



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



Inspection Report

International School of Choueifat – Al Ain

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

International School of Choueifat – Al Ain

Inspection Date	2 - 5 March 2014
School ID#	162
Licensed Curriculum	SABIS
Number of Students	2,090
Age Range	3 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Janet Haley (Acting Director)
School Address	Saeed Ibn Shakhboot Street, Al Muwaiji, PO Box 15997, Al Ain
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School Website	www.iscalain-sabis.net
Date of last inspection	29 October - 1 November 2012

The overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A High performing (overall effectiveness grade 1, 2 or 3)

Band B Satisfactory (overall effectiveness grade 4 or 5)

Band C In need of significant improvement (overall effectiveness grade 6, 7 or 8)

The School was judged to be:	BAND B;	GRADE 5
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The main strengths of the school are:

- high attainment in external examinations by students in Grades 10 to 12
- monitoring of assessment results that identifies gaps in students' knowledge
- high levels of attendance
- students who show respect for both their own cultures and the values of the UAE
- the positive atmosphere of the school, and the respectful relationships established by teachers that produce well-behaved students
- the Principal's commitment to the community and to school improvement
- the opportunities for a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- effective systems that maintain buildings and premises in a healthy and safe condition
- organisation and smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the impact of teaching on the development of students' critical thinking skills and their ability to work independently and in groups
- the use of assessment for learning during lessons to check students' progress and provide immediate support
- curriculum implementation to effectively meet the needs of students who find learning difficult and those with high ability
- provision of opportunities for Kindergarten (KG) children to explore, make choices and express themselves creatively

- the quantity and appeal of classroom and specialist resources, especially for information and communication technology (ICT), science and books other than formal teaching texts
- implementation of a lesson observation system to provide a clear focus on monitoring and improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching
- self-evaluation and development planning to give greater attention to the quality of provision across the school.

Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of 6 inspectors who observed 101 lessons as well as assemblies, break periods and students' arrival and departure. They met with school leaders, teachers, students and parents. Inspectors scrutinised students' written work, and analysed performance data and documents provided by the school. In addition, 371 responses from parents to a questionnaire about the school were analysed. During the inspection process, the school leadership and the representatives of the Choueifat administration, were close observers of the evaluation process and participated in several joint lesson observations.

Description of the School

The International School of Choueifat, Al Ain was founded in 1980 and moved to the present location in Al Muwaiji district in 1982. All SABIS schools aim academically to: 'qualify every student for entrance to university, provide a well-rounded education based on mastery of English and mathematics, enable acquisition of a second language, train students for logical reasoning and critical thinking, prepare students for sustained intellectual effort, and generate excitement for life-long learning'. Non-academic aims for graduates are to prepare them to: 'uphold high standards of ethical, moral and civic conduct; make informed decisions on social issues; defend convictions and reverse negative peer pressure; participate in extra-curricular activities, school management and community work; foster tolerance, cooperation and teamwork; and understand people of the world through appreciation of differences and similarities'.

The school is part of the SABIS School Network and this provides a common corporate framework for all its schools. Policies and priorities are set centrally and decisions are taken at a corporate level. The school implements the SABIS Educational System and secondary students may choose to take American or British external examinations.

There are 2,090 students: 1,182 boys and 908 girls. There are 487 children in KG, 1,069 students in Grades 1 to 5, 391 students in Grades 6 to 9, and 143 students in Grades 10 to 12. There are more boys than girls in each section and the number of students at each grade level decreases significantly from Grade 6 onwards. Almost all students are Muslim; 84% are of Arab heritage and 50% are Emirati. The remainder originate from a wide variety of backgrounds: American, Pakistani, Canadian, Iraqi, Indian, British, Omani and Filipino.

Identification of students with special learning needs (SEN) is contrary to the SABIS philosophy: students who do not achieve sufficiently well in tests are

provided special lessons. The number attending special lessons varies throughout the year according to test results. Additionally, students from Grade 4 who achieve 95% in examinations are able to opt out of English, social studies and mathematics, and may choose to self-study. 8.5% of students from Grades 5 to 12 are identified with language and literacy difficulties. Student admission is non-selective; students from Grade 1 take diagnostic tests in English and mathematics.

