



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



Summary Inspection Report

International School of Choueifat - Al Ain

Published in 2013

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International School of Choueifat – Al Ain

Inspection Date	29 th October – 1 st November 2012
School ID#	162
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	SABIS
Number of Students	2,233
Age Range	3 - 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Janet Haley
School Address	Saeed Ibn Shakhboot Street, Al Muwaiji PO 15997, Al Ain
Telephone Number	(+971) 03 7678444
Fax Number	(+971) 03 7678711
Email (ADEC)	Choueifataa.pvt@adec.ac.ae

Introduction

Six inspectors inspected the school. The inspectors observed 72 lessons and scrutinised students' work. In addition to observing assemblies, break times and other additional activities, they held discussions with students, parents, teachers, senior managers and a representative of the owners.

Description of the School

The International School of Choueifat (ISC) Al Ain, was established in 1980. The school is part of the worldwide SABIS School Network. It is located in the Al Muwaiji district. It is a private international English-medium day school serving both the local national and expatriate communities. which owns 12 schools in the Gulf. Students in these 12 schools study courses at the same rate. All SABIS schools have the same aim, which is to give students the best preparation to join and succeed at good universities.

498 students are in Kindergarten (KG) classes, 1,274 in primary (Grades 1 to 6), and 461 in the secondary section (298 in Grades 7 to 9 and 163 in Grades 10 to 12). There are 1,292 boys and 941 girls. Muslim students account for 92% of the population with 8% non-Muslim. Arab students make up 82% of the student population and 49% of students are UAE Nationals. The other main nationalities represented are from Egypt (7.4%), United States (6.5%), Jordan (5.4%), Pakistan (5.1%), Syria (4.2%), and Lebanon (3.5%) with smaller percentages from Canada, Palestine and Iraq. The specific identification of students with special educational needs is contrary to the SABIS philosophy. Students come from a variety of circumstances but their socio-economic background is generally above average. The school operates a non-selective admissions policy and there are no academic requirements for entry for three to five year olds. They must be able to speak, follow simple instructions and be toilet trained. All other students take diagnostic tests in English, mathematics and possibly a second language. Fees range from AED 18,900 per annum in KG1 to AED 34,500 in Grade 12. Teachers' salaries range from AED 6,000 per month to AED 17,500 with an average salary of AED 9,000. The SABIS Schools' Network provides a common corporate framework for all its schools. They set policies and priorities centrally and take decisions at a corporate level.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged International School of Choueifat – Al Ain to be in Band C; that is a school that is in need of significant improvement.

The last inspection of International School of Choueifat – Al Ain took place in January 2010 and judged the school to be providing standard of education that needs significant improvement. There has been a significant increase in the number of students on roll since then. The school has made some improvements since the last inspection. It meets its SABIS related aims to a satisfactory level; however, the overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. The changes, since the last inspection, include notable improvements in students' personal development and the arrangements that enable them to feel safe, valued and supported. These aspects are now satisfactory and improving.

There are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the curriculum does not yet meet the needs of all students. Teaching and student support adheres to the SABIS formula. This results in a rigid didactic approach where students become recipients of knowledge. The school does not adequately develop students' logical reasoning and critical thinking, which form part of the SABIS philosophy. The school has made improvements to its buildings and accommodation but still has work to do to make sure it fulfils all aspects of health and safety requirements. Aspects of the leadership and management of the school still require further improvement for them to have a full impact on raising the overall quality of education. The new principal has gained the confidence of students and staff and has a good understanding of instructional leadership. Consequently, the school is now demonstrating a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

When measured against the best international standards, the standards that students achieve in English, mathematics, Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies are unsatisfactory. They are better in science. Students enter a range of international award bearing courses from the UK and US. These include International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), A level, Standard Assessment Tests (SAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Most students, who enter UK exams, perform broadly in line with or below international standards. The few students, who enter AP exams, produce better results. Only a small percentage of students progress through to Grade 12. These students leave the school suitably qualified to enable them to take up undergraduate places at universities in the UAE and other countries such as the USA and Canada. To this extent, the school fulfils its aims and student outcomes

are in line with that of similar schools, if not always with the best international standards.

