



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



Summary Inspection Report

Our Own English High School

Published in 2013

Iqraa

Our Own English High School

Inspection Date	5 th – 8 th May, 2013
School ID#	168
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Indian (CBSE), British (CIE)
Number of Students	1,859
Age Range	KG – Grade 12
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Rocky Miller
School Address	P.O. Box 80369, Al Ain, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 6 inspectors who observed 94 lessons, other student activities, scrutinised students' written work, analysed student and school performance data and studied school documents. They also talked with staff, students and a senior representative from the Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) group.

Description of the School

The school is located in the Al Muwaiji area of Al Ain and is part of the GEMS group. It opened in 1992 and moved to its current premises in 1997. The aims of the school include the intention to develop children into self-confident, morally upright young adults who are able to achieve their full potential and face global challenges.

The school delivers the GEMS curriculum in KG. Grades 1 to 4 follow a global curriculum that is based on CBSE requirements. Older students follow either the Indian CBSE or the British international GCSE (IGCSE), international AS (IAS) and international A level (IA) curricula (CIE). French is taught as a second language to all students from Grade 1 onwards.

The school is led by the principal, vice principal and three supervisors. The supervisors lead the three sections: KG to Grade 4, Grade 5 to 12 CBSE curriculum, and Grade 5 to 12 British section. KG to Grade 4 classes are mixed but boys and girls are taught separately from Grade 5 onwards. The older students are divided into science and commerce streams. There are 264 children in KG, 629 students in G1 to 4 and 966 students in Grades 5 to 12. In Grades 5 to 12, 47% students study the CBSE curriculum and the rest study the CIE. There are a total of 1859 students in the school, of whom 935 are boys.

61% of students are Muslim and, of these, 3% are of Arab heritage; 3% of students are local Emirati and 0.7% originate from other Gulf States. The rest come from a range of other countries, principally India (45%), Egypt (15%), Pakistan (10%) and Sudan (7%).

Teachers assess all students prior to enrolment. Formal and informal tests are used to identify students with learning needs, although all are usually admitted. All teachers have appropriate teaching qualifications. Fees are affordable, ranging from AED 3,324 in KG to AED 6,624 for Grades 10 to 12, not including books, uniform and transport. The majority of parents have moderate incomes and the school provides scholarships for the most able and those in financial need. Staff salaries are low; the average class teacher's salary is around AED 5,000 per month, depending on experience and qualifications.

Nine students are currently identified as having special educational needs, relating to moderate learning or behaviour difficulties. Twenty-two students are identified as having particular gifts or talents, relating to languages and mathematics.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Our Own English High School to be in Band C; that is a school in need of significant improvement.

Standards are below international expectations for students with similar aptitudes and attainment has declined in most subjects since the last inspection. Progress in almost all subjects is unsatisfactory. Standards in both the CIE curriculum at international GCSE (IGCSE) and international AS level (IAS) are below international averages. Over the last three years, IGCSE and IAS standards have steadily declined in mathematics and ICT and have fallen sharply in IGCSE physics and biology. Standards in the international A (IA) level exams rose in 2012 and were broadly in line with world results in mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry. Standards in the CBSE curriculum are below average and the proportion of students obtaining the higher grades in the 2012 exams fell sharply in mathematics.

Standards and progress made in Arabic and Islamic Studies are below average. Written Arabic is weak because students copy from the board and do not have sufficient opportunities for extended, original writing. Standards are well below average in Social Studies because students are disinterested. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well below average.

Morale amongst CIE students is lower than in the rest of the school. They feel those in the CBSE section receive preferential treatment, from having more frequent educational trips to being allowed to play with balls during break. Behaviour observed during the inspection reflected this disaffection. While attendance across the whole school for the current academic year is average, the attendance of Grade 10, 11 and 12 CIE students is 82%; this is 10% below the equivalent CBSE grades. Relationships between all nationalities are satisfactory and they respect the values, cultures and traditions of the UAE. While younger students usually enjoy school, they find some of their lessons to be boring and repetitive. They say that some of their teachers get angry and push them around. Parents indicate they are pleased with the quality of education provided.

