



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



Inspection Report

Scientific Distinction Private School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Scientific Distinction School

Inspection Date	17 – 20 February 2014
School ID#	171
Licensed Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MoE)
Number of Students	775
Age Range	5 to 20 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Ali Mahmoud Al Natour
School Address	Al Markhania area, Al Khapsi, Al Ain
Telephone Number	(+971) 03 761 4455
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Official Email (ADEC)	scidistinction.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	-----
Date of last inspection	26 – 29 February 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 C;	GRADE 6
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The main strengths of the school are:

- standards in mathematics are in line with international expectations
- conscientious teachers make full use of the limited range of learning resources
- the owner has improved facilities by refurbishing the science laboratories, providing grassed areas for outdoor physical education and installing an outdoor recreation area for KG
- the majority of parents are satisfied with the quality of education provided

The main areas for improvement are:

- the standard of students' work in science, English, information and communication technology (ICT), Arabic, Islamic education and social studies
- the curriculum implementation to ensure sufficient breadth and balance
- accuracy of the self-evaluation as it is currently too positive and leaders do not monitor the school's performance rigorously enough
- the quality of learning resources, particularly with regard to ICT and practical science
- effective use of assessment information by teachers to monitor the progress of individual students or groups
- work provided during lessons to match students' individual needs and abilities.

Introduction

The school was inspected by 4 inspectors. They observed 77 lessons and other activities, reviewed students' written work and studied school documents. They also talked with the Principal, the owner's representative, parents, other members of staff and students. Inspectors also considered the 422 responses to the parents' questionnaire.

Description of the School

This school opened in 2006 in Al Ain as an elementary school and has since developed provision for students in Grades 10 – 12. The premises are purpose built and situated within a developing residential area. The school's aims include the intention to 'enable students to be fully aware of their future career and higher education'.

All 775 students are Muslim and speak Arabic as a first language. There are 47 children in KG, 349 in Grades 1 – 5, 226 in Grades 6 – 9 and 153 in Grades 10 – 12. Of these, 55% are boys; 6% are Emirati and the rest come from 20 countries with the largest proportions coming from Syria 28%, Egypt 13%, Jordan 8%, and Yemen 9%.

The school delivers the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. There is no provision for KG1 and all children are admitted directly to KG2. Older students are admitted following an interview and successfully passing in-house assessments in English and mathematics. The school does not identify students with special educational needs (SEN) or specific gifts and talents.

The school has an administration council which includes the Principal, senior leaders and the owner. Annual fees are in the very affordable to low category and range from 4,750 AED in KG to 8,500 AED for Grade 12, exclusive of transport, books and uniform.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

The overall standard of students' work is below that usually found in other schools that teach the same curriculum. The standard of students' work and progress made do not meet ADEC's expectations in Arabic, social studies and Islamic education. Standards and progress in other subjects, including physical education, music and art are well below average. Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work indicate that the standard of work and progress made meets international standards in mathematics, is below in science and well below in English and information and communication technology (ICT). Boys and girls and students of differing abilities and nationalities make similar progress.

Children do not have pre-school experience and they enter and leave KG2 with skills that are below expectations for their age. With the exception of mathematics, students' basic skills are below international expectations, especially with regard to their ability to use ICT and understand, speak, read and write English. Inspection evidence indicates that progress in mathematics accelerates as students move through the school. By Grade 12, students are undertaking challenging work, for example, calculus that involves the integration of terms with positive and negative fractional indices.

The school was unable to provide information regarding the final marks obtained in key subjects in the 2012/13 Grade 12 exams. Analysis of the proportion of students who passed the Ministry exams indicates that standards in English were higher than other subjects, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry; this is not supported by inspection evidence.

Students' personal development

Students are friendly towards each other and visitors. Most of the students behave sensibly. Some of the younger boys become overly boisterous during break times, for example when they run down corridors and slide along the tiled floors with little regard for others around them. Girls say that there are occasional incidents of bullying.

The majority of students willingly undertake the work set during lessons, though some demonstrate low levels of enthusiasm, lack of preparedness with basic equipment such as pens and paper. They also become restless during lessons when the work is too easy or there are too few supplementary resources, including ICT, to retain their interest and keep them occupied. During lessons, only few students demonstrate curiosity or innovative thinking. They rarely take the initiative by, for example, asking questions of their own. The standard of their

behaviour and attitudes towards learning are more positive when students are provided with work that extends their knowledge and understanding. For example, during a mathematics lesson, Grade 6 boys enjoyed learning to add and subtract fractions that had different denominators.

There are very few opportunities for students to adopt personal responsibility. Some students help to organise sports competitions and select the places students would like to visit. Apart from this, students do not have opportunities to contribute to the on-going development of the school.

