



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



Summary Inspection Report

First Lebanon Private School

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Iqraa

First Lebanon Private School

Inspection Date	26 th – 29 th February, 2012
School ID#	156
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1,089
Age Range	KG – Grade 12
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Mohd Qassem Mohd Abu Kassab
School Address	Falj Hazza, Al Ain
Telephone Number	(+971) 03 7806780
Fax Number	(+971) 03 7806006
Email (ADEC)	firstlebanon.pvt@adec.ac.ae

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, who observed 84 lessons. The inspectors considered the school ethos and the quality of students' learning experiences, personal development, progress, and the teaching they receive.

Description of the School

The school opened in 1981 in the Falj Hazza area of Al Ain. It aims to 'provide students with academic skills, and personal capabilities in accordance with international standards'. The vast majority (97%) of the students are Muslim and of Arab heritage. The main nationalities represented are Syrian (25%), Jordanian (16%), Emirati (15%), Palestinian (12%), and Egyptian (7%). There are small proportions from Iraq, Sudan, Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen. Approximately 60% of the students are girls. There are 171 students in the kindergarten (KG), 464 in grades 1–6, 229 in grades 7–9 and 216 in upper grades 10–12. Four students are identified as having special educational needs, related to hearing impairment. The school teaches the MoE curriculum in all grades, plus robotics, and science is taught in English as well as Arabic. Arab students are admitted following meetings with parents and checks of required documents. After Grade 2, non-Arab students take admission tests in Arabic, mathematics and science. Annual fees range from AED 3500 in KG to 11300 in Grade 12. Additional charges of AED 650 are levied for all grades. Teachers' monthly salaries range from AED 2700 to AED 5000. The principal joined the school after the last inspection and has been in post for approximately 18 months.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged the First Lebanon Private School to be in Band C; that is a school in need of significant improvement.

The last inspection in May 2010 made the following recommendations for improvement:

- i. Strengthen leadership and management by meeting the Private School By-Law regarding connection between the owner and the principal, developing monitoring and evaluating systems and using them to identify strengths and weakness, providing a costed school improvement plan for improving teaching and learning, and developing systems to measure progress and compare with international standards.

- ii. Extend the curriculum by providing more breadth and balance, enabling access to internationally recognised qualifications.
- iii. Improve teaching by sharing good practice, providing professional development on strategies to meet different needs, and providing feedback to teachers on how to improve their teaching.
- iv. Improving the accommodation and resources by improving maintenance and updating of the building, increasing the range of resources available to teachers and students, including provision for PE, ICT, books and equipment in science, and providing a mosque or prayer room for staff and students.

The school has taken some positive steps to address these issues, but they have yet to make a real difference to students' learning and achievement. The new principal has no connection to the owner. Subject leader roles have now been identified, and training provided for teachers to improve teaching and learning. A number of safety issues have been addressed, including security and fire safety.

The proprietor has provided extra funding, when requested, to increase resources. The school improvement plan focuses appropriately on improving teaching and learning but is not costed, and has no clear success criteria or evaluation arrangements. The school leaders are not doing enough, for example by analysing examination and test data, to establish why students' achievement is not improving. Those who perform badly in tests are provided with an individual plan, but it is often not specific enough to have any real impact. The school does not identify patterns in the data, for example results that are much higher in some subjects than in others, or why girls perform better than boys. The senior staff and some subject co-ordinators observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers, but is not effective enough. The subject co-ordinators' roles are not yet established. Lack of leadership training, job descriptions, time and remuneration means that some are not wholly committed to the role. Some training has been provided for teachers, and a recent focus on using group work is now evident in lessons. But many teachers are resentful of their low salaries and this affects their attitudes to leadership initiatives. The principal has developed a pay policy that provides for annual increments and recognition of good work, but it is not yet in place and teachers are not convinced it will be acted on. Parents' responses to questionnaires show that they generally support the school and its leadership, but there is no formal procedure for parental complaints. The fees are in line with those of similar schools but given the quality of education, the school does not provide adequate value for money. Without external support, the school has limited capacity for further improvement.

The school still does not meet its aims to ‘provide students with academic skills, and personal capabilities in accordance with international standards’. Little progress has been made in providing high-quality international accreditation. The school has just started to prepare students to take the IELTS examination but no results are available. Attainment in all key subjects except mathematics is well below international standards. In English, girls’ skills are better than boys’. By Grade 12, they are more confident in speaking spontaneously. Students’ speaking, reading and writing skills are beginning to develop in the primary grades as a result of a broader, better resourced programme. In mathematics, standards and progress are broadly in line with MoE grade expectations but still below international standards. In physics, however, Grade 12 boys apply numeracy skills well in working on formulae. In science, a narrow curriculum and lack of practical skills mean that standards are particularly low. In Arabic, students’ reading skills are developing but with little impact on overall standards. In Islamic studies, new resources are helping students to learn how to recite the Holy Qu’ran. Students still have few opportunities to learn and apply their computer skills, or to develop their wider understanding and thinking skills, although they are beginning to work effectively in groups.