Senior leaders acknowledge that teaching is unsatisfactory. Too few teachers use assessment information to plan interesting work that meets students' differing needs. Tasks do not challenge the most and least able. Students with special educational needs and particular gifts or talents are not identified and therefore

make particularly slow progress. In KG, inappropriate teaching methods and teachers' poor pronunciation of key words confuses children. This slows progress when children are learning new vocabulary, for example, about different facial features and expressions. Teachers often provide the same worksheets for the whole class and some students become distracted. Classrooms are sometimes very noisy and teachers struggle to make themselves heard. Lessons frequently start late and tasks are repetitive. Some teachers do provide group work and are encouraging students to become more pro-active in their learning. For example, students in Grade 9 and above may undertake practical activities during science lessons. While some teachers use ICT resources effectively, for example, to play video clips, there are no computers in classrooms for students' day-to-day use. As a result, students are not developing the skills needed for the contemporary work place.

Teaching in Arabic and Islamic Studies remains largely traditional. Teachers follow the workbook and provide few additional activities. Students are particularly passive during Social Studies and their progress is very slow. Older students say four out of five students receive private tuition.

The KG curriculum is unsatisfactory. Classroom activities usually involve rote repetition and recall. Children rarely choose their own activities and are only able to go outside to use the climbing equipment during their formal timetabled slot. There is only one classroom assistant for the ten KG classes and this adversely affects children's learning and language development. Teachers usually provide one activity for the whole class and this is not always relevant to their needs. Children do not learn through structured play and few activities foster their verbal communication or creative talents.

The CBSE curriculum is satisfactory. The school receives specialist support from the GEMS organisation and activities provide appropriate challenge. Within the CIE and MOE curricula, students' learning is largely limited to the acquisition and recall of facts. There are few opportunities for students to develop problem-solving skills or to use ICT regularly. While remedial classes are provided in most subjects, there is no such provision for students who require support in Arabic.

Within lessons, teachers do not plan additional activities for the most and least able students. Outside of lessons, some of the most able participate in community engineering competitions and help to write the prospectus and school magazine. They also accept positions of responsibility such as head boy and girl and serve as prefects or house captains. These activities are open to only a few of the older students and there are relatively few extra-curricular clubs. While students enjoy inter-house competitions, there is no regular sporting or academic link with other

schools other than periodic ADEC organised workshops. Tutor time is not used effectively to support students' academic or personal development.

The school makes all the required checks when recruiting staff and there are suitable arrangements for first aid and the dispensing of medicines. Systems for ensuring students' safety when travelling to and from school on the buses are good. A generic GEMS child protection policy is in place and there has been suitable staff training. Despite this, students told inspectors that several teachers use bad language, call them names and sometimes hurt them. Senior managers are unaware of these concerns. During the inspection, inspectors did not see any corporal punishment take place, but heard several staff shouting unnecessarily.

The social worker who joined the school the week before the inspection, has no office and has nowhere to talk to students in confidence. Prior to her arrival, the post had been vacant since the start of the academic year. Younger students feel safe in school but say that some of those in higher grades are violent with each other. Students of all ages resent whole class punishments, such as the cancellation of a physical education lesson because one student has misbehaved. They are also concerned about using the stony sports field, the aggravation of injuries should they fall over and damage to their school uniform. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are unsatisfactory. The school does not contact parents on the first day of absence and the attendance of older CIE students has fallen to an unacceptably low level.

The building is a purpose built school. It is adequately maintained and rigorous health and safety procedures ensure it is clean and hygienic. Many of the classrooms are small for the number on roll and students and staff cope because students store their bags neatly, move carefully and remain sedentary. Restrictions imposed by the buildings adversely affect the curriculum, students' academic progress and personal development. Several classes are large, comprising more than the recommended number of students.

