



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



Inspection Report

Al Sorouh American School

Academic Year 2014 – 2015

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Al Sorouh American School

Inspection Date	19 – 21 January 2015
School ID#	200
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	232
Age Range	4 to 12 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Nada Saab
School Address	Shakbout City, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 586 1133
Fax Number	-----
Official Email (ADEC)	alsorouh.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	-----
Date of last inspection	5 – 7 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 C;	GRADE 6
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the principal has introduced effective procedures for managing behaviour and ensuring the smooth running of the school
- the principal has a satisfactory knowledge of what needs to be achieved in order to improve student attainment and increase progress
- the school has a welcoming and caring ethos that provides students with a calm environment in which to learn.

The main areas for improvement are:

- students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics, science, Arabic and Islamic education
 - provision of high quality classroom resources to deliver the licensed curriculum
 - recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers
 - the development of independent and collaborative learning skills
 - the use of assessment criteria provided by the common core standards to identify student attainment and track progress
 - adaptation and enrichment of the curriculum to meet the needs of students with different abilities
 - strengthening senior and middle management, in particular, to increase their impact on improving the quality of teaching.
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Introduction

The school was evaluated by 3 inspectors. They observed 35 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, subject leaders, teachers, support staff, students and parents. Inspectors examined test and assessment results, scrutinized students' work across the school, analyzed 80 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and senior leadership team were fully involved throughout the inspection process; they undertook 2 joint lesson observations with inspectors.

Description of the School

The school opened 4 years ago but was without a Principal for the first 2 years. The school is located in Shakhbout City, previously known as Khalifa B, a new and growing residential area to the south of the airport. The school aims to create a learning community that encourages students to become participants and leaders in 'an increasingly global and diverse community'.

The current principal is in her second year at the school but has a long history of teaching and administration in the Emirate. There are 24 teachers, turnover has been high for the last 2 years; 10 teachers were newly appointed at the start of the current academic year. There is no vice-principal; the academic coordinator takes a senior leadership role.

The school has 232 students of whom 95 are girls. It is organised into 14 classes; 4 in KG, 3 in grade 1, 2 in grades 2, 3, 5 and 6, and 1 class in Grade 4. Boys and girls are grouped separately in Grade 6. All students are Muslim, of whom 90% are UAE nationals. Of the remainder, half are from Yemen with small numbers from other Gulf nations. One student is identified with special educational needs (SEN) and 6 who are either gifted or talented.

There is an open admissions policy for KG children; where older students seek admission, entry tests place them in the most appropriate class in their year group. Annual fees are high for children in KG where they are AED 22,370 – 23,450; Grades 1 – 5 are AED 26,120 to 28,580 and Grade 6 is 29,005.

The Effectiveness of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness

The school continues to provide unsatisfactory provision in many areas. The leadership and management of the school was strengthened 18 months ago by the appointment of the principal; she lacks a strong management team that can rapidly deliver the improvements to teaching and the curriculum that are urgently required.

Students from KG to Grade 6 do not make the progress expected in nearly all aspects of their studies, and attainment falls below that achieved by their international peers. In particular, the slow development of students' spoken and written English skills inhibits their progress in mathematics and science. Students are well behaved and are eager to learn; to make significant academic progress, they need teachers who have greater competence in the English language and a better understanding of the American curriculum.

The school claims to offer an American curriculum, in practice it falls short of what might be expected. It relies heavily on American textbooks and does not offer the breadth of experience intended by the Common Core Curriculum. The school has insufficient resources, both in terms of the quality of teaching and classroom provision, to deliver an effective curriculum. This is one of the main reasons why many students underachieve.

Students' attainment & progress

The attainment and progress made by students in Arabic, Islamic education, English, science and mathematics is unsatisfactory; it is satisfactory in social studies. Students' progress in other subjects outside of these core subjects is unsatisfactory. They enjoy music and art but the progressive development of skills is generally missing so only a few students, who show talent, make significant or even expected progress. Students enjoy their French classes and make satisfactory progress in their spoken skills.

Children in KG are keen and motivated to learn. Most have had some exposure to English and they are excited when asked to chant or shout their answers. This often means they do not achieve correct pronunciation and these mistakes persist, as teachers almost never correct them. This is also true of children's incorrect sentence structure with missing parts of speech, and verbs used with the wrong tense left uncorrected.

Most older students find writing in Arabic at any length very challenging. They are rarely presented with opportunities to extend their spoken skills by talking to a range of audiences for different purposes. In social studies, the older students are

able to recall and describe some of the key features of life in the UAE and name other Gulf nations, demonstrating age-appropriate levels of attainment and progress. They could confidently and accurately describing the Five Pillars of Islam and relate Islamic concepts to their own lives. Students make unsatisfactory progress in English and by the time they reach Grade 6, few can speak at their expected grade level with any confidence or fluency. They are rarely required to write creatively and are presented with too few opportunities to speak in English, other than to answer questions.