The standards students achieve in other subjects are very variable. All SABIS schools have an intensive testing programme and comparison shows that the standards students achieve at ISC Al Ain are generally in line with most of the UAE SABIS schools. Limitations in the curriculum and weaknesses in teaching are the main causes of students not reaching the best international standards. Students build up a knowledge base in their subjects. The development of the necessary skills of application, creativity, critical thinking or independent learning does not compliment their knowledge acquisition. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills are unsatisfactory. In Arabic, whilst most students are able to finish textbook activities they do not develop the full range of language skills. Students develop basic knowledge in Islamic studies but have insufficient understanding to apply their learning. They develop basic knowledge about key places, people and events in the UAE. Students have a weak understanding of effective citizenship.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress in Arabic, Islamic studies, English and science and insufficient progress in mathematics and social studies. Students' progress focusses on knowledge acquisition with little emphasis on skills and the application of knowledge. In social studies, this is because of the low priority given to the subject. Students learn the underpinning concepts in mathematics but are less able to apply them. There are variations in the progress and acquisition of literacy skills in English; by Grade 9, most students have a level of literacy broadly in line with national standards. A narrow curriculum, which does not meet the needs of young children, and inexperienced teachers who do not implement the SABIS methods as intended, restrict the progress of children in KG classes. The early introduction of French helps students to make progress. Students make satisfactory progress in music and art in the primary section. Students enjoy physical education (PE) and make satisfactory progress in swimming and gymnastics as well as in a range of other activities. There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills and apply them across the curriculum, this results in unsatisfactory progress in ICT.

Students have positive attitudes to learning. In lessons and around the school they are respectful and well behaved with few incidents. It is common to see them playing and interacting together regardless of ethnic or religious background. The Student Life Organization (SLO) plays an important part in the personal development of students. It provides an opportunity for the older students to take responsibility and manage teams of mentors and prefects in younger grades. As a result, older students are articulate, confident with a

well-developed sense of responsibility. They have developed a range of personal and social skills to help them in their future education and careers. There are few opportunities for students to develop personal and social skills during lessons because of the level of teacher domination and the lack of student interaction in many lessons. The lack of any links with outside organisations also limits this aspect of their development. Not all teachers give sufficient attention to creating a calm environment in which students can develop confidence and maturity.

The quality of teaching across the school is variable and is unsatisfactory overall. The highest percentage of unsatisfactory teaching is in KG followed by primary grades. Many teachers in these sections are new to the school and are relatively inexperienced and unfamiliar with the SABIS teaching methodology. They have a limited understanding of how to work with young children, and how to get the best from them.

Students have very frequent formal assessments to gauge their understanding. Whilst they do not receive guidance on how they can improve through oral or written dialogue in class, they have access to their weekly results, which highlights their areas for improvement. The best teaching, such as that seen in secondary science, develops students' understanding by involving them in discussion and practical application of the concepts.

Although the school has provided induction and ongoing support, some teachers have not understood the importance of creating a calm, productive learning environment. They spend much of the day talking to students with raised voices, resulting in the whole class shouting out in response to questions. This has a negative impact on learning and the overall climate for learning. Throughout the school, there are insufficient opportunities for interaction and independent learning. In many lessons, students are passive learners. A group of students who talked with inspectors commented that they like lessons when teachers are “fair, approachable and when we have time to interact.” Less successful teaching occurs when teachers “shout, talk too much and don’t allow us to talk.” The best teaching excites interests and motivates students, and is characterised by strong, supportive relationships.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The SABIS curriculum is very thorough and prescribes the points of essential knowledge teachers should cover in each lesson. The emphasis on knowledge accumulation reduces enrichment opportunities and skill development. Students receive insufficient opportunity to use their learning in practical or problem-solving situations. Its effectiveness is to some extent determined by the integrity with which teachers implement and deliver it. In Arabic and Islamic studies, the curriculum is mainly limited to textbooks with very little research or extended knowledge. The school does not implement the UAE

