



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



Inspection Report

American International School Abu Dhabi

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

American International School Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	2 – 5 March 2014
School ID#	117
Licensed Curriculum	American and International Baccalaureate
Number of Students	1319
Age Range	3 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Gareth Jones
School Address	P O Box 5992, Muroor, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 444 4333
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Official Email (ADEC)	Americanint.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.aisa.sch.ae
Date of last inspection	25 – 28 November 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 4
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the school has a strong community ethos
- attainment in the American Curriculum is in line with international standards
- students are confident independent learners
- the director and senior staff are effective and well regarded
- technology is well used for communication and learning purposes
- communication with parents is strong.

The main areas for improvement are to:

- improve teaching and students' progress in Arabic and Islamic education
 - strengthen students' understanding of UAE culture and heritage
 - develop the monitoring and evaluation skills of middle leaders
 - improve some aspects of teaching
 - enhance students' personal development
 - improve the facilities – shading in the sport/play areas and specialist accommodation for science and art.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. The inspectors observed 98 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, middle leaders, the managing body (board) representative, teachers, support staff, students and parents. They analysed test and assessment results and scrutinised students' work across the school. They considered the 431 responses to the parents' questionnaire and many of the school's policies and other documents. The director was involved throughout the inspection process. Senior staff engaged in joint lesson observations with inspectors.

Description of the School

The school, which is known as AISA, opened in 1994 in the Embassy Area of Central Abu Dhabi. The management company, Educational Services Overseas (ESOL) provides the school's governing board. Students come from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The school provides the American High School Diploma and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and IB Primary Years Programme (PYP). About 25% of students in grades 11 and 12 take the IB DP and take individual subject certificates. The school aims to *'produce reflective, responsible, independent and respectful students who possess strong global citizenship, integrity and an appreciation for life-long learning'*.

Of the 1319 students, there are 667 boys and 652 girls. There are 193 children in kindergarten (KG), 499 students in elementary (grades 1 – 5), 277 in middle school (grades 6 – 8) and 350 students in the high school (grades 9 – 12). 68 % of the students are Muslim and 55% of Arab heritage. There are 71 nationalities represented in the student body. Of these 31% are Emirati, 15% American, 5% Egyptian, 4.5% Jordanian, 4.5% Indian, 4% Canadian, 2.5% Australian, 2.2% Lebanese, 2% Philippino and less than 2% each from Pakistan, Malaysia, France, UK, Korea and France. Further very small proportions are from many other countries. There are 70 students identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Most have moderate (36) or specific (19) learning needs. In addition, 4 students have behaviour difficulties, 3 each have severe learning and speech and language needs. A further 3 students are identified as gifted and talented. The school has more than 80% of its student population with English as a second language. Those at an early stage in English acquisition are referred to as English language learners (ELL). In some grades, the proportion of ELL is nearer to 40%.

School fees are AED 2,9078 in KG to AED 5,2852 in the high school. The principal, referred to as the 'director', has been in post 6 years. A new ADEC improvement partner was very recently allocated to the school.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Attainment is in line with international standards. This is shown in Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) tests, which are taken in grades KG 2 – Grade 10 and IB Diploma Programme (DP) results. The school provides effective intervention support for ELL students, particularly in the middle grades. MAP and other data indicate that the support helps them catch up with their peers. By grades 9 and 10, MAP data show that results in reading, language, and mathematics, are above US norms, when compared with Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) mean scores. The school is taking effective action to address weaker mathematics performance in grade 6 where the ELL population is higher and language difficulties slow the progress.

In 2013, the school scored just above international averages in 20 of 26 IB subjects. Three year data shows the mean IB grade has risen. The school took effective action to address a drop in mathematics performance in 2012. As a result, scores improved significantly in 2013, bringing the overall pass rate to 88%. The school enables students wishing to seek college admission in the USA to undertake the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs). Results for 2013 have not been received by the school. Those for 2011 and 2012, show that mathematics scores are stronger than those in critical reading or writing.

