



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



Summary Inspection Report

Canadian International School

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Iqraa

Canadian International School

Inspection Date	5 th - 8 th November, 2012
School ID#	102
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Canadian(Alberta)
Number of Students	607
Age Range	KG – Grade 12
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Darcy Reynolds
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Introduction

The school was inspected by three inspectors. The inspectors observed 74 lessons. They talked to the owner's representative, the school's leaders and other staff, parents and groups of students. They looked at data provided by the school and a range of documents about policies and procedures. They also observed the broader work of the school including the arrival and departure of students and extra-curricular activities.

Description of the School

The school opened in 2007 in purpose-built premises located in Khalifa City. Since that time there have been additions to add further facilities and classrooms. The school's aim is that students 'embrace challenge, respect diversity and achieve personal and academic excellence'. The principal has been in post since 2010 and there have been other changes to the leadership team.

In 2012 the first small cohort of students completed Grade 12 and moved to university or work. Numbers in upper grades are low, with 138 in total in Grades 7-12, but the school has grown towards full capacity. There are now 118 children in kindergarten (KG) and 351 in the elementary school. In total there are 312 boys and 295 girls and the capacity of the school is 654.

Just under half of the students are Muslim and Arab, 45% and 48% respectively. Nearly one-quarter of the students (23.5%) are Canadian. The other main groups are Emirati (13%) and American (11%), with 59 nationalities represented in the school in total.

The school is accredited to provide the Alberta curriculum leading to the Alberta High School Diploma. This is taught together with the subjects required by the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum. The school admits English-speaking students who demonstrate their ability to succeed in the Alberta curriculum by passing a written assessment. Five students admitted under these criteria have special educational needs. Students come mainly from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds. Fees are in the higher range, from AED 33,500 in KG1 to AED 44,375 in Grade 12. Teachers' salaries range from AED 7,200 to 15,000 per month. A superintendent has a full-time role at the school and is responsible to the owner's representative. There is no board of governors.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 3

Inspectors judged the Canadian International School to be in Band A, that is a school that is high performing.

The last inspection of the school was in May 2010. At that time the school was judged to be good. The report suggested three areas for improvement: to raise the quality of teaching in Arabic, Islamic and UAE social studies; to raise the standards reached and progress made by higher attaining students; and to develop the effectiveness of leadership and management. The school has made improvements in all three areas. Inspectors observed some better teaching and a wider range of activities in Arabic and Islamic Studies, although the overall quality remains well below that in other subjects. There is now more challenge for higher attaining students although some lessons still place a ceiling on performance. The senior leadership team has been extended and action has been taken to improve teachers' performance and make better use of assessment.

The Alberta test data for 2012 confirms that standards have improved in Grades 3, 6 and 9 in all subjects. The first small cohort of Grade 12 students took the Alberta Diploma examinations. They were all successful and these results were comparable with students elsewhere. Similarly, results for the Ministry of Education examinations in Arabic and Islamic Studies were encouraging and suggest a trend of improvement, with almost all students passing with results ranging from satisfactory to excellent. All students who applied were successful in getting into the university in Abu Dhabi or other countries.

Children in KG make rapid progress. They learn well early reading and number skills. They do this in an environment that is rich in talk and demonstration and this develops their speaking skills and confidence. Routines are good and they have ample opportunity to learn through play and activities such as music and swimming.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are high. In English, students in the elementary school rapidly develop skills in reading, writing and speaking. They increasingly work independently and creatively, developing accuracy in grammar and spelling so that by the time they enter the secondary school most are fluent readers and writers. Older students show considerable maturity in analysis of character portrayal in literature or imagery in poetry, for example. In mathematics, younger students develop number skills well because they enjoy the emphasis placed on practical mathematics and problem solving. Expert teaching in the secondary section, with good attention to Diploma examination

requirements, helps them to succeed. In science young students absorb facts and take an enquiring approach, demonstrating good scientific method. When studying electricity, for example, a student asked ‘is an electron a living thing?’ Secondary students showed good skills in experiment, investigation and application of theory.

Standards in Arabic are average for Arab students. Through the grades, the development of their skills in listening and understanding is stronger than their speaking and they are reluctant to speak Classical Arabic. Their reading is competent but they need more opportunity to think about texts so that they understand and enjoy them more. Writing is less well developed and too often writing involves only copying. Standards in Arabic for non-Arab students are below average in speaking, reading comprehension and writing. Standards are average in Islamic Studies. Students learn the rules for Quran recitation but they are not given enough opportunity for practice.

Students who have English as a second language make very good progress. So too do students with special educational needs. Students who join the school late receive extra support to help them catch up.