Students' progress and attainment in mathematics and science is limited by teaching that rigidly remains textbook based and does not relate learning to the real world. For example, students studying the water cycle were not taken out of the classroom when it rained during their lesson despite their obvious excitement. They do not have a secure understanding of key terms in mathematics or science. They have very restricted experience of using practical equipment in mathematics lessons to support their understanding of number concepts. There are almost no practical resources to enable students to undertake investigations in science.

Students' development of independent and collaborative learning skills is weak. They are rarely required to work collaboratively on a problem and present their findings to a larger group. They do not use digital technologies in the classroom to support their learning.

Students' personal development

The personal development of students is satisfactory. They behave well inside and outside the classroom. They move about the building in an orderly manner and there are few signs of litter in the playground or corridors. Students show respect to their teachers and generally to each other. They respond quickly when asked to reduce noise levels, which can become elevated when teachers do not ensure that students are purposefully occupied. Students in younger grades find sharing the limited resources difficult, particularly when they are working in groups.

Students are not confident communicators and do not find it easy to take leadership roles. Older students were unsure about how to undertake their monitoring duties on the stairs and could not explain what was required of them. Despite some displays of their work, students had no opportunity to make the room in which they spend most of the day a place that was special for them.

Students were able to describe what made the UAE a good place to live and showed some awareness of what makes the country strong. They sing the national anthem with pride and vigour.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Lessons begin with introductions that leave many students inactive for long periods. Teachers give too little attention to how students could be actively involved in their own learning. In the weaker lessons, textbooks are the sole resource for learning and their content is not extended by reference to real-life experiences. The planning of learning is weak and brings little value to the delivery of the lesson. Learning objectives are written on the whiteboard but are often not referred to during the course of the lesson. The way that lessons finish is poorly managed so that there is no time for reflection or a recap of learning. Checks on learning through questioning and answer sessions are inefficient as teachers rely too heavily on undirected questions or chanted responses. Strategies for peer and self-assessment are rarely used.

Although most teachers have sound subject knowledge, they maintain an over dependence on teaching to the textbook. In addition, there are insufficient opportunities for students to think critically, creatively or independently about their learning. Teachers use assessments, including homework and quizzes, which they have devised to judge learners' progress and attainment. There is no use of standardized testing or detailed use of the Common Core Standards on which to assess, track and report on student progress. Assessment outcomes are not used to plan the delivery of the curriculum so that the learning needs of all students are addressed by the tasks set.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The school follows an American based curriculum supplemented with adaptations that enable MoE requirements to be met for the teaching of Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. The curriculum implementation in Arabic, Islamic education, English, mathematics and science is narrow. It focuses too heavily on knowledge and rarely introduces students to interesting and challenging ideas or involves them in experimental and practical activities. There is an over reliance on American based textbooks to deliver the curriculum so that students often miss the relevance of the subject of their learning to their lives in the UAE. The early learning curriculum provided in the KG follows a programme used in the US; its implementation by teachers does not give sufficient emphasis to the development of children's creative, physical and social skills.

None of the teaching staff have direct experience of teaching to the core curriculum standards in an American school and none are native English speakers. They have almost no knowledge of the 'instructional shifts' that are required in order to make the curriculum more centred on learning rather than teaching.

Subject coordinators do not work with their teams to create the necessary detailed medium term planning that establishes the scope and sequence of the skills, knowledge and understanding students need to acquire during each trimester.

The school does recognize the needs of 1 student with SEN; there are others who need individualized plans that target the ways and means by which they might best make progress. The use of a shadow teacher has enabled the student who has SEN , to integrate successfully with his fellow students.

Extra-curricular activities are focused on a 4 week period in the second trimester. There are no on-going activities or after school sports clubs, and this is noted as a missed opportunity by some parents and students.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school makes satisfactory provision for the care, guidance and support of its students. The school provides a calm place to learn. The policies and processes for establishing and maintaining good behaviour work well and this is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Attendance is below average at 88% and during the inspection, only a few students arrived after the singing of the national anthem despite the heavy rain.

The school has a child protection policy that is sufficiently detailed to provide clear guidance to staff. Training was provided at the beginning of the school year but due to the continued high turnover of teachers, not all staff are fully aware of the policy's contents. There was no evidence of corporal punishment in the school and the principal is vigilant in ensuring that staff deal with students with courtesy at all times. There is satisfactory provision for the health needs of the students and there is a growing awareness by students in some classes of what constitutes a healthy snack.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school building is now 5 years old and provides satisfactory accommodation. There are sufficient specialist facilities to support most of the curriculum. Some classrooms are too small to allow students to enjoy regular opportunities for active learning. The science and ICT laboratories are a good size. There is no sports hall and during hot weather or when it rains, no indoor option is available. The building has been maintained to a reasonable standard and maintenance issues are dealt with speedily. Regular servicing is provided for fire-fighting equipment and electrical appliances. Exit routes are clearly signed and procedures for emergency evacuation are practised regularly throughout the school year. Records show that children and students can exit the school and assemble

outside within 2 minutes. Most locations on the school site are inaccessible to students and adults who might have limited mobility.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resourcing of the curriculum remains unsatisfactory. There is a continuing high turnover of teachers. Over 40% of the staff have been replaced during the last school year with some new teachers starting during term time.