Teachers are beginning to use a wider range of strategies to engage students’ interest and extend their learning, such as the setting of learning objectives for lessons and use of group work to promote collaboration. But these strategies are not applied consistently and are not making enough impact on progress. Too many lessons still rely heavily on a textbook and this becomes boring for students, particularly boys. Teachers are not yet using group work flexibly enough for different abilities. In most lessons students are taught as a whole class, so the work is sometimes too easy for the most able students and they have to wait for others to catch up, while the least able occasionally struggle with work that is too difficult. The effective teaching methods that do exist are not shared across the school. In some cases, improved resources are being used to good effect. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher’s strong subject knowledge, combined with a specially prepared workbook and skilful use of an interactive whiteboard, enabled students to get a clear grasp of parabolas and hyperbolas. Listening to a recording of a native speaker reading a story in English, while following it in the accompanying textbook, helped primary grade students to improve their pronunciation and reading skills. Teachers occasionally use open questions to challenge students’ thinking, but more often their questions only check that students can recall facts. Students have few opportunities to undertake research or work independently, and little use is made of assessment information to give them guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers have criteria or ‘rubrics’ in

some subjects, but these are not shared with the students to help them in assessing the quality of their own work.

The majority of students enjoy school life. They are sensitive to others and treat fellow students with respect, supporting new students and those with special educational needs. The different nationalities in the school are friendly to each other and mix well. They appreciate UAE culture and values and celebrate National Day enthusiastically. A ‘student as teacher’ programme in grades 6–12 is developing students’ confidence by giving them the chance to make formal presentations to the class. Both boys and girls volunteer to do this, enjoying the challenge. Occasionally, boys’ attitudes are negative because they are bored by lessons that are uninteresting and repetitive. Few social, cultural or sporting activities are on offer, beyond a small number of extra-curricular visits. The lack of access to physical education (PE) facilities means that students have little awareness of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, particular in terms of diet and fitness.

The curriculum is narrow in terms of the range of subjects offered, what they include and the time available to teach them. UAE values and culture make up a strong strand, but the time allowed for Islamic studies in grades 1 to 5 falls short of MoE requirements. The art curriculum is limited to drawing, and there are too few resources to teach that well. A small range of musical experiences is provided for primary-age students. Some students are doing well on the new robotics course, and a few have competed very successfully in local and international competitions. The science curriculum is taught in English in Grades 1–8 but is not yet of a good enough quality to enhance learning. The KG curriculum focuses only on basic skills in Arabic, English and number. New robotics kits are helping to develop the children’s practical and fine motor skills, but they still are not provided with opportunities to work independently, make choices or learning through play. Options for older students are limited by the lack of a literary stream in Grades 11 and 12. There are some links with universities but students do not receive enough guidance and preparation for their post-school choices. The curriculum barely meets MoE requirements and falls well short of international expectations because it is narrow and does not provide a clearly defined structure for developing students’ skills and understanding.

The school ethos is mostly positive. Rewards celebrate students’ efforts and achievements. Sanctions are generally effective, although some teachers feel they are less so for boys. Safety checks on staff are now carried out appropriately, and the security guard diligently checks in visitors. CCTV in both the boys’ and girls’ sections and better fire safety have improved the students’ sense of security.

They feel safe and say there is no bullying. The school clinic is not licensed and the nurse not yet qualified, although the school has made appropriate interim arrangements with a medical company, and a doctor visits twice each week. The premises are clean and suitably maintained. Some pastoral systems are too informal. For example, not enough is done to check on absences. The school shows concern for students by offering discounts on fees to families in difficult circumstances. The small amount of support offered to the least able students has very little effect in terms of meeting students' special educational needs.

The buildings are safe and clean. Most classrooms are of a reasonable size but some for older students do not have enough space for them to move about or to support group work, for example. The facilities for providing food are satisfactory. There are only two science laboratories which is inadequate for a school of this size. Hazardous substances are locked away but there are no smoke detectors in the labs. There is a good-sized library area, but it is primarily used as a storage room. A good central hall in the KG building has the potential to provide independent learning centres and opportunities for play-based learning. The school has appropriate plans to improve the unsafe surfaces in the PE areas. A prayer room is provided for boys, but not the girls.

The school has sufficient qualified teachers with appropriate subject knowledge, but their teaching skills are too variable. Teaching assistants help children to learn in the KG classes, but make too little contribution in Grades 1 and 2. New technological resources include 17 mobile 'data show' projectors, laptop computers, robotics equipment and a number of Holy Qu'ran electronic readers. In addition, two SMART boards have been installed in KG and the library. The two computer labs have sufficient computers to support typical class sizes, although some are in need of repair. There are too few books available in classrooms and the library. The poor range of PE equipment does very little to encourage or support sports activities. In the two science labs there is enough equipment for the teacher to demonstrate practical work, but not for the students to conduct their own experiments. The school buses are licensed and maintained regularly, but are not fully safe because they lack seatbelts and the first aid boxes are kept out of reach at the back of the vehicles.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - i. analysing exam data to identify patterns in the achievement of particular groups;
 - ii. developing the role of subject co-ordinators by providing job descriptions, leadership training, time and appropriate remuneration;
 - iii. refining the school improvement plan to show how actions will be funded and the impact monitored and evaluated; and
 - iv. ensuring accurate recording of students' absences and lateness.
2. Improve teaching and learning by:
 - i. planning to meet the needs of different ability groups in lessons
 - ii. providing a range of activities in lessons which interest students; particularly boys, and enable them to practise skills that promote thinking and problem-solving; and
 - iii. improving assessment, ensuring students receive feedback on how to improve.
3. Improve the breadth and quality of the curriculum by:
 - i. addressing the deficiencies in KG, PE and art;
 - ii. increasing the choice of subjects for older students; and
 - iii. developing schemes of work that promote students skills and understanding as well as their knowledge
 - iv. increasing resources in all subjects, but particularly in the library, PE and science, and book resources in classrooms.
4. Provide a prayer room for girls.
5. Immediately attend to the regulation and safety issues communicated to the school.