The school analyses its performance data appropriately, including for key groups. It identified that IB physics results in 2013 were lower than other science subjects and took action to address the weaknesses. The school is taking a range of appropriate measures to address weaknesses in SAT scores.

Progress in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. For example, students in grade 1 English can sequence their writing to tell a story and use full stops and capital letters appropriately. Middle grade students use laptops and other devices to research, collate resources and make presentations about their work. Grade 12 students use technology to produce the Year Book and regular newsletters which are widely distributed. In mathematics, progress is improving. Grade 3 students, show clear understanding of place value and some grasp the relationship between fractions and decimals. In grade 11, IB1 students can solve trigonometric quadratic equations. In chemistry, grade 11 students confidently experiment on the enthalpy of combustion of alcohols. Attainment in Arabic and Islamic education is below expectation and progress is unsatisfactory. Skills in speaking, reading and writing Arabic are weak. The small number of students (5 in 2013) who take IB Arabic achieve well. For students

generally this is not the case. Grade 1 students are unable to blend letters to form words. Students in grades 8 struggle to write grammatically correct passages in Arabic. The progress of native Arabic speakers is slowed by limited expectations. In Islamic education, students cannot recite verses of the Holy Qur'an, properly paced with "Tajweed" rules. Most do not understand the deeper meaning of the verses. Progress is satisfactory in social studies. Students understand the pluralistic nature of the UAE. Although there is some variation, attainment and progress in other subjects are good overall. Students' thinking and collaborative skills are also good. They are developed well in the elementary school for example, through the big inquiry questions of the International Baccalaureate Primary Year Programme (IBPYP).

The school collects destination data on the students' university and college entrance. Many students proceed from the school to attend universities in the UK and USA. Canada, Australia and UAE universities, such as New York University (NYU) Abu Dhabi is also represented as a higher education destination.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is good. The school atmosphere is positive and relaxed throughout. Students are confident and proactive learners. Both parents and students confirm that they feel safe and happy in school. The diverse student population is seen as a strength. Students treat each other with respect. The very occasional incidences of bullying are minor in nature. Students confirm it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Attendance is above average at 93%. Some students in the high school, and, to a lesser extent, the middle grades are late to lessons. Students engage enthusiastically in a wide range of enrichment activities. These include daily after-school clubs provided by teachers, including sport, art, languages, writing, yoga, choir and chess. In addition, a number of external organisations provide other activities, including swimming, ballet, music, kayaking and sailing. The students' council is less effective in the high school. Student leaders as a whole are not high profile around the school.

Students lack a deep understanding of UAE culture and traditions. National Day is celebrated appropriately. Assemblies are held monthly. There are flags around the building. The flag is not raised on a daily basis. The National Anthem is played every day and shown due respect.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. It is strongest in the American curriculum, particularly in the elementary and high school grades. Relationships are positive. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This is particularly the case in regard to IB

teaching. In the elementary grades, teachers show clear understanding of how to use a range of strategies, and resources, to interest and challenge students. Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) are used skilfully by many teachers to extend learning. Development of collaborative and independent learning skills is good.

The use of IBPYP Unit of Inquiry (UofI) questions, specific learning objectives and success criteria linked to the US Common Core Standards raise expectations. For example, in a grade 4 UofI lesson, students were challenged to think about how decisions should be made to allocate resources to water-poor countries. They worked effectively in groups to consider key data about several countries, and summarised information to persuade others on which country was most needful and deserving. The students showed real concern about the issues, asked great questions and worked very effectively together. Ongoing assessment is used effectively to target learning particularly in elementary grades and the IBDP. In KG, the use of a synthetic phonics programme, high frequency words and guided reading are accelerating progress, particularly in KG2. Independent learning skills are mostly well developed. Child initiated activities to reinforce independent learning and other skills are more limited in frequency and scope.