social studies curriculum with sufficient rigour. During the inspection, teachers used UAE social studies lessons to revise Arabic instead. The curriculum is strongly weighted towards science and mathematics. The science curriculum provides progression and eventually leads to a good knowledge base as evidenced by the overall standards. There is strong extracurricular provision for PE, but few other activities are available. There are limited opportunities for students to continue studying music or art after primary. The KG curriculum falls well below the accepted international standards for early years. There are no opportunities for children to learn through play and exploration and insufficient opportunities for creative development. The SABIS philosophy does not allow for the categorisation of students into those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. There are systems in place to provide support for students who find learning difficult, to enable them to catch up with their peers. Students receive support in specially timetabled classes, and along with review and re-teach, are effective for most students. It also ensures that the coverage of the curriculum continues at a rapid pace, which provides some challenge for the more able. The curriculum design and teaching methodologies do not differentiate by task, activity or resource. The school does not cater for students' differing ability levels in lessons. At ISC Al Ain, too many students do not receive a curriculum that addresses their academic, personal and social needs. The school does not have any links with external partners.

The school has an effective pastoral system with the involvement of the SLO and its coordinator where students support each other by acting as mentors to improve academic and personal progress. The Academic Quality Controllers (AQC's) monitor the academic progress of each student and liaise with teachers and parents. The school has policies and procedures in place to ensure student protection from abuse with a diligent approach to child protection. One SLO member has responsibility for leading on anti-bullying supported by prefects throughout the school. Students demonstrate a very strong awareness of this. Students are appreciative of the advice and support they receive from the university adviser when deciding on course and university applications.

The school has made improvements to its buildings and premises since the last inspection and the increase in student roll. The introduction of hard surfaces has reduced the amount of sand blowing round the site. PE facilities are good and most classrooms are satisfactory. Many are bright and attractive, particularly in KG. Despite improvements in the overall cleanliness of the school and the systems in place to ensure regular cleaning, the quality assurance of the hygiene arrangements is ineffective. Some communal play areas are unhygienic and some

students eat food in these areas. The canteen is not meeting the needs of all students and the school has plans for its refurbishment. Material resources are insufficient to support practical and interactive learning and this restricts teaching methodology. There are only two science laboratories, which is insufficient to support learning in this area.

There are some aspects relating to health and safety that are unsatisfactory. Although the school carries out regular fire drills, it does not keep any record of them. There is no annual programme for portable electrical equipment testing and the school expects staff to check their own. The level of traffic as students enter and leave school puts them at risk. The school has had a plan drawn up to address this and is now waiting for municipality approval to determine a solution. The SABIS School Network demonstrates strong leadership and defines every aspect of the management, organisation, curriculum and teaching methodology. Consequently, the school has clear structures, job descriptions and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The regional director monitors the performance of the school in ensuring students progress through the agreed curriculum. The presence of such strong corporate leadership and direction is both strength and a weakness. The organisation pays fair salaries and honours its obligations to employees. It sets priorities and determines the direction for educational improvement across its schools. School leaders have little individual freedom to assess the specific needs of students at ISC Al Ain and to set targets and plan how to achieve them. They are unable to align financial resources with strategic priorities. The organisation does not allow parents and students to play any part in decision-making. The middle management structures provide for academic leadership through the heads of department but they only have influence over the secondary section. The school is not taking advantage of the potential to strengthen continuity and progression throughout the school, or use the subject expertise and knowledge of its specialists. AQC's monitor progress and provide vital links with parents who do not have direct access to teachers. They monitor the quality of teaching and learning and provide ongoing support in their parts of the school. They are too few in number to be able to do this effectively. Judged on the outcomes for students who remain at the school until the end of Grade 12, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - i. providing professional development to ensure that all teachers understand and implement the methodology expected of them and create an appropriate climate for learning;
 - ii. providing more opportunities for the development of independent learning, creativity and critical thinking skills and for students to take an active part in lessons;
 - iii. developing the use of ICT to support teaching, extend learning, and improve students skills;
 - iv. providing sufficient material resources to support practical learning; and
 - v. further developing the ethos and climate of the school by ensuring all staff, particularly those in KG, lead by example and encourage praise, reward and respect.
2. Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - i. creating management structures that give middle managers sufficient time to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning by extending the influence of heads of department across the school and ensuring there are sufficient AQC's;
 - ii. using staff expertise to promote continuity and progression and share best practice throughout the school; and
 - iii. providing strategic direction and developing school action plans based on an evaluation of the specific needs of ISC Al Ain.
3. Address all health and safety issues and ensure the school is compliant with ADEC regulations.