



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



Inspection Report

Raha International School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Raha International School

Inspection Date	21 – 24 April 2014
School ID#	113
Licensed Curriculum	International Baccalaureate (IB)
Number of Students	1,449
Age Range	4 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Wayne MacInnis
School Address	Khalifa City A, PO Box 34150, Abu Dhabi
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School Website	www.ris.ae
Date of last inspection	13 – 16 May 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 A;	GRADE 2
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The main strengths of the school are:

- students' high academic standards, very good progress and exceptional 21st Century skills
- the harmonious and cohesive school community
- students' impressive personal development
- the high quality of teaching and learning
- the high quality of the curriculum, that is comprehensively planned to provide continuity and progression in student learning between and within the 3 IB programmes
- the strongly supportive and successful pastoral system
- the spacious building and premises that provide high quality facilities
- strong and well-focused strategic leadership and management

The main areas for improvement are:

- consistency of high quality teaching within and between subjects at all grades, particularly for the higher grades in Islamic education
- student attainment, in order that it compares favourably to the highest international standards in all subjects
- further development of shaded areas around the campus.

Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 87 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, programme and subject co-ordinators, counsellors, teachers, support staff, students and parents. They analysed test and assessment results, scrutinised students' work across the school, analysed the 422 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The Principal was involved throughout the inspection process.

Description of the School

Raha International School opened in 2006 and is part of the Taaleem group of schools. The school aims to: 'inspire compassion, confidence and international mindedness; challenge individuals to excel; provide a safe, happy and nurturing learning community; empower thoughtful action locally and globally'.

There are 1,449 students in total: 660 girls and 789 boys. There are 179 children in Early Years (EY), 621 students in Grades 1 to 5, 432 students in Grades 6 to 9 and 217 students in Grades 10 to 12. Of the student body, 41% are Muslim and 25% are of Arab heritage. Of the 75 nationalities represented at the school: 15% of students are Emirati, 11% American, 8% British, 6% Canadian, 6% Australian, 5% German and 2% or less from each of 69 other countries. 10% of students have language and literacy difficulties and 57 students are identified with special educational needs (SEN). Student admission procedures include an interview and written assessment of skills and ability in English and mathematics, and for Arabic students their level of Arabic.

The curriculum follows the 3 International Baccalaureate programmes: Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP).

The Executive Board is the main governing body and is accountable to the Taaleem Group. It has a representative on the Advisory Board. The Principal is in his seventh year. There are 109 full-time teaching staff and 21 teaching support staff. There are 11 administrative staff, 2 nurses, 1 security staff and 7 technical staff.

Fees range from AED 35,900 in EY to AED 55,200 in Grade 12. This places the school in the premium category.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Standards and progress in almost all subjects compare very well to those in other schools following the same curriculum, and to best international standards.

In Islamic education, standards are approaching ADEC expected levels and progress is satisfactory and improving. Since 2012, there has been an upward trend in Diploma Programme (DP) results in Arabic, English, mathematics and the sciences, and predicted results for 2014 are high. Internal assessments in all subjects in (Primary Year Programme) PYP and (Middle Year Programme) MYP indicate at least very good outcomes.

In English, students are extremely fluent and confident communicators, and their reading skills are well developed. For example, they are able to quickly grasp key ideas, identify themes and relate these to their own lives. In subjects taught in Arabic, students' listening, speaking and particularly creative writing skills are well developed. In Islamic education, PYP students show strong skills in memorization and the ability to reflect on the impact teachings of Islam makes on their lives and behaviour. These skills are not as well developed in higher grades. Students' knowledge and understanding in science is well developed. They make confident use of technical vocabulary and have a strong understanding of scientific method and its application. In mathematics, attainment is very good; in particular, students confidently apply problem-solving skills to understand the relevancy of mathematics to real-life situations. In non-core subjects such as physical education, additional languages, and particularly creative arts, attainment is high and progress is very good.

Students skilfully apply information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum to support their learning. The inquiry based approach to learning produces students who demonstrate well developed skills in working independently and collaboratively from the EY onwards. In addition, they develop very effective research, creative and data presentation skills. The thorough planning and support for more able students and those who find learning difficult result in most students working at or above expected levels.

Students' personal development

Above average attendance rates of 95% reflect the extremely positive attitudes students have towards learning. Their behaviour is impressive: confident, mature and self-assured. The student community is harmonious and extremely cohesive. Students enjoy being at school and interact positively with their teachers. They show sensitivity and respect for the many different nationalities, cultures and

viewpoints within the school. Students are enthusiastic and vocal in their appreciation of the opportunity to interact and develop friendships with young people from other countries. They very readily participate in activities that successfully develop their knowledge and understanding of the culture and values of the UAE. Their great respect for the country they live in is evident each day when they attend carefully to the National Anthem and flag-raising ceremony. The extensive club and extra-curricular programme is well subscribed.