Students’ personal development is a great strength of the school. It is fostered through every aspect of the school’s work: daily routines and the conduct of lessons, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and the guidance and counselling programme. Teachers in the Alberta curriculum encourage students to take initiative in the way they work and to express their point of view. Thus, for example, KG children take it in turns, following their ‘show and tell’, to lead the class in exploring letter, number, colour and shape. Opportunities for enquiry based learning builds students’ independence and confidence as well as their very positive attitudes to learning. The school has a ‘virtue of the month’ such as responsibility and respect. These are strong. Students respect each other and are happy to take on responsibilities such as the school council.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. The school very effectively fosters respect for the diversity of the UAE in the curriculum as well as the daily life of the school. Students are given very wide opportunities to take part in activities such as clubs including a newspaper club, ‘world scholars’ cup’, sporting activities and house and intra-school competitions.

The quality of teaching is good overall and at least satisfactory in all subjects. There is some outstanding teaching where expertise and enthusiasm combine to provide students with wonderful lessons. In most lessons teachers plan very well in their close knowledge of the students’ progress. The atmosphere is relaxed but purposeful with very effective classroom management and an emphasis on

reward rather than sanction. Often students are in command of the learning, the teacher standing back, assessing and providing support where necessary. Day-to-day assessment is generally very effective. Some marking is exemplary although in a small number of classes there is little evidence of marking in students' workbooks. A few lessons observed were unsatisfactory, mostly in the Arabic section and characterised by too much teacher talk and dull activities. A few lessons taught in the computer room across a range of subjects did not make good use of the resources available. Assessment data is used to identify students falling behind and very effective learning support helps them catch up. Students with special educational needs also have good support. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) for planning, communicating with the administration, colleagues and parents and for teaching. Some very good use was made of interactive whiteboards, for example to explain and apply trigonometry in mathematics.

The Alberta curriculum is very successful in motivating students and promoting their independent learning skills and academic progress. It is well planned so that teachers, students and parents know the learning steps through the school, and testing is regular and appropriate. As well as the core programme, students have the opportunity to opt for subjects, such as film and psychology. Although standards are broadly satisfactory in Arabic and Islamic studies, with some high achievement, the time allocations fall short of those stipulated. UAE social studies is integrated within the Alberta programme. There are benefits in this in the regular linking of life in the UAE to the outside world and to studies of geography, history and culture. In particular students gain a good understanding of UAE diversity and values. However, there are no explicit units of work on UAE social studies to draw this together. Students have reasonable access to ICT across the curriculum and there is some teaching of IT capability, although this is largely taken for granted. A remarkable feature of the curriculum is its strength across a wide range of subjects, with very rich provision in art, music and physical education (PE). In addition, students can take part in an excellent extra-curricular programme, with activities in school having no extra cost.

The school has a very effective pastoral system. Teachers know students well and there are high levels of confidence and trust. A counsellor and a nurse are available to students at all times. Students feel safe, cared for and can approach staff for help if needed. The school pays high attention to the care and safety of students. There is a clear, published, 'zero tolerance' policy on unacceptable behavior and bullying. In practice, the atmosphere of the school is very relaxed and no sanctions of any sort were seen to be applied during the week of the inspection. Students receive good advice and guidance through the 'CALM'

programme and elsewhere, but more could be done to encourage healthy eating. The school's gates are supervised all the time by security guards and all visitors sign in and out. Students' attendance is high (95%), reflecting their enjoyment of school.

The school buildings and premises are outstanding in most respects. They are attractive, spacious, generously built and very well maintained. Classrooms in KG and adjacent areas give children opportunities for imaginative learning through play and physical development. All classrooms are attractive and of good size. Specialist facilities include two libraries, two science laboratories, a computer room and very good facilities for art, music and physical education. There is a large swimming pool and ample, well equipped playgrounds. There are two prayer rooms. There are also two student lounges. There is no canteen and no water fountain in the playground. The school meets the regulations regarding health and safety.

The quality and availability of resources are outstanding in several respects. The school is well staffed with highly qualified teachers. Material resources are abundant and, for example, all Grade 6 students are issued with a musical instrument for the year. Books are in plentiful supply. The school has two libraries rich in books and a corner for ICT. The Arabic book collection is relatively small. Laboratories are well equipped with apparatus and materials for practical science. There is a dedicated computer room available on a booking system and, in response to demand, the school has added a set of laptops. Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards, but not those where Arabic and Islamic studies are taught.

The leadership and management of the school are very effective. Two years ago the school was struggling to cope with a very high turnover of teachers and students. From this position, the school is now stable and has very clear purpose and direction. School leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. They are very well supported by the superintendent and the owner's representative in their drive to meet the school's ambitious aims. The school has expanded the senior leadership team. As noted in the last report, the role of coordinators remains limited and there are good reasons why their phase or subject expertise should be harnessed in the drive to raise standards and quality of teaching. Overall, the school offers very good value for money and has demonstrated strong capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Continue to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in Arabic and Islamic Studies, developing the strategies currently in use.
2. Establish explicit teaching programmes for UAE social studies.
3. Give more authority to coordinators so that they can use their expert knowledge to raise standards, improve teaching quality and promote greater consistency, for example in marking.
4. Consider how the computer room can be used more effectively and how younger students can be helped in the development of their IT capability.
5. Improve resources for learning Arabic in classrooms and the library.
6. Promote healthy eating and provide an outside water fountain.