The teaching of Arabic and Islamic education is unsatisfactory. A narrow range of teaching strategies and resources is used. Work is not matched to the needs of different abilities. The teaching improves to a limited extent in older grades but not enough to accelerate progress significantly.

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning in other subjects too. Occasionally, higher attainers find work easy, finish quickly and have to wait for others. Some middle grade boys' behaviour in a few lessons, and outside, is unsatisfactory and limits their learning. Very occasionally, teachers in high school grades do not provide the supportive atmosphere students need.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. The school has a broad curriculum with a wide range of enrichment activities. There are effective links with outside organisations to extend the provision. Higher attainers are enabled to undertake some challenging activities, such as through participation in the Model United Nations (MUN). This year, to increase curriculum rigour, the school made the transition towards regulating standards and making assessments of progress in line with the US Common Core Standards initiative. Considerable planning, including the identification of specific learning goals and success criteria, has been undertaken in the implementation process. The Arabic curriculum does not provide adequate scope and sequence for teaching the language effectively. In

the elementary school for example, a grade 1 textbook is used in all grades for any newly arrived, beginning level Arabic Foreign Language students, with little to supplement it. The curriculum implementation does not sufficiently promote or celebrate the UAE culture and heritage.

In the secondary grades, a 10 day timetable enables greater flexibility in the range of 'elective' subjects offered. It allows the school to provide separate boys' and girls' classes, which Emirati and other parents appreciate. The timetable also leads to some inconsistencies in provision and the school is rightly planning to review it. The American High School Diploma course, to which IB subject credits may be added, and the full IBDP course are offered in the high school. Extra activities, such as an active ECO Club, enable students to fulfil the community service part of the IB.

This year, the school started a 'bring your own device' (BYOD) initiative, enabling middle grade students to use their own laptops and tablets in class. It is still at an early stage in terms of impact. It is supported by a good school learning platform. This provides access to assignments, extra work, skills and reinforcement software. It supports effective communication between student, school and parents. Good intervention provision for ELL and SEN students supports learning in middle grades. In elementary grades, insufficient of this support is available for the numbers of students.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students are satisfactory and improving. The school has a positive ethos and a strong sense of community. Clear anti-bullying messages are emphasised at all levels. All staff are made aware of child protection. There is effective guidance for high school choices and university. At the end of grade 8, students receive a high school course prospectus. They also meet individually with counsellors for guidance on programmes, subject choices and information about local and international universities. Students and parents can get further information about course programmes on the school website. The school enables relatively open access to IB programmes. Students wishing to go for the full IB receive guidance from the IB co-ordinator. In addition, several IB preparatory courses in grade 10 support students in making the transition. With the support of counsellors, students make successful applications to a range of international universities. The school is careful about most safety aspects. Not all bus supervisors register students and report daily absences to the school as required.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The buildings and accommodation are satisfactory. Site security is diligent. The school has a range of appropriate specialist facilities including 2 gymnasiums, swimming pool, large soccer field, clinic and 2 prayer rooms. There is good provision for ICT. The school has 5 computer laboratories, IWBs in all classrooms and extra computers and laptop carts. Effective use is made of the available space. Displays and 'learning walls' celebrate and support students' work, particularly in elementary grades. Building risk assessments are carried out appropriately.

There are shortcomings in the accommodation. There is no disabled access. Science laboratories and art rooms are small for the numbers of students. There are narrow corridors in parts and limited shading outside, particularly for the sports field seating area. A plan is in place to provide a new KG and some classroom accommodation on the site in the near future. This will ease some of the pressure but will not address all the shortcomings. The school is substantially oversubscribed with 1,500 applications for 300 places this year. While it makes the most of the accommodation, it has outlived the buildings to some extent in terms of modern curriculum provision. The owners have a site outside the city and an option to build in the future.