Some of the specialist accommodation is also limited in size, for example, the school library. The main hall is sometimes used as a gymnasium but facilities for outdoor physical education lessons are unsatisfactory. The basketball court is hard paved areas and the stony sports field has the potential to cause serious injury should a student fall or trip.

Teachers have sufficient ICT resources for their personal use. Projectors are now installed in every classroom and each teacher has a laptop. There are still too few ICT resources for students' use; there are no computers within any of the classrooms or within the library. None of the three ICT rooms have interactive whiteboards. In addition, there is only a limited range of software and this affects

the extent to which students can develop the skills students will need for the workplace.

The library has sufficient bays for private study and students can keep up to date with current affairs by reading Indian and local national daily newspapers. The range of fiction books is very limited. Many library books are old and tattered and the system for their storage and retrieval is not effective. There are sufficient scientific resources within the three laboratories. But these are only used by students in Grades 9 and above. Younger students do not have access to these specialist facilities and undertake few practical investigations within their own classrooms.

Teacher turnover has been high this year and around one in five has left. While senior leaders have recruited replacements, there have been lengthy delays in obtaining the relevant visas and security clearance. The school employs too few classroom support staff. There is only one person for all KG and some large classes in the rest of the school make it difficult for teachers to plan lessons that actively involve students in a range of activities. The canteen is clean and medicines are stored safely.

GEMS closely monitors the work of the school and holds a sufficiently independent and objective view of the school's effectiveness. GEMS holds the principal and senior leaders fully accountable for the quality of education. The school improvement plan is comprehensive. While it serves as a useful document, identifying the main areas that require improvement, it does not include any costs for the various initiatives. Success indicators are insufficiently explicit. While the school has no links at student level with any other schools, exam results are compared within the GEMS group. These show that the IGCSE results have been the lowest in any GEMS school within the UAE for at least the last three years.

Although the school is over-subscribed it has amassed a significant, and rapidly growing, financial deficit. It is seeking permission to increase tuition fees in the near future. In the meantime, the large budget deficit continues to increase. GEMS is fully aware of the school's declining financial viability.

GEMS provides much of the required professional development for teachers. The impact of training undertaken is monitored through a system of triangulated lesson observations that includes heads of department, supervisors and the principal. Wider responsibilities are distributed between the principal, vice principals and subject leaders. Despite these procedures, the quality of education has declined significantly since the last inspection. Some senior leaders are poorly informed about current standards and trends within the CBSE curriculum. Self-evaluation is too positive and senior leaders are unaware of the low morale

among many of the CIE students, their concerns over sanctions they perceive to be unfair and allegations of corporal punishment. Senior leaders do not effectively analyse the available assessment data and procedures to monitor students' attendance or attainment lack rigour. The school has not identified any differences in the learning and progress of students of different nationalities or ability groups.

The quality of education has declined significantly since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation is overly positive. Prior to the inspection, it graded itself at least good in all areas except buildings, which were considered to be satisfactory. The school is highly dependent on GEMS' input and lacks the capacity to improve unaided. Against a background of falling IGCSE standards, high staff turnover and a rising financial deficit, capacity to improve is unsatisfactory. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Arrest the decline in IGCSE standards by:
 - i. ensuring teachers use assessment information to monitor students' progress and plan work that meets their individual learning needs, including those with special educational needs and specific gifts and talents;
 - ii. taking steps to raise the attendance of Grade 10, 11 and 12 CIE students; and
 - iii. improving the range, quality, appeal and use of learning resources across the school
2. Improve students' 21st Century skills so that they are well prepared for life after school and are able to take their place within the workplace.
3. Enable KG children to learn through the provision of more frequent opportunities for planned, child-initiated play.
4. Ensure self-evaluation is sufficiently objective and is based on robust assessment of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses.