



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



Summary Inspection Report

The Cambridge High School

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Iqraa

The Cambridge High School

Inspection Date	28 th – 31 st May, 2012
School ID#	045
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	British - English National Curriculum (Modified)
Number of Students	1693
Age Range	3 - 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Peter Lugg
School Address	PO Box 27602 Abu Dhabi/63 rd Street, Mussafah, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. The inspectors observed 73 lessons, daily assemblies, the arrival and departure of students and their conduct around school. They spoke formally with many students and informally with others. They interviewed staff and were approached by some with views they wished to share. Formal interviews were also conducted with the Principal, other senior leaders, parent liaison officers, the chief accountant and with a representative of the owners. In addition, inspectors scrutinised a wide range of key policies and planning documents as well as students' work.

Description of the School

Cambridge High has evolved from a Villa school, founded in 1988. It achieved full school status in its current premises in 1995. It has continued to grow since then. The current Principal and much of the senior leadership team joined the school in 2001.

As part of the GEMS group, Cambridge High aims to pursue the group's core values of world citizenship, valuing people's differences and similarities, developing leadership qualities and being ambitious. In addition, it emphasises the importance of leading by example.

There are currently 1693 students and Kindergarten (KG) children on roll. 883 are boys and 810, girls. Of these, 216 are in KG and 1477 in Grades 1-12. Numbers are consistent in most grades but there are fewer in Grade 13 as only those students committed to A2 and overseas university places need to complete that year.

The majority of students originate from the Indian subcontinent while about 35% are Arab including 11.5% who are Emirati. In total, over 77 countries are represented in the school. About 70% of students are Muslim. The school does not formally recognise students with special educational needs but does cater explicitly for those who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

No entrance examinations are applied to students opting for the school except where they are of secondary age and transferring from non-English medium schools. Fees are below average, ranging from 12,216 Dhs p.a. in KG to 25,800 in Grades 12 and 13. Staff come from all over the world and receive salaries that are a little below average, ranging from 3,000 Dhs per month to 9,850 per month with the majority close to 6,000.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 2

Inspectors judged Cambridge High School to be in Band A; that is a High Performance school.

Inspectors judged the school was good when inspected in 2010 and it has improved significantly over the last two years. Its overall effectiveness is now very good. The ethos of the school has further improved. It is now outstanding. It is difficult to overestimate the impact this has on all aspects of the school's life. Most strikingly, students show a zeal for learning and devotion to service that are remarkable. They exploit to the full everything their teachers give them and find great satisfaction in helping to run the school. The school has produced an upward trend in examinations with its recent IGCSE results being the best in its history and well above international averages.

Leaders and managers have been very effective in acting on the recommendations of the previous report.

Arabic teaching is now far more effective and, consequently, students' Arabic language skills have improved significantly. The strategies used include using ability groups for teaching and placing much stronger emphasis on student participation in lessons and around school in general. For instance, all presentations now have an Arabic component, giving the language high status and exposure in assemblies, debates and all other presentations. The school's Arabic magazine displays Arabic writing skills. Standards overall have risen noticeably and are now above average.

The 2010 report also sought improvement in teaching generally. It asked for the use of a wider range of stimulating methods. The great majority of staff has met the challenge successfully. Some departments, such as English, demonstrate a wide range of successful methods extremely well. Teaching overall is very much better than at the time of the last inspection and there are now many lessons that promote practical activities, strong dialogue and provide extensive scope for independent learning. Learning in these lessons is always at least as good as the teaching and quite often better, because of the very good application of students. The older students especially extend this effort into research and preparation done in their own time, and they feed this into subsequent lessons as formal presentations or well-informed comment. The current challenge to the school is to convert even more of its good and very good teaching into outstanding practice. There is scope for the impressive pace and focus on progress, so conspicuous in the very best lessons, to become the school's norm. Support staff are now significantly more effective. This is especially so in KG, where they

support learning, rather than focus on physical care for children. This reflects good appointment practice and some effective training.

The previous report called for specific improvements in school premises. The school has been very successful in increasing the number of good quality toilet facilities. It has not yet replaced the outdoor sports pitches or installed a canopy over the playground but there are contracts in place. There is still some overcrowding in primary classrooms and the owners are aware that the school's popularity and growth are putting further pressure on all its facilities. They have made considerable progress in developing plans for capital expansion in order to resolve the matter.

The overall effectiveness of the school is now highly impressive. The Principal and his senior team have established a remarkably positive atmosphere for learning. They demonstrate care and leadership with high visibility around the school on a daily basis. In turn, this inspires staff to adopt the same approach, so students learn in a very encouraging atmosphere.

Academic performance is rising markedly at all levels, though especially so at IGCSE. Standards are well above average compared with international levels. Progress is very good. The proportion of candidates gaining five or more A*-C passes (including English and mathematics) in 2011 was 87% compared with an average of 63% in the UK. The individual subjects, English, mathematics and science have very high scores with well over 90% gaining A*-C passes. Given its open entry policy, the school is helping students of widely varying ability make very good progress. This is partly the result of good day-to-day teaching. It also reflects the depth of experience many staff have in preparing students for examinations. Added to this are the students' extremely good attitudes to learning which ensure they maximise the benefit of all teaching, advice and independent research or homework. Standards in Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies are higher than commonly found in the UAE, again the outcome of good attitudes and a growing proportion of good teaching. Standards and progress are also well above expectations in business studies, physical education, French, art and drama. The school currently assesses extensively and it is able to measure good or better progress that leads to the above average outcomes. This has contributed to the rise in academic performance. The school does not have the sophisticated data systems in place to demonstrate the progress students make compared with international rates of progress, or to use data to define and reach the very highest levels of performance.

The personal development of students is the school's greatest success. Students learn that constructive and helpful attitudes are best and cynical negativity has no

place. Students are extremely well behaved, confident, respectful and keen to give to the school. There are several reasons for this. First, the opportunities for students to be active in school life are exceptional. The quality is high and covers numerous age appropriate sports teams, academic clubs after school, and many heavily supported student organisations. The latter include the Model United Nations, Operation Smile, Green Horizons, school prefects and the highly influential School Council. These ongoing contributions to school life, as well as environmental and charity action groups engage well over 1300 students on a regular basis. The level of responsibility results in the development of leadership skills and raised awareness of citizenship. Students reported on the impact of their recent visit to India, including working at mother Teresa's hospital in Calcutta. Prefects play a valuable daily role in organising younger pupils and they act as positive role models.

They in turn speak of the respect with which staff treat them. Students appreciate that leaders hear their voice and value their ideas. Staff consistently apply positive rewards for good behaviour and implement sanctions if behaviour is unsatisfactory.

Teachers are very strong in their subject expertise and those taking the upper grades know examination board requirements very well. Teaching quality overall is good and improving. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of Arabic and Islamic teaching since the last inspection and the best lessons in these subjects now match the quality seen elsewhere. Relationships are of consistently high quality and students come to nearly all lessons very keen to learn. Where this is harnessed to imaginative, lively teaching, progress rates are excellent. Some good lessons have most of these qualities but not quite the rapid pace or levels of student participation and opportunities for independent learning seen in outstanding lessons. Not all lessons have student progress as the focus or provide additional challenge for the most able and support for the least able. Some staff under-use assessment data largely because it is expressed as a percentage and therefore does not give a clear indication of what students need to learn next if they are to improve.. Where teachers apply descriptions of performance using levels, they are more effective in shaping their lessons to students' strengths and weaknesses and use data to plan lessons and set targets.

There has been an expansion of the curriculum since the last inspection so that drama, business studies, French, art, music and accountancy now enrich the existing core. EAL support and extra-curricular provision has expanded to offer even more openings for students, so that overall the curriculum is good. Extra-curricular provision offers many opportunities for the flair and ability of gifted and talented students to flourish, as well as more limited provision for average and

low ability students. Formal support explicitly for students with special educational needs is not yet in place.

Protection, care, guidance and support are very good and provide a major reason why personal development is so outstanding. Behaviour policies are clear and applied with remarkable consistency. High quality care is central to the school ethos demonstrated by the quality of relationships and students' active engagement in caring for each other. Care is at the very heart of how the school operates. The formal systems for underpinning caring attitudes are working well. The school takes child protection, safeguarding and health and safety issues extremely seriously and implements them very well. The school goes to exceptional lengths to gain maximum parental support for students' learning and keeps parents fully aware of personal and academic progress. The "3-A-Day" programme, asking parents to discuss current affairs and new issues with their children, is strengthening existing links further. The school keeps attendance data efficiently but the analysis of trends is limited. Lateness is not analysed to identify any patterns. Students receive extensive informal guidance about careers.

The school's buildings and facilities are very well maintained and there is no vandalism or graffiti. Currently, many areas are smaller than ideal. This does not stop some of the best teaching from taking place in some of the most crowded rooms, but it requires determination and some skill to create spaces for group work in much of the school. In KG, group work and choice are possible but there is not the freedom of movement between learning centres that typify outstanding KG practice. The school is aware of these issues and others such as the absence of a gymnasium or sports hall, the poor quality of the all-weather pitch and the need for far more cover for the playground. Similarly, there are considerable shortfalls in resourcing. These are not stopping students from making very good progress but they make outstanding progress unattainable. The key priorities are the shortage of IT equipment in ordinary classrooms, both for teachers and students. In addition, textbooks are in short supply in many classes, leading to excessive use of photocopying by staff.

Leadership and management can take much credit for the strengths outlined above. Its quality is very good, especially at senior level. In terms of communicating vision and high expectations to others, it is exceptional. While middle leadership is effective it has scope for further development, especially around the area of data management and the systematic monitoring of colleagues. Collectively, leaders and managers are now helping students to attain very high standards by the time they leave school and to make excellent personal development. This is a very substantial achievement. The school is rightly popular

and over-subscribed. The owners have contributed well by ensuring strong support and guidance for the school, very effective legal and financial systems and an extensive professional development programmes. They are aware of the constraints placed on future improvement by premises and resources. Senior staff lead by example. It is hard to fault the consistency with which they move to key positions around school throughout the day to meet students and oversee safe movement between lessons. Other staff closely follow their example so that the positive ethos of the school is sustained. Daily meetings of the senior team and full staff briefings are highly effective at keeping everyone informed. The school improvement plan accurately reflects the needs of the school. An extensive programme of monitoring including the analysis of data, scrutiny of work and systematic lesson observation informs the priorities. The impact of this monitoring is limited because its focus in the classroom and in follow-up action is more on teachers' activity than on students' progress. Teachers receive insufficient advice on how to improve.

Staff morale is extremely high. Several staff, unasked, stopped inspectors to report how inspired they felt by the example and leadership of the Principal and his senior team. Because students' fees are below average but their achievements in academic work and personal development are very high, the school is offering excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Ensure an even higher proportion of outstanding lessons by:
 - i. extending current best practice more widely; and
 - ii. consistently providing additional challenge for the most able and specific support for the least able.
2. Accelerate existing developments in assessment by:
 - i. creating a data base that shows more clearly the progress students make compared with international rates of progress;
 - ii. using this data to define outstanding attainment and progress for each cohort; and
 - iii. ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment methods that analyse individual students' skills and knowledge, in order to guide the planning of lessons and set accurate targets.

3. Make radical proposals for overcoming the hindrances to outstanding performance posed by current premises and resource levels, especially:
 - i. overcrowding in classrooms; and
 - ii. the limited access for staff and students to interactive white boards and other classroom IT equipment.
4. Improve lesson observation so that:
 - i. SLT and middle leaders focus on students' learning and progress;
 - ii. Teachers receive timely feedback that identifies strategies for improving students' progress.