



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



# Inspection Report

Abu Dhabi Australian School

Academic Year 2014 – 2015

إقرأ

Abu Dhabi Australian School

|                         |                                                                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inspection Date         | 27 – 30 April 2015                                                           |
| School ID#              | 27                                                                           |
| Licensed Curriculum     | International Baccalaureate (IB)                                             |
| Number of Students      | 1,112                                                                        |
| Age Range               | 3 to 18 years                                                                |
| Gender                  | Mixed                                                                        |
| Principal               | John Mason                                                                   |
| School Address          | PO Box 36044, Khalifa City B, Abu Dhabi                                      |
| Telephone Number        | +971 (0)2 586 6980; +971 (0)2 586 6981                                       |
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| Official Email (ADEC)   | <a href="mailto:adaustralian.pvt@adec.ac.ae">adaustralian.pvt@adec.ac.ae</a> |
| School Website          | <a href="http://www.aiahome.net/abu_dhabi">www.aiahome.net/abu_dhabi</a>     |
| Date of last inspection | 26 – 29 May 2013                                                             |

## 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**

### The main strengths of the school are:

- most students' attainment is broadly in line with international standards and they make satisfactory progress
- most students, particularly girls, now behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes towards learning
- long-term curriculum planning is thorough and reviewed carefully to ensure relevance, continuity and progression within programmes
- staff have established a positive ethos in which students' safety and well-being are supported effectively
- the senior leadership team fosters productive team work
- regular professional development is linked to the appraisal process
- staff at all levels maintain effective communication links with parents.

### The main areas for improvement are:

- attainment levels in all core subjects, particularly for more able students and those who find learning difficult
- opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and learn independently
- consistency in the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality of lesson planning, teaching and use of assessment to meet the different learning needs of all students
- implementation of the KG programme in order to provide purposeful learning activities for children to explore, solve problems and be creative
- structured guidance for students as they make choices regarding further education and careers
- provision of information and communication technology in classrooms for use by students
- self-evaluation procedures.

## Introduction

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The school was evaluated by 5 inspectors. They observed 91 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, coordinators, teachers, support staff, students and parents. They analysed test and assessment results, scrutinised students' work across the school, analysed the 145 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The leadership team was fully involved throughout the inspection process and conducted 4 joint lesson observations with inspectors.

## Description of the School

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Abu Dhabi Australian School opened in 2006 and moved to its present location in Khalifa City B in 2007. It is one of 6 member schools of the Australian International Academy; the other 5 are in Australia. Its vision is 'to have graduates who are well prepared and self-motivated to advance their country of origin and to participate effectively as world citizens with universal values'. The school is an authorised International Baccalaureate World school and offers the 3 International Baccalaureate Programmes. It follows the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Arabic, Islamic education and UAE social studies. Students in Grade 12 sit the IB Diploma examinations.

There are 1,112 students: 58% are boys, almost all are Muslim and of Arabic heritage. The majority of the students, i.e. 77% are Emirati nationals, with 4% Egyptian, 3% Yemeni, 2% Australian, 1% Omani, 1% Pakistani and smaller percentages from other countries. The school is organised into: the Primary Years Programme (PYP) with 232 children in Kindergarten (KG) and 569 students in Grades 1-5; the Middle Years Programme (MYP) with 284 students in Grades 6-10; and the Diploma programme (DP) with 27 students in Grades 11 and 12. The school has not identified any students with special educational needs (SEN) or specific gifts and talents. Almost all students speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) and in Grades 1 to 5, 18% are withdrawn from some lessons for additional support with identified language needs. Student admission procedures include formal written assessments of ability in English and an interview for Grade 1 and higher; in KG children are admitted following an interview.

The school is governed by a board of trustees from the corporate organisation in Australia and by a local board that consists of the director general, assistant director general, principal and 2 parent representatives. The principal is in his second year in the role. The senior leadership team (SLT) includes the principal and assistant director general, assistant principal, headmistress and headmaster. There are 83 full-time teaching staff and 10 teaching support staff. There are 6

administrative staff, 1 nurse and 8 security staff. Teacher turnover was 25% for the previous school year.

Fees range from AED 16,475 in KG to AED 38,034 in Grade 12. This range falls within the medium to premium categories.

## **The Effectiveness of the School**

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### **Evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness**

The overall effectiveness of the Abu Dhabi Australian School is satisfactory. Attainment and progress are satisfactory when compared to international standards and students develop fluent speaking skills in English. There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Curriculum planning and review ensure continuity and progression within the IB programmes and implementation successfully integrates UAE culture and values in all subjects. The curriculum is not sufficiently adapted to consistently meet the needs of the most able students and those who find learning difficult.

A key strength of the school is the students' behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning. Students safety and well being are priorities. The buildings and premises adequately support delivery of the educational programmes. Most staff, parents and students are committed to the school's strategic direction. Teamwork at all levels is promoted by senior leaders and has a positive impact on school improvement. The school's self-evaluation procedures and school development planning lack rigour. Professional development is regular, linked to the appraisal process and has positive impact on the quality of learning.

### **Students' attainment & progress**

Attainment and progress are satisfactory. Evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of student work and data analysis indicate that standards are broadly in line with age-related international expectations.

Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points in all subjects; in the middle years, girls make stronger progress than boys. Attainment in IB examinations by the very small cohort of students in Grade 12 is generally low; results indicate an improving trend. Students adequately acquire basic skills in literacy, numeracy, thinking and use of information and communications technology (ICT). The progress of higher and lower achieving students is restricted due to limited planning for their needs, and as a result they do not consistently receive sufficient support and challenge to help accelerate their progress.

Children have little English on entry to school and make good progress in acquiring confident listening comprehension and spoken English levels, particularly in KG. By the middle years, students use a range of vocabulary and grammar with accuracy to discuss ideas and share opinions. They read for a range of purposes with understanding and fluency, and most write with age-appropriate awareness of sentence structure and grammar; the writing levels of boys in grades 6 to 10 are weak and below expected standards.

In mathematics and science, students' knowledge and understanding are generally in line with curriculum expectations. Primary students make adequate progress in the practical application of mathematical skills to real life. They reflect critically on the impact of scientific concepts, such as habitat and species adaptation. Progress is slower for many students in older grades and they have more difficulty fully understanding the concepts being taught; they understand and use specialist terminology with accuracy. Students' investigative and practical skills in the middle and higher years are not sufficiently developed.

In Arabic, students' listening skills are well developed and they listen carefully in order to learn. Reading skills using the grammar rules 'Tashkeel', speaking standard Arabic, and creative writing are not well developed as a result of the limited opportunities provided for practice in all subjects taught in Arabic. In Islamic education, students confidently link values to real life examples and apply them to their own lives. Skills in reading from the Holy Qur'an and recitation are generally weak. Students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of UAE social studies.

In all grades and most subjects, students make effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) when given the opportunity. Students' development of ICT skills in grades 1 to 5 is below expected levels. They work productively in cooperative groups; skills in learning independently are less well developed. Students demonstrate secure inquiry skills, particularly in primary grades.

### **Students' personal development**

Students' personal development is good. Most students, girls particularly, display a sound moral perspective and are well behaved in lessons and around school. The behaviour of older boys has improved considerably, to be satisfactory overall. The school fosters an appropriate understanding of the values and culture of the UAE, and students treat each other with respect and mix in harmonious groups. A minority of older students are disrespectful when teaching and classroom management skills produce an unsatisfactory learning environment.

Students in all grades confidently interact with peers and adults. They show their enjoyment of school and positive attitudes towards learning, especially in grades 1 to 5. Levels of self-discipline are age-appropriate. Students take on leadership roles such as raising the flag in assembly and monitoring behaviour in corridors. Not enough students are given purposeful opportunities to develop leadership skills in lessons and other school activities. Students participate in an appropriate range of social, cultural, scientific and sporting activities within the daily schedule; opportunities are limited beyond the regular school day.

Students have a good practical understanding of healthy life styles and Grade 7 boys knowledgeably explained the benefits of regular exercise and healthy food. They develop adequate personal and interpersonal skills, as evidenced by their ability to work together in all grades. Attendance at 90% is average and most students are punctual at the start of the day and to lessons.

### **The quality of teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school and in all subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and ranges from very good to very unsatisfactory. Most lessons were deemed to be at least satisfactory; a small minority were judged to be unsatisfactory. Examples of effective teaching practice were found in all subjects and grades.

In the more effective lessons, teachers provide regular opportunities for active learning and encourage students to ask questions and think about issues at a deeper level. This is inconsistent, and there is an over-reliance on textbooks, particularly in the subjects taught in Arabic. There is insufficient attention to different learning needs, and planning is not consistently effective enough in supporting more able learners and those who progress more slowly than their peers. Use of assessment for learning is emerging in the more effective lessons, and this is evident in planning where students' prior levels are taken into account to create appropriate learning activities. Teachers use data show to enhance learning; there is limited provision and use of ICT by students across the curriculum in regular classrooms.

Teachers have at least adequate subject knowledge. In most lessons, teachers display or otherwise communicate learning objectives. These do not always have measureable learning outcomes. In the more effective lessons, teaching is lively and engaging, pace is well maintained and students are highly motivated. Teachers are beginning to use a variety of learning strategies and they create many opportunities for students to work cooperatively, for example when primary students share information on the unit of inquiry. Groups are sometimes too large and become less effective in involving all members and promoting

collaborative learning. There are fewer opportunities for students to work independently and without close teacher direction.