Students of all ages are acquiring strong leadership skills through their work in collaborative groups in lessons, when they participate in activities such as the student councils, and when they act as ambassadors in showing the school to visitors. The successful inquiry approach produces students who from a very young age demonstrate high levels of curiosity, reflection, persistence and flexibility. They have a full understanding of the benefits of healthy diets and exercise, and are committed to applying that understanding to their own lives. Community action is embedded in all programmes and students contribute actively and with enjoyment to school-based, local and international activities.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is high across almost all grades and subjects. Examples of some outstanding practice were observed in Arabic, English, science and mathematics, in both PYP and MYP. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and secure understanding of how best to plan within the programmes and successfully support learning for all students. The inquiry approach is well understood and frequent targeted professional development guides further improvement in curriculum planning and teaching practices. Planning is thorough and learning objectives are made clear in lessons, leading to purposeful participation and reflection on achievements. Teachers plan carefully for the range of learning needs and the level of challenge and support in most lessons is effective and accelerates all students' progress.

Most teachers confidently use a range of methods and the many available resources to effectively promote understanding and skills as well as knowledge. In a minority of lessons, for example MYP Islamic education, students are not sufficiently motivated and engaged in learning. In most lessons, students are confident and eager participants who assume responsibility for their own learning, for example when editing their creative writing independently, and in group work in an MYP Arabic lesson. Teachers consistently use a range of questioning strategies, including open-ended questions, that challenge students to think creatively. Consequently students confidently ask questions that deepen their understanding.

Relationships throughout the school are supportive and successfully promote learning. There is highly effective and unobtrusive management of behaviour that ensures calm and productive lessons. In a minority of lessons, there was an overlong introduction, and the explanation of tasks and outcomes by the teacher was too detailed and lengthy, leading to loss of attention and reduced time for practice. In a very few lessons there was not enough opportunity given to students to practise a range of skills in Arabic. Support staff are knowledgeable and well prepared so that they can make very effective contributions during both preparation and lessons to support teaching and learning.

Teachers and students make accurate and very effective use of assessment; this includes frequent and integral peer and self-assessment. Students understand their individual targets and receive helpful support in how to improve their work.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

Middle leaders and teachers comprehensively plan a high quality curriculum to provide continuity and progression between and within the 3 IB programmes. Careful planning ensures a high level of inquiry and appropriate and successful integration of UAE culture within all subjects. This includes the effective use of resources, regular curriculum-related field trips and visitors to the school, and many cultural events. In addition, UAE social studies is well planned to promote good understanding of the UAE and community values. A wide range of well planned subjects provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

Curriculum mapping, scope and sequence documents and programmes of inquiry are detailed, and outcomes are clear in every subject. Planning and implementation very successfully meet the range of student learning needs and interests and as a result students are very well engaged. This includes students with identified SEN and English as an additional language. Curriculum planning and implementation extremely successfully develop students' 21st Century skills and personal qualities. In Early Years, planning and delivery ensure excellent attention to meeting the specific developmental learning needs of young children. Implementation across the 3 programmes prepares almost all students very well for their next grades, further education and careers. A few Grade 10 students, who the school considers will not successfully complete the academically challenging full diploma programme, are counselled to move on to alternative education. The school has developed close and very useful local and international links to enhance student learning.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

All staff give high priority to the care, protection and guidance of students. There are pro-active, strongly supportive and successful pastoral systems within each

programme. Students are extremely well supported when they join the school. The academic deans and counsellors add further effectiveness to the monitoring, guidance and support systems. These structures result in a close bond between staff and students that enhances their levels of academic progress and personal development. Rewards, that students often regard as intrinsic to learning, and sanctions are fair, clearly understood and highly effective. Supervision is thorough and age appropriate. The friendly and positive atmosphere around the school creates a very safe environment where students feel valued by peers and staff; the community clearly understands child protection procedures. First aid provision is safe and effective and students receive prompt attention. The school clinic does not make the best use of the available space. Staff give knowledgeable advice to students when they make choices in all grades, and especially in the older grades to support informed decisions on career opportunities and further education.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

Buildings and premises are spacious and provide excellent facilities and support for almost all activities and subjects. There are not enough shaded areas around the campus. The unusual architecture and stimulating displays that celebrate high quality artwork contribute to the welcoming and motivating learning environment. Staff make very effective use of available spaces for larger community activities, such as performance practices in the canteen. The school lacks a multi-functional structure that would accommodate large audiences and a range of school activities. The EY teachers make excellent use of the central areas and careful scheduling of outdoor space to supplement regular classrooms. Health and safety practices are excellent. Facilities are closely monitored and very well maintained and they have a high level of cleanliness. Students support this through responsible and mature use. All hazardous materials and equipment are safely stored and supervised. Security is vigilant and rules are applied well to ensure the safety of students.