There are 104 full-time teaching staff, 35 teaching support staff, 35 administrative staff, 2 nurses, 4 security staff and 56 technical staff. There is a Director who has oversight of two schools within the network. The Acting Director is in her second year in the role of Principal and her seventh year within the organisation.

Fees range from AED 18,900 in KG to AED 33,300 in Grade 12; additional fees are charged for books and uniforms, ranging from AED 700 to AED 3,000. This places the school between the medium and premium categories.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Evidence from lesson observation and scrutiny of students' work indicates that attainment in most subjects is broadly satisfactory, and students make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. The exceptions to this are Islamic education and information and communication technology (ICT), where attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. Attainment in external examinations by the small cohort of students in Grades 10 to 12 is high. Student performance in internal tests is broadly in line with the regional averages of similar schools. In recent periodic tests, performance in English, Arabic and mathematics is slightly below that of similar schools in younger primary grades and slightly better in older primary and middle school grades.

Children in KG make less progress in developing necessary skills as they have limited opportunities to explore, make choices and express themselves creatively. In English, attainment levels are below best international standards in younger grades and in line and improving by Grade 7. Students listen well and read fluently, using high order scanning skills to target information. Their writing and speaking skills are not as secure, mainly because these are not sufficiently supported or extended to accelerate progress. Students' acquisition of scientific and mathematical knowledge is in line with international expectations and they use terminology with confidence. Their ability to apply knowledge and use skills is less well-developed. For example, Grade 9 students do not know how to interpret word problems and convert them to algebraic expressions.

In subjects taught in Arabic, students listen well and write using correct grammar. Their reading and speaking skills are less developed and Standard Arabic is not used consistently. In Islamic education, students share ideas when given the opportunity; they do not read verses of the Holy Qur'an with the expected levels of accuracy and do not confidently explain how their meaning links to their daily lives. Achievement in world social studies is significantly higher than in UAE social studies.

21st Century skills, such as working independently and collaboratively, using ICT and applying research skills, are less successfully developed as too few opportunities are provided in lessons. The attainment and progress of more able students and those who find learning difficult are below expected levels. This is because they do not have enough opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills or because activities lack sufficient challenge.

Students' personal development

Above average attendance of 96% indicates students' positive attitudes towards learning. Most students state that they enjoy school and have sufficient confidence to approach adults and to offer suggestions in lessons. Students behave well towards each other. They appreciate their own cultures and the values of the UAE, and treat adults and peers with clear respect. There is no student council and some students feel that their opinions are not listened to or valued.

The majority of students participate enthusiastically in activities outside lessons. The student life organisation (SLO) is a significant feature of the school and students are proud of their involvement. Students take on leadership roles with responsibility and they contribute to school life by organising activities for all students. Additionally, higher achievers in all grades have the opportunity to support their peers, for example, as mentors to monitor written work in lessons and as student teachers. Students do not sufficiently develop initiative, curiosity and flexibility because opportunities are not provided regularly. Students express an age-appropriate practical understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives and are energetic during break times.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They maintain positive relationships with students. In effective lessons resources are used to good effect, for example in physical education (PE), in the use of flash cards in Arabic and two-dimensional shapes in mathematics. In the best lessons teachers use a range of questioning strategies that encourage students to share opinions and require them to justify responses. This results in enthusiastic discussion, lively pace and good

productivity, and encourages students to take responsibility, ask questions and reflect on their work. This practice is inconsistent and students are not given enough opportunities to use their own initiative and work independently.

Teachers' understanding of the variety of ways to encourage and support learning throughout the school is less well developed, particularly for younger children. Lesson objectives are not consistently shared with students so that they know what they need to achieve. Lessons focus too heavily on instruction and this is often effective in transmitting knowledge. It does not fully stimulate and enthuse active learning among students. Lessons are whole-class and frequently teacher dominated.

In the least effective lessons, low expectations and lack of challenge result in students who are quietly passive and learn mostly through well-developed listening skills. Resources are sometimes not used well to support learning. For instance, limited time is spent applying ICT skills and there is an over reliance on theoretical learning. There are few opportunities for students to ask questions and teachers sometimes actively discourage it. There is limited attention given to meeting the needs of students with differing abilities. Students who finish quickly are held back by teachers sticking rigidly to a step-by-step methodology. Learning time is sometimes wasted and this leads to more able students spending significant time waiting, rather than working. There are sufficient support staff in KG. They occasionally help guide learning activities; often they act only as teacher assistants, supervising students and reacting to minor discipline issues.

