Teachers' annual salaries range from 96,000 AED to 171,636 AED, the average being 135,000 AED. In addition teachers are in receipt of additional benefits which raises the average to 220,000 AED per annum.

The campus accommodates two schools. The Elementary School serves 665 students and the High School 602.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band B

Grade 4

Inspectors judged the American International School (AISA) to be in Band B, that is a satisfactory school.

Good progress has been made in tackling many of the recommendations from the last inspection report, although the impact of these improvements on standards has yet to be felt as they remain broadly satisfactory. The school's curriculum is now broader and more balanced. The elementary school curriculum has developed within the framework of the IBPYP and students enjoy an inquiry-based approach. The high school offers three options: a High School Diploma linked to the Virginia State Standards of Learning, the IB, and a regular high school programme supplemented with IB subject options. An increasing number of students in Grades 11 and 12 are following the IB. Arabic teaching groups are split between those who have Arabic as a first or second language.

The Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) has now been extended from Grades 2-10, providing teachers with accurate formative data. In the best lessons, teachers use this information to inform planning, but teachers are at the early stages of implementing differentiated approaches to student learning. The tracking system is being developed to allow teachers to analyse any inequalities in performance.

The appointment of two new principals has improved leadership and management. This is particularly the case in the elementary school where the principal leads by example and, in a very positive way, holds teachers to account through rigorous and effective monitoring of classroom practice. In the high school, accountability is not as well defined and formalised and, whilst Grade Level Leaders effectively support their teams, the management role of the heads of department is less developed. Teachers appreciate the positive support they receive from leaders.

Standards and progress across the school are satisfactory overall but with weaknesses in Arabic and Social Studies and some inconsistency in mathematics. MAP results indicate that speaking and listening, reading, and mathematics are improving and outcomes are broadly in line with international standards. The data from Preliminary SATs (PSATs) show improvement and indicate that results for students taking PSATs are now close to the US national average. IB results are satisfactory and improving in science and English. In mathematics, results are variable from year to year but are satisfactory overall. Standards and progress in Arabic and social studies are unsatisfactory. Standards in Islamic Studies are satisfactory because the students have a sound grounding in the basic aspects, but they are not challenged to exercise their knowledge and so develop higher

level skills. Boys generally perform less well than girls and Emirati students perform less well than non- Emirati students.

In English, students work creatively on design ideas and show strong presentations skills when delivering their ideas to the class. In mathematics, Grade 5 students use multiplication and division strategies to solve equations appropriately. In lower grade science lessons, students can explain how diet can impact on blood pressure. Students understand the importance of UAE and the Arabic World, its strategic location and the significance of its rich resources. However, their weak skills in map work and their lack of terminology mean that they cannot locate Islamic countries on a map and do not understand terms such as population density, for example. Students make good progress in drama and satisfactory progress in information technology and humanities. Progress in art is good as students are encouraged to be inventive and respond to this challenge with flair and imagination.

Students' personal and social development is generally good. Almost all students behave well with only a few instances of poor behaviour amongst boys in the middle school, when a narrow range of teaching strategies are used. Students relate well to each other and with their teachers. This leads to a sense of harmony and mutual respect. In KG and elementary, students interact with confidence and express their ideas freely either orally, in writing or in drawings. Students say they enjoy the diverse nature of the school as they can share in each other's culture. Almost all students are involved in a range of creative and sporting clubs. The student council meets on a weekly basis along with their teachers, to organise school activities and events.

Most high school students have a good understanding of the need to develop good work habits and to put these into practice in their studies. Student ambassadors plan activities for special assemblies. The school actively promotes the UAE culture. Students enthusiastically prepare to celebrate National Day, expressing their full understanding of UAE values and history. Students show respect when the UAE anthem is played each morning. Students are confident and articulate. They understand how to lead safe and healthy lives as seen in the enquiry based approach taken in health education classes. They are being well prepared for the next stage in their education or working life.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and there are many examples of good teaching. In the best lessons, teachers excite students to enter into informed debate and persuasive argument. Teachers frequently make use of real life contexts to enrich students' learning. For example, in economics, the teacher uses real examples to further explain market failure. In English and mathematics,

students collaborate together to peer-assess using rubrics. In English, students manage their reading circles and also enjoy silent reading. As a result of all these opportunities, they develop valuable skills for learning. In most curricular areas students express themselves well. In science, teachers ask challenging questions and give sufficient time to enable students to think before replying. High-level questions in English help students analyse their knowledge of topics. In general, differentiation to provide work for students at different ability levels is a weaker aspect of teaching, particularly in Arabic and in elementary and middle grades. Learning objectives are displayed in most classrooms with the best having clearly and usefully defined outcomes. Special needs students now receive specialist support outside the class in addition to some support in lessons and their progress is satisfactory and improving as a consequence. In general, teachers give freely of their time and after school support results in improved student performance.