The school was unable to provide attendance data for 2012/13. Attendance during the first term of 2013/14 was given as 97%. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicated that actual attendance is lower than this figure but it is still well above average. Punctuality at the start of the day is unsatisfactory and a significant proportion of students arrive during the morning assembly. A significant minority of students consume unhealthy snacks and drinks during break-times, which indicates that they are not aware of how to have a healthy life style.

The school fulfils its obligations regarding flying the UAE flag. During assembly, a few students talk or walk during the national anthem and occasionally stand with their back to the national flag. Some students' understanding of the country's intrinsic customs and heritage is very unsatisfactory

The quality of teaching and learning

The majority of teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of their subjects and their working relationships with students are usually positive. They usually write learning objectives on the board but do not always explain the purpose of the intended activities. As a result, students are not always clear as to why they are undertaking the work or the extent to which they subsequently meet the intended objectives. Less effective teachers list a series of activities that will keep students busy for the required length of time, rather than developing the independent learning skills and knowledge that will prepare students for further education and the workplace. The range of teaching strategies is limited by the lack of learning resources. This sometimes results in students becoming bored and inattentive. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan work that meets individual needs, monitor students' progress or set targets for improvement. In more successfully taught subjects, such as mathematics, teachers plan a wider range of more challenging activities and address students' individual needs by providing detailed support during lessons.

Teachers now have access to professional development on general issues such as classroom management. In addition, they share best practice by observing colleagues at other schools. Teachers work hard to make the most effective use of the few additional learning resources. Some make their own, for example, science teachers created a model of an atom to show the locations of electrons, protons and neutrons. They do not have access to subject specific training. This combined with a general lack of practical resources, affects the development of students' practical skills, for example, in science and physical education. Students lose concentration when the pace of learning is too slow or if they are repeating work they have previously undertaken. Some teachers raise their voices unnecessarily and discourage anything other than a collective rote repetition of the main points.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The school provides all the required subjects, but the overall curriculum implementation is too narrow and very unsatisfactory. This is because teaching is usually restricted to the tasks and knowledge specified within the standard workbooks. There is very little additional planning and there are very few opportunities for practical science and students' ICT skills are weak because they rarely use computers during the school day. In addition, little has been done to improve the KG curriculum and children have very few opportunities to make choices or engage in planned outdoor play and investigation. There are no Grade 11 and 12 science classes for able girls and all older girls are accommodated within a single literature class. In addition, the teaching time in Grade 12 is up to one hour a week short of Ministry recommendations in Arabic and Islamic education. The quality of the curriculum in physical education, art and music is very unsatisfactory.

The curriculum is not adapted to meet the needs of the more and less able students and opportunities for extension work are rare. Students visit local sites of interest within Al Ain, such as a local fun park or shopping malls. There are links with a private college in Al Ain and Grade 12 students visit the UAE University to find out about choices available to them in higher education. While some students participate in enrichment activities such as inter school quizzes, poetic and sporting events, there are few other day-to-day activities that excite or energise students. The limited range of extracurricular activities includes an agriculture club and an English club; there are no links with business or charities.

The curriculum does not effectively support students' learning about UAE culture and heritage. There are no wall displays, exhibitions or related artefacts provided within the school.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

Procedures for the recruitment of staff are thorough and all the necessary checks are undertaken and recorded. The school clinic is clean and there are suitable arrangements for the administration of first aid and the dispensing of medicines. The school nurse is male and this restricts the extent to which girls feel able to seek his help if they feel unwell.

The pastoral system does not effectively support students' personal development and academic progress. This is because teachers do not use assessment information to provide individual targets for improvement and students do not always receive clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Students receive very limited career guidance. The school provides a calm environment within which most of the students say they feel safe; some girls indicate that bullying is not always effectively managed. The school has a child protection policy and relevant training has been provided. There remains some confusion among adults concerning the implementation of this policy.

Systems for recording students' attendance are weak. There are no formal policies or procedures in place and the school does not make use of the limited information it holds to inform improvement planning.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The building is adequately maintained and the overall size of the plot is sufficient for the number on roll. Land is also available to extend the school in the future. Since the last inspection, there have been some improvements to the premises. A fenced, shaded area for KG children now provides a safe environment for active, outdoor play. A boys' grass football pitch has also been provided, along with a smaller volleyball court for girls. These provide safe areas for active sport. Other areas used for outdoor physical education are hard paved and they are unsuitable as they have the potential to cause injury should a student fall or trip. The science laboratories have been refurbished, including the installation of safety showers, since the last inspection; these are now satisfactory.