There are insufficient practical resources placed in classrooms that would support the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. There are insufficient resources for the investigative element of the science curriculum. There is little provision for storage in classrooms except for textbooks. Many teachers make resources for their lessons; these are limited and rarely adequate. Digital technologies are in short supply. There are data show projectors in some classrooms but these are not ceiling mounted and often placed on the teacher's desk. They project from poor angles providing students with a small, distorted picture. In the KG classes, teachers' laptops are linked to a TV monitor high on the wall, which again presents young children with a small picture and a poor viewing angle. There are no computers in classrooms and no smaller digital devices for students to use. There are no inter-active whiteboards in the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There has been improvement in the school since the appointment of the principal in the summer of 2013. She has worked hard and successfully to set a caring and friendly tone. The principal has brought a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved if the school is to continue on an upward trajectory of improvement. The principal has been able to bring more realistic judgments to the school's performance as recorded in the self-evaluation (SEF), although these are still inflated. She has set out a clear agenda for change in the school development plan (SDP) but much of the plan requires the input of resources outside her control. The school has no set budget and each item of expenditure is referred to the owner for approval. Communication between the owner and the principal is irregular and has no set agenda. Lines of communication are not clear to ensure a shared vision and business plan to move the school forward.

The principal has no additional senior member of staff who could share the management load and provide an additional quality assurance and improvement function. Lesson observation takes place regularly but the process does not provide an associated improvement plan detailing training and support for each teacher. Curriculum coordinators have little experience or specific training for the roles they undertake.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made some progress since the last inspection. The two main recommendations from the 2013 inspection have been met. Firstly, the appointment of the current principal halfway through 2013 introduced some much needed professional and administrative expertise. Secondly, decisions about behaviour management led to an effective strategy being implemented and a marked improvement in student behaviour. These improvements were noted in the monitoring visit of May 2014.

Other areas for improvement noted in the last inspection, and again during the monitoring visit, are taking longer to be realized. Improvements in student attainment and progress are very slow and are adversely impacted by the poor retention of teachers and, in many cases, their weak standard of English. Without improvements to teachers' spoken and written English, students' attainment and progress are unlikely to become satisfactory. A stable staff is a necessity to enable the school to make further progress.

The KG remains an unsatisfactory learning environment for young children. Teachers have attempted to make classrooms more appealing places, there are very few resources that children can handle or interact with and nearly all displays are well above head height.

The school owner is keen to meet parental requests for a Grade 7 to be in place in the next academic year. Key recommendations regarding the quality of teaching, the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of the KG have persisted from previous reports and remain largely unaddressed. The school has not demonstrated that it has the satisfactory capacity to improve further without significant external support.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve students' attainment and progress through:
 - i. using the established assessment criteria provided by the Common Core Standards to identify students' attainment and track their progress more accurately
 - ii. using the outcomes of formative and summative assessments to plan learning that meets the needs of learners of all abilities.
2. Improve the educational experience of children in KG by:
 - i. creating a learning environment that excites young learners through the provision of learning centres within the classroom
 - ii. providing opportunities for children to make choices in their learning
 - iii. encouraging children to undertake sensory and imaginative play
 - iv. ensuring that staff in KG have a clear idea of what is expected by enabling them to visit KG departments in other schools where good practice has been reported to ADEC.
3. Improve teaching and learning throughout the school by:
 - i. ensuring that teachers rely less heavily on textbooks and worksheets by providing more relevant and challenging contexts for their units of study
 - ii. giving more attention to the planning of lessons so that available time is structured more effectively with only a small proportion of the time taken up with 'teacher talk'
 - iii. using learning outcomes as a strategy for checking learning throughout the lesson and as a basis for a plenary session.
4. Provide students with a more recognisably American curriculum by:
 - i. taking full account of the required standards in skill development and academic standards when planning the curriculum, instead of textbook based learning
 - ii. providing detailed medium term planning that establishes the scope and sequence of the skills, knowledge and understanding of what students need to acquire
 - iii. providing students with a wider range of extra-curricular activities designed to enhance and extend their learning and enjoyment.
5. Improve resourcing by:
 - i. providing more practical resources in the classroom to support the development of literacy and numeracy

- ii. providing resources that enable students to complete the investigative requirements of the science curriculum
 - iii. ensuring the recruitment of teachers with good English skills who are willing to stay at the school for more than a year.
6. Improve leadership and management by:
- i. establishing regular and reliable communication between the owner and the principal
 - ii. strengthening senior management through the provision of an additional senior manager to oversee the curriculum
 - iii. providing training for curriculum coordinators so that they are better equipped to carry out their curriculum planning, assessment and monitoring roles
 - iv. enhancing the current lesson observation process by undertaking regular 'walkthroughs' that focus on single aspects of teacher and or learner performance, such as how lessons begin and end. Results of 'walk-throughs' should be collated and used as the basis for further professional development.

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								