Many students confidently ask questions for clarification and to deepen their knowledge, for example in grades 2 and 4 when students probe each other's ideas with 'how' and 'why' questions. In the better lessons, this is well modelled by teachers. In less effective lessons, teacher questions only require short answers without the opportunity for students to explain and to extend their thinking skills.

Teachers cultivate respectful and encouraging relationships with and between students; in KG and primary grades these are friendly and support learning well. Many teachers demonstrate effective classroom management skills that provide structure and help students work productively. In some middle years lessons, weaker behaviour management with boys reduces pace and learning opportunities.

Assessment is regular and accurate and a variety of strategies are used, including portfolios. The use of rubrics to monitor student achievement and progress is emerging as an assessment tool. Portfolios are often collections of student work, and are not used by many teachers to demonstrate progress by the addition of guiding comments and the use of rubrics to set learning targets. Marking is not used consistently to provide formative comments to help students improve their work. Teachers appreciate the regular professional development opportunities and these have a positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

### **Meeting students' needs through the curriculum**

The implementation of the curriculum is satisfactory; it is broad, balanced and relevant. The core curriculum is enhanced by ICT, library, music, art, sport and a range of electives in DP. Long-term planning in the 3 programmes is thorough and carefully reviewed by coordinators and teachers, and provides appropriately for continuity and progression of skills. Curriculum implementation helps students to develop an understanding and knowledge of UAE community values and culture and the diversity in the school and wider community. It supports students' speaking skills in English well, and in most subjects, links students' learning with real life.

Curriculum implementation does not provide enough opportunities for children in KG to develop investigation, problem-solving and creative skills. In primary grades, there is not enough integrated use of ICT to promote students' skills development. Curriculum planning and delivery do not cater sufficiently for students whose levels are above and below the planned class groupings. The school provides a restricted range of extra-curricular activities to extend learning.

The school has developed adequate links with local and international organisations to enhance learning.

### **The protection, care, guidance and support of students**

Provision for the protection, care, guidance and support of students is satisfactory; students' safety and wellbeing are priorities for the school. Senior leaders and staff create a positive ethos in which students feel secure and well cared for; they appreciate the high visibility of, and attention given to them by, senior leaders. Behaviour expectations are consistently reinforced and this has led to significant improvement in the behaviour of boys in the middle years.

The pastoral system is effective in supporting most students' personal and academic development. Systems are followed to ensure prompt liaison with parents in cases of academic and personal concerns. Procedures to monitor and track the progress of the most able learners and those who learn more slowly than their peers lack sufficient rigour to ensure they make at least satisfactory progress. Monitoring and prompt contact with parents help maintain average levels of attendance.

The child protection policy is understood by students and followed by staff. The school's clinic, staff and procedures provide satisfactory first aid provision. Students are provided with good opportunities and facilities for prayer. There is not enough structured guidance to older students about the transition from MYP to DP, nor about career and further education choices. Staff are attentive to the safety of students when they use school transport.

### **The quality of the school's buildings and premises**

The quality of the school's buildings and premises is satisfactory and supports curriculum delivery. Key staff are responsible for health and safety, and careful procedures maintain the accommodation in a safe and clean condition. Students respond by using the facilities responsibly by, for instance, properly disposing of litter. The welcoming environment is enlivened by bright displays of recent student work, including eye-catching artwork, in the corridors and classrooms of all sections of the school. Classrooms and specialist areas are for the most part sufficiently spacious and fit for purpose. In a few classrooms, where student numbers are high, movement is restricted. Most KG classrooms are too small for the delivery of an appropriately active curriculum; the available inside and covered breakout areas are not used sufficiently well to maximize learning opportunities.

Procedures are in place to ensure safe storage and use of chemicals and regular testing and maintenance of equipment. The school gives close attention to security procedures and security staff and supervisors are vigilant.

### **The school's resources to support its aims**

The school's resources provide satisfactory support for its aims. Teachers are sufficient in number and have appropriate qualifications. Regular professional development has increased their understanding of the requirements of the IB programmes and the need for improvement in teaching effectiveness throughout the school. There are sufficient KG assistants, and they are attentive in assisting with behaviour and preparation in lessons; they are not used well to help support children's learning. The range of resources in classrooms to support the curriculum, including KG classrooms, is limited. Almost every classroom has data show, used predominantly by teachers; there is limited classroom ICT provision for students to use regularly. Libraries do not appropriately support literacy development in English and Arabic. Most teachers make satisfactory use of available materials and equipment.

There are ICT laboratories in each section of the school that provide computers and data-show. There are not enough computers to cater for classes over 25. The sports facilities support the physical education (PE) programme and the swimming pool provides a spacious and well-resourced facility. There is an extensive covered play area with a selection of large play equipment for KG children. KG lacks sensory equipment such as sand and water investigative areas. The library provides different reading areas, student computers and a range of reading material to promote literacy and research skills in English and Arabic. Science laboratories and resources are adequate.

Procedures to maintain transport in reliable condition, and for safe use by students, are followed appropriately. Food preparation is well organized and hygienic, providing healthy options. Risk assessments are conducted regularly and evacuation procedures are thorough and regularly practised.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Administration is well organized so that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Senior leaders support the focused strategic direction set by the corporate organization. The principal and senior leaders have promoted purposeful teamwork within grades and programmes and between all leadership levels, and this has led to progress and improvement. Middle leaders are held appropriately accountable through regular meetings. The boards have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which they fulfil. The board of trustees provides support and holds the principal and school to account for its overall performance.

Self-evaluation procedures lack sufficient rigour. Senior leaders and IB programme coordinators have a satisfactory understanding of the school's

strengths and priority areas for improvement. The school's self-evaluation form (SEF) was completed by senior leaders with indirect input from staff through the coordinators. The evidence does not always support the judgements in the SEF and these are overly positive in most areas. The school development plan (SDP) responds specifically to the recommendations from the previous inspection report and focuses on improvement in all standards referred to in the report. It has an appropriate format and includes all expected elements of a SDP. There is no structure to monitor progress and successful achievement of planned targets.

The appraisal process is comprehensive and supportive. It involves visits by a team from the corporate organisation as well as observations by senior leaders and coordinators. The internal process is not sufficiently focused on monitoring the effective use of assessment for learning, in order that teachers plan activities that provide appropriate support and challenge for students of different abilities. Not all subject coordinators have sufficient monitoring skills to effectively develop teaching and classroom management skills. The school arranges regular professional development opportunities, provided by staff members and external trainers, which are linked to needs identified during appraisal.

Students confidently express their views about the school. They do not have structures, such as student councils, to have their views listened and responded to. Staff cultivate and maintain effective communication links with parents, which they appreciate. Responses to the parent questionnaire, and the parent meeting, demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the school's provision, particularly in relation to student safety and communication with parents. A minority of parents are concerned that they are not kept well enough informed about their child's progress and that not enough help is given to children when they find work difficult. Parents recognise the improvements made by the school since the previous inspection.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

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The school has made satisfactory progress on many of the recommendations from the last inspection. It has addressed all safety issues: security is now vigilant and procedures to monitor access are thorough; supervision for student departure by private vehicles has been significantly increased. Student attainment and progress have improved in all core subjects. EAL support is provided by classroom teachers and students demonstrate improving language skills in the MYP. Inquiry is a feature of many lessons and students work cooperatively to good effect. There are still not enough opportunities for students to learn independently.

Regular professional development linked to the results of lesson observations has resulted in more confident use of a wider range of teaching and learning strategies. During meetings teachers regularly share best practice. The school has provided more material resources and data show projectors in almost all classrooms. Resource development to support the curriculum remains an ongoing need, particularly regarding the provision of ICT in regular classrooms. In the most effective lessons, teachers use the results of assessment to guide planning and teaching.

The focus on teamwork and the mentoring system has helped to build confidence and skills in many middle leaders. IB coordinators have a strong impact on the developing quality of their respective programmes. Self-evaluation procedures do not yet provide sufficient rigour, nor involve input from all members of the school community.

The school and senior leaders have demonstrated satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further:**

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1. Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that lessons secure consistently good academic progress by:
  - i. sharing more widely the good practices already in place
  - ii. using assessment for learning more effectively to plan differentiated teaching and learning activities to take account of students' starting points
  - iii. providing challenge for more able students and appropriate support for students who find learning difficult
  - iv. providing opportunities for students to learn independently
  - v. ensuring students in primary grades have access to ICT in classrooms, particularly in core subjects.
2. Strengthen curriculum planning and implementation by providing:
  - i. more opportunities for children in KG to make choices through purposeful learning activities that develop their creativity and problem solving skills
  - ii. meaningful opportunities for all students to develop leadership skills in lessons and within the school community
  - iii. more opportunities for all students to participate in a wider range of curriculum activities
  - iv. structured guidance for older students as they make the transition from MYP to DP and face choices regarding careers and further education.
3. Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by:
  - i. improving the quality of self-evaluation and development planning for all aspects of the school's performance so that it accurately identifies the strengths and priority areas for improvement and regularly reviews progress
  - ii. providing more guidance to, and professional development for, subject coordinators to enhance their skills in monitoring and supporting teachers
  - iii. ensuring coordinators rigorously monitor the quality of short-term planning and support teachers' use of assessment for learning to plan and deliver lessons that meet all students' learning needs.

## Inspection Grades

| Performance Standard                                               | Band A<br>High performing |           |      | Band B<br>Satisfactory   |              | Band C<br>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: <b>The school's overall effectiveness</b>      |                           |           |      |                          |              |                                              |                     |      |