All classrooms have been recently redecorated and provide an adequately cool and well-lit environment for learning. Several of the classrooms are much too small for the number of students and this results in very limited freedom of movement. Some teachers have difficulty getting to the back of the classrooms and this affects teaching styles. Students spend most of the day within their assigned classrooms; these are bland and uninspiring. Ceilings are high and, in some rooms, poor acoustics and the lack of display contribute to an unpleasantly noisy learning environment. Toilet facilities within KG are unsuitable; the sanitary ware used is too high for small children to use unaided.

A school committee oversees health and safety issues. There are two fire drills each term and evacuation of the building is prompt. There is no indoor hall or gymnasium and no designated activity rooms for art or music. Should any students with physical difficulties enrol, they would not enjoy access to all areas as there is no lift and no ramps to facilitate wheelchair access. The school does not undertake regular safety checks of portable electrical equipment.

The school's resources to support its aims

The school has very unsatisfactory provision of resources to support its aims. The school has sufficient teachers to deliver the curriculum and they are appropriately qualified. There are no technical support staff within science and the quality, quantity and range of resources, including chemicals, is very unsatisfactory. This significantly restricts the extent to which students undertake practical science. There are also no classroom assistants within KG and this reduces the attention paid to individual children's personal or learning needs.

Resources within classrooms are often restricted to the relevant text books. Some teachers personally purchase or construct additional activities in order to support understanding and add variety. The library is rarely used as a teaching space and the range, quality and quantity of available books is inadequate.

Since the last inspection, data show projectors have been installed in the library, science laboratories and ICT room; they are not provided in other classrooms. Some teachers use their own personal computers during lessons. There are no computers within classrooms for students to use. Around half of the computers within the ICT room are not in working order. During ICT lessons, three or four students share with the result that some 'switch off' or become entirely passive observers. Cross-curricular ICT links are very weak limiting the development of the ICT skills students shall require for the contemporary workplace.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis and staff and student morale is satisfactory. Leaders have acted upon some of the recommendations of the last inspection though these are not enough to ensure adequate quality of education and leadership and management remain unsatisfactory overall. They have, for example, created a middle leadership management council and appointed subject coordinators; all teachers now hold suitable job descriptions. The Principal, along with heads of subject, have started to undertake planned and unannounced lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching. The feedback to individual teachers usually focuses on aspects of behaviour management and insufficiently on learning and progress.

The owner has no day-to-day involvement with the school and there is no system for holding the Principal to account, other than a review of Grade 12 results. The leadership has started to review the quality of education provided; the process is insufficiently reflective. Self-evaluation judgments are overly positive and the school grades itself as satisfactory in all areas. The school development plan addresses all performance standards, but targets are insufficiently specific. Leaders are not systematically monitoring the educational impact of investments made and actions taken.

Over half the parents responded to the inspection questionnaire; the majority are satisfied with the work of the school. Around one quarter would like more information about their child's progress and one in five thinks the school does not value their opinions or manage students' behaviour effectively.

Progress since the last inspection

The last inspection judged the school to be poor; it has improved in some areas but is still providing an inadequate standard of education. There have been gradual improvements to several improvement standards, including the standard of students' work and progress made, personal development, teaching and learning, care, premises and leadership. These have not been sufficient to ensure that students receive at least a satisfactory education.

Leadership has taken satisfactory action to address some of the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Improvements to science laboratories, the provision of library and prayer rooms and creation of an outdoor play area for KG have all helped to improve students' behaviour. Standards have risen in some subjects and declined in others. There is still no comprehensive system for monitoring students' progress but teachers do now provide some support for low attaining individuals. The continuing narrow range of resources restricts the way in which teachers can deliver their lessons. This is a key reason why the curriculum remains very unsatisfactory. This leads to some students becoming bored and adversely affects their learning.

The school has demonstrated some capacity to improve. It will require external support to sustain recent improvements and ensure that academic standards rise consistently across the school.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise standards in Arabic, Islamic education, social studies, English, science and ICT by:
 - i. broadening, adapting and enriching the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of all students, particularly able older girls, children in KG and students with special educational needs (SEN) and those with specific gifts and talents
 - ii. improving provision for ICT so that students are given more opportunities to develop independent learning and research skills
 - iii. developing students' collaborative, critical thinking and problem solving skills
 - iv. ensuring teachers use assessment information effectively to provide lessons that match students' needs, to monitor their progress, set targets for improvement and quickly identify those who are falling behind.
2. Improve the quality, quantity and appeal of learning resources with particular regard to the development of the library and students' ICT and practical scientific skills
3. Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - i. ensuring self-evaluation of the school's performance is realistic and clearly linked to ADEC school inspection criteria; use this information to drive priorities for improvement
 - ii. devising and implementing robust procedures to systematically review, evaluate, and monitor the quality of teaching and learning and students' progress.

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								