The school's resources to support its aims

There are sufficient teachers, administration and support staff of high enough quality and experience to deliver the 3 IB programmes. Staff are committed to the ethos and aims of the school and to providing high quality education. There is a wide range and quantity of classroom resources to enrich and support the curriculum, particularly in PYP. The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative is an innovative and intelligent approach to the application of technology to teaching and learning. This is greatly appreciated and most effectively used by students and teachers. For example, Grade 9 students readily move between observing

videos of practice routines to improving choreography in physical education. Computers in the secondary laboratory and libraries are outdated; BYOD mostly supersedes them and there are advanced plans to replace hardware. Other ICT is more than sufficient and is confidently used to meet the needs of the curriculum. The library premises are large; they do not operate fully as resource centres for independent research and reading for pleasure. Stocks are small for the number of students and are not sufficiently tied to curriculum demands; there is too small a collection of books available in Arabic. Digital stock is more extensive. Science facilities and resources are extensive and the resources are well used by teachers and students. Developments in PYP science reflect an increased acknowledgement of its importance, and better planning. Sports facilities are extensive: they offer students the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sports and make full use of high quality resources. Effective attention is given to risk assessment and evacuation procedures. The canteen is spacious and hygienic and offers healthy food options.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Administration is highly organized and well managed to ensure that the school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Highly experienced board members hold the Principal to account effectively for continuing developments in provision and raising students' attainment. They fulfill their roles well and provide knowledgeable advice and support. The Taaleem Executive Board and the senior leadership team (SLT) deliver well focused strategic leadership and this results in a shared commitment to the ethos and aims of the school by teachers, students and parents. Strong commitment to shared leadership and teamwork produces a highly motivated and responsible staff. School self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive, inclusive, and demonstrate a complete commitment to continuous improvement.

The appraisal system is thorough in a teacher's first year; in following years there is a less rigorous and formal structure designed to identify teaching needs and drive improvement. Non-contact time for Arabic coordinators does not give enough time for them to monitor and make sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. Intensive analysis of student performance in internal and external assessments is well used to set development priorities. The self-evaluation document (SEF) provides good evidence to support judgments and provides helpful descriptions and evaluative commentary. The school development plan (SDP) was developed with systematic and well-considered input from staff, students and parents. It is closely linked to the May 2012 inspection recommendations and is well-structured and closely monitored to track progress and achieve strategic goals. The SLT and middle leaders

demonstrate a very clear awareness of the strengths to build upon as well as the areas that need further development.

The school has a strong commitment to cultivating an appreciation of the heritage and values of the UAE. Strategies include Emirati parents making contact with new parents, cultural events and focused curriculum development. Parent responses, both to the questionnaire and during meetings, were mostly positive. Parents and students appreciate the opportunities they are given to share opinions and give input into decisions; for example, in deciding key strategic goals and through surveys and meetings with the SLT. Links with parents are very effective and they are kept well informed about student progress and curriculum developments, particularly through the online system, 'Managebac'.

Progress since the last inspection

The school was last inspected in May 2012 and has made very good progress on almost all the inspection recommendations. Specific goals related to the recommendations are thoroughly addressed in the SDP and there is regular monitoring to evaluate the status of progress and strategies to reach the targets. Multiple strategies have led to a significant increase in consistency of higher quality teaching across all subjects and grades. Systems and structures, such as teachers working across both MYP and DP classes, and regular planning meetings, are ensuring smooth transitions for students within and between the 3 IB programmes. Additional shaded areas have been created to protect students and staff but further provision is needed and is planned for. The school has further developed an extensive range of activities to successfully develop students' understanding and appreciation of UAE culture and heritage. Parents and students regard this as a strength of the school.

The school and SLT demonstrate very good capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Increase the consistency of teaching quality, particularly for the higher grades in Islamic education, to raise students' academic performance still further in comparison to the highest international standards, by:
 - i. ensuring that successful teaching approaches are shared widely among the staff
 - ii. enabling teachers with advanced skills to influence and develop their colleagues' practice through, for example, modelling successful strategies, team teaching and peer observations
 - iii. monitoring and evaluating the work of teachers beyond their first year of service through a process of regular observation of practice, developmental feedback and target-setting.
2. Complete the process of providing effective shading on the school campus so that students are more fully protected from the sun.
3. As soon as is practicable, provide a flexible, multi-functional building that can be used to stage productions and community activities of all types, and enable the entire student body to assemble in a single location.

Inspection Grades

	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
Performance Standard	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								