Summative assessment through weekly and periodic testing is systematic. The results are used well by the school to support students with identified gaps in their learning. Continuous assessment during lessons is limited and is only used by the most effective teachers to provide immediate interventions to meet the range of student learning needs. In the least effective lessons, marking is restricted to student partners checking only for correctly written answers. Students who find learning difficult are not given sufficient support and limited attention is paid to developing their skills and understanding.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

Implementation of the curriculum results in satisfactory academic progress in most subjects and offers an appropriate range of subjects. It is less effective in developing independence, collaboration, problem solving skills, and personal qualities. In KG, the emphasis on basic skills of literacy and numeracy leaves too few opportunities for children to explore and problem solve, make choices and express themselves creatively.

The school successfully promotes understanding of the UAE community values and culture through social studies lessons, attractive and informative displays and participation in special events. Insufficient priority to this subject is given in Grades 7 to 9. It is embedded in Arabic lessons and was replaced by revision for Arabic tests during the inspection visit.

The syllabi and pacing charts clearly define the intended outcomes of the curriculum. Planning does not provide sufficient opportunities for students to use and apply the knowledge and skills presented in lessons. There are some opportunities for more able students to support their peers' achievement. Enhancement opportunities for more able students are limited by the way most lessons are organised. Lesson planning for students who experience difficulties does not provide adequate additional steps to allow them to develop skills successfully and progressively.

There is a well planned enrichment programme with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In addition, there are well developed community links to enhance students' learning, particularly in sports. Students feel they are well prepared for further education, a view shared by their parents.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school maintains a welcoming atmosphere and clear systems within which students feel safe and secure. Rewards and sanctions effectively promote positive behaviour and attitudes. Careful attention is given to addressing any disciplinary concerns; systems and procedures help students consider their actions and behave well towards each other.

The pastoral system provides effective support for students' academic progress. This is closely and regularly monitored and students are quickly made aware of any gaps through their performance on tests. It less effectively monitors and communicates their personal development. Prompt contact with parents encourages high attendance. Students from Grade 9 receive thorough guidance about appropriate courses and further education choices. The prayer room is small and does not provide sufficient separate access for girls and boys. The school ensures a healthy environment and provision for first aid is appropriate and caring.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The premises and plot are extensive and classrooms are of sufficient size. Buildings present a welcoming environment with attractive displays of student art work and information. Effective procedures ensure that the buildings and premises are well maintained in a hygienic and safe condition. Students use them

with respect. There is a wide range of high quality PE facilities. There are extensive facilities to enable testing using computers; there is only one computer room available for computer science classes. Specialist facilities do not fully support the curriculum: there are no science laboratories for students up to Grade 9, the art room and library are small, and there is no music room. Buildings do not cater to students with physical disabilities. Guards ensure visitors are noted and security systems are satisfactory.

The school's resources to support its aims

Teachers are qualified and are sufficient in number. Professional development is regular and appreciated by teachers: they are intensively inducted into the SABIS educational system and trained specifically in how to implement it. The impact of the training is inconsistent as levels of teaching skill vary widely.

The quality, quantity and range of resources do not adequately support the curriculum in all subjects. PE resources are of high quality and plentiful. Very few resources are provided in other lessons and this often restricts students from learning by experience. There are not enough materials and equipment in KG classes to support age-appropriate choice and independent learning activities. The range and quality of English and Arabic fiction and non-fiction books does not provide sufficient supplementary reading materials to extend literacy development. Interactive whiteboards are being piloted in Grades 5 and 8. There is limited access to ICT, including computer access, in regular classrooms and for all subjects. Available resources in primary mathematics and science for Grades 2 to 10 do not provide enough access and opportunity for practical activities.