Weaknesses in teaching are to be found in Arabic, Islamic Studies and social studies because there is an over-reliance on the textbooks, meaning that the needs of students of differing abilities are not appropriately addressed. In these subjects in particular, some teachers are as yet unaware of what good teaching looks like and do not get sufficient opportunities to observe good teachers in practice. A general weakness across the range of subjects is the use of formative feedback to help students improve their work, although good practice was observed in a few lessons.

The curriculum is broad and includes a good balance of arts and science subjects. A cross-curricular approach to learning excites and motivates elementary and middle school students and enables them to make links between different aspects of learning. For example, the Grade 8 ‘murder mystery theme’ incorporated science, mathematics, social studies and English. It was very effective in engaging and challenging students. More generally, the elementary and middle school curricula do not offer the same good levels of challenge as that provided for IB students in the senior school. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and include basketball, soccer, volleyball, drama and music clubs. In the debating society, students formed groups to represent UN countries and debated issues such as human trafficking, widening their awareness of international issues. The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to develop their skills in independent learning, critical thinking and presentation. Their learning is further enriched through good quality educational excursions and field trips.

Protection, care, guidance and support are mostly strong in the school. There have been a few minor incidences of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and name-calling, and students say these are dealt with quickly and effectively by senior

managers and counsellors. The student handbook outlines the school's expectations for behaviour within a defined moral code. Students feel the successful system of sanctions and rewards is fair and effective. It reinforces qualities such as perseverance, respect, and initiative. Teachers strive to deepen global awareness within the diverse student community. Parents attend interactive workshops to help their understanding of an American curriculum. A 'learning platform' enables parents, students and teachers to communicate electronically. The college counsellor ensures that all high school students get appropriate support to successfully apply for the best universities. From 11th Grade, individual parents and students are guided through the university application process.

Attendance is registered electronically in all lessons and absences are followed up with a telephone call to the students' home. However, the available data are not used to monitor rates of attendance or to analyse differences between year groups or groups of students, so to inform action. School leaders estimate attendance at 95%, and say that absences are higher in the high school and amongst Emirati boys. This weakens the effectiveness of personal development and fails to support progress measures, particularly for Emirati students.

Premises and resources are generally good. Although the science laboratories are suitable, more resources are needed to enable them to be used effectively. A few classrooms are small but class sizes are low ensuring this is not an issue. Facilities are good and the new swimming pool provides another dimension to the range of sporting facilities.

Fees are high in comparison with Abu Dhabi averages. Finances are well managed. The budget is healthy and projected expenditure is clearly annotated.

The Director, the owners and ESOL have clearly defined roles and set the strategic direction for school improvement effectively; the impact of recent senior appointments is already beginning to accelerate improvement. The two new principals know the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on use of performance data and the systematic monitoring of teaching practice. The impact of this has had a positive effect in the quality of teaching in the elementary school. The role of some middle managers continues to be underdeveloped and staff turnover remains high. Parents' views are sought on an annual basis. Parent ambassadors are active in the day-to-day life of the school and form the link between existing and new parents resulting in a positive community ethos.

The school provides satisfactory value for money. There have been clear improvements since the last inspection, and although results are not yet consistently high in all subjects and cohorts, the overall outcomes are in line with

international norms. Given its track record and current rate of progress, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Make better use of assessment by:
 - i. providing students with good quality feedback on their work and how it can be improved; and
 - ii. using individual student assessment data and group data to ensure that all teachers differentiate their planning to provide challenging tasks for all groups and abilities of students in order to accelerate their progress.
2. Improve standards in teaching and leadership in the high school by:
 - i. using the elementary school leaders as role models to further develop the leadership role of middle managers in the high school;
 - ii. developing rigorous systems for monitoring and improving teaching practice in the high school in order to improve accountability; and
 - iii. sharing the good practice in teaching to ensure greater consistency of high quality teaching and learning.
3. Improve standards in Arabic and Islamic studies by:
 - i. ensuring teachers use resources more effectively and use a greater variety of activities in order to engage and motivate students.
4. Improve the analysis of progress and attendance data to focus initiatives and further improve standards.