The school's resources to support its aims

The resources are satisfactory and improving. The staff are well qualified. The appropriate material resources throughout the school are good in elementary and KG classrooms. Teaching assistants provide mostly effective support for learning in KG. There are 2 libraries, 1 for KG and 1 for the rest of the school. The main library, while relatively small for the student numbers, is well resourced with a wide range of books, appropriate to curriculum needs. The librarian's plans to reorganise the library to optimise its use are well thought through. ICT resources are good. Resources for sport and physical education are appropriate. Those for science are insufficient for the needs of a modern curriculum. The fire extinguishers on the buses lack an expiry date which presents a potential hazard.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The director and senior leaders are effective and well regarded. The Governing Board actively supports the school and the Board representative visits weekly. The Chief Education Officer is currently providing a leadership development programme for middle leaders. There is appropriate focus on continuous improvement, including through the analysis of performance data and sharing good practice. A good

range of professional development opportunities is provided. This includes a focus on specific teaching strategies. These are impacting positively on teaching and learning in the American curriculum. Professional development has also been provided for the Arabic department. As yet it has had limited impact. The department lacks opportunities to learn from effective teaching in the rest of the school and is not monitored adequately.

Teachers and leaders were involved in completing the school self-evaluation form (SEF) which provides a mostly accurate view of performance. The school development plan (SDP) is centred appropriately around the inspection framework standards. It is brief and costed with goals, success criteria and allocated responsibilities. The school has other detailed plans which drive improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality in the secondary school is not sufficiently rigorous. Middle leaders share good practice appropriately. Their skills in evaluating the quality of learning for individuals and groups in lessons are less well developed.

The school has good links with parents. The learning platform gives parents quality information and access to their children's progress grades. An active parent group supports the school. Teachers are loyal to the school. They appreciate how the owners strive to meet their needs when unforeseen circumstances arise. Teacher turnover has decreased over three years though still remains relatively high. High school students express concern about how this affects their continuity of learning.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is appropriate analysis of performance and attendance data so that trends and patterns can be identified. Assessment has improved. MAP and other data are used to identify weaknesses in learning and appropriate measures taken to address them. The data are not yet used consistently to differentiate the quality and impact of teaching. There is increasing use of rubrics to enable students to self and peer assess. Not all teachers are providing consistent feedback to students on how to improve their work. The roles of middle leaders have been effectively developed. They now actively promote peer sharing of good practice. Middle leaders are not yet accountable for the quality of delivery and provision in their areas. The professional development provided for teachers of Arabic and Islamic education is not making sufficient impact on learning in lessons. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further:

- 1 Improve teaching and students' progress in Arabic and Islamic education by:
 - i. raising students' attitudes to, and expectations of, the subjects
 - ii. enabling teachers to share good practice with colleagues in the American curriculum
 - iii. increasing the quality of resources to support a wider range of teaching styles and the use of Arabic
 - iv. providing more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of learning aligned to effective ongoing support.
- 2 Strengthen students' understanding of UAE culture and heritage by:
 - i. featuring these aspects more prominently in the curriculum
 - ii. increasing UAE community links and celebration of culture and heritage around the school
 - iii. providing quality time and space for raising the flag and singing the National Anthem.
- 3 Improve and empower the leadership of middle leaders by:
 - i. enabling them to take responsibility for subject quality
 - ii. developing their skills in evaluating the impact of teaching on students' progress.
- 4 Improve teaching by:
 - i. providing more support for English language learners (ELL) and special needs in the elementary school
 - ii. increasing the consistency with which quality teaching is delivered in the secondary grades.
- 5 Enhance students' personal development by:
 - i. improving the behaviour of some boys in middle grades
 - ii. improving the punctuality of students in secondary grades
 - iii. enabling students' to exercise leadership roles around the school on a daily basis

6. Improve the facilities by:
 - i. developing a medium term plan for increasing the shading in sport/play areas
 - ii. reviewing the opportunities for enhancing the specialist facilities for science and art as part of the new building development.

 7. Increase students' safety by:
 - i. ensuring all supervisors take attendance registers on buses and report absence to the school each day
 - ii. providing expiry dates on fire extinguishers.
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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								