There is no school transport. Outsourced transport is used for fieldtrips and the systems in place ensure high standards of safety. The canteen is hygienic and offers healthy food options.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The corporate organisation and senior leadership ensure compliance with ADEC's standards and regulations. The Principal provides caring accountability within the focused strategic direction set by the corporate organisation. Her emphasis on teamwork across the school motivates staff and builds a well-organised and cohesive community. The Board has clear roles and responsibilities and fulfils them appropriately. As representatives of SABIS, Board members' view of the school is guided by corporate expectations; they do not have a sufficiently objective view of the school. They provide appropriate support and hold the school firmly to account for its overall performance and particularly for student attainment in internal tests.

The school is required to follow established structures that do not allow them to systematically seek the views of parents in the decision making process. Parents are continuously informed about their children's academic progress through web-links and reports. Parent responses to the questionnaire were mixed but generally positive. Concerns were expressed by KG parents in regard to the value given to parental opinion and how well parents are informed about their children's progress. In all grades, parents are concerned that they do not have meetings or communication with their children's teachers.

School self-evaluation and school development planning (SDP) focuses on academic outcomes. There is less effective evaluation of other aspects of school provision. The self-evaluation form (SEF) is overly positive. The SDP gives attention to all performance standards and has all the expected elements. Strategic planning is undertaken at corporate level; the system allows input from teachers through middle and senior leaders. This reduces the extent to which the school can respond quickly to the identified curriculum needs.

Staff turnover is an ongoing challenge for the school in its attempts to develop consistent understanding and skills in teaching the chosen curriculum; professional development focuses on this challenge. Middle and senior leaders regularly evaluate teachers' performance against organisational expectations as well as students' performance in tests and examinations. Middle leaders are not sufficiently involved in lesson observation and do not have enough impact in improving the quality of teaching. There is less attention paid to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in lessons in order to provide support and professional development.

Progress since the last inspection

The school was last inspected in November 2012. Health and safety issues that were identified in the report have been addressed. In comparison, more limited progress has been made in addressing the recommendations for improving the quality of teaching and learning and strengthening leadership and management.

Interactive whiteboards are being piloted; this initiative and the provision of greater access to computers across the school require more urgency in their implementation. Induction processes give new teachers a clear introduction into organisational and educational expectations. Opportunities for students to develop independent learning and creative and critical thinking skills, and to become more active in lessons, remain limited across grades and subjects.

The academic quality controllers (AQC's) have multiple roles including teaching, and do not have sufficient time to satisfactorily fulfil their responsibilities. This particularly applies to improving the effectiveness of teaching and raising standards. The Principal ensures that within the mandated corporate strategic direction the school is developing action plans that relate to specific needs, for example, in the development of SLO activities and in professional development activities during team meetings.

Overall, the senior leadership team has demonstrated satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Develop the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - i. challenge more able students to make maximum progress and provide targeted support in all lessons for students who are less able
 - ii. promote students' critical thinking skills through consistent use of a range of questioning strategies, including asking probing questions
 - iii. plan learning activities that promote students' ability to work independently and in groups
 - iv. use formative assessment more effectively during lessons in order to promote efficient learning and better progress for students of different abilities.
2. Strengthen curriculum planning and implementation in order to:
 - i. provide adequate opportunities for children in KG to investigate and explore, engage in conversation, and develop their creative and problem-solving skills
 - ii. ensure recognition is given to the importance of UAE social studies.
3. Develop the access to, and effective use of, resources by:
 - i. ensuring student access to ICT in lessons across all subjects
 - ii. increasing library facilities and printed reading material, both fiction and reference, to promote literacy and research skills
 - iii. increasing access to science and mathematics resources for students in all grades, in order to promote practical and investigative science skills.
4. Strengthen the impact of self-evaluation on planning by taking greater account of the views of parents and students.
5. Strengthen leadership and management:
 - i. through more rigorous use of evaluation of the quality and impact of provision in setting priorities for school development planning
 - ii. by linking professional development with performance management through confident use of the lesson observation process to monitor the quality and effectiveness of teaching
 - iii. setting improvement targets for individual teachers and monitoring and supporting progress towards them.

Inspection Grades

Performance Standard	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory & Improving	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Poor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Standard 1: Students' attainment and progress								
Standard 2: Students' personal development								
Standard 3: The quality of teaching and learning								
Standard 4: The meeting of students' needs through the curriculum								
Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students								
Standard 6: The quality of the school's buildings and premises								
Standard 7: The school's resources to support its aims								
Standard 8: The effectiveness of leadership and management								
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall effectiveness								