



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



Private School Inspection Report

Scientific Distinction Private School

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

iqraa

Scientific Distinction Private School

Inspection Date	22 – 25 November, 2015
Date of previous inspection	26 - 29 February, 2012

General Information		Students	
School ID	171	Total number of students	763
Opening year of school	2006	Number of children in KG	66
Principal	Ahmad Abdulfatah	Number of students in other phases	Primary: 290 Middle: 246 High: 161
School telephone	+971 (0)3 761 4455	Age range	4 to 18 Years
School Address	Al Markhania Area, Al Khansi, Al Ain UAE	Grades or Year Groups	KG2 - Grade 12
Official email (ADEC)	Scidistinction.pvt@adec.ac.ae	Gender	Mixed
School Website	N/A	% of Emirati Students	4%
Fee ranges (per annum)	AED 6,700 - AED 10,700	Largest nationality groups (%)	1. Syrian: 35% 2. Egyptian: 9% 3. Sudanese: 5%
Licensed Curriculum		Staff	
Main Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MoE)	Number of teachers	49
Other Curriculum		Number of Teaching Assistants (TAs)	9
External Exams/ Standardised tests	MoE Examinations	Teacher-student ratio	22:1 KG 30:1 Other phases
Accreditation		Teacher turnover	18%

Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	4
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	101
Number of joint lesson observations	4
Number of parents' questionnaires	167; (return rate: 22%)
Details of other inspection activities	Lesson observations Meetings with students, staff, parents and owner Work scrutiny Review of documents

School	
School Aims	The school's aim is to provide a good education for all students and develop effective communication with the UAE society to enable students to plan well for their future
School vision and mission	-----
Admission Policy	The school is non-selective but carries out a face-to-face meeting with children joining the Kindergarten and a diagnostic test for students joining every other grade.
Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)	The principal, vice principal and five curriculum leaders who support curriculum development in the school, make up the leadership team. The school's governing council is made up of parents, teachers, the owner, and the principal.

SEN Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

SEN Category	Number of students identified through external assessments	Number of other students identified by the school
Intellectual disability	0	0
Specific Learning Disability	0	9
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	0	2
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	0	0
Speech and Language Disorders	0	9
Physical and health related disabilities	0	0
Visually impaired	0	0
Hearing impaired	0	0
Multiple disabilities	0	0

G&T Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

G&T Category	Number of students identified
Intellectual ability	0
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	10
Social maturity and leadership	3
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	0
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	6
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	9

The overall performance of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A	High performing (Outstanding, Very Good or Good)
Band B	Satisfactory (Acceptable)
Band C	In need of significant improvement (Weak or Very Weak)

School was judged to be:	BAND (C)	Weak
--------------------------	-----------------	-------------

	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
Performance Standards	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
Performance Standard 1: Students' achievement						
Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills						
Performance Standard 3: Teaching and assessment						
Performance Standard 4: Curriculum						
Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students						
Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management						

Summary Evaluation: The school's overall performance						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

The Performance of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall performance

The quality of education provided by Scientific Distinction Private School is weak. Students demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and relationships are strong across the school. Most students make acceptable progress in Arabic. Attainment and progress in other subjects is inconsistent and weak overall. In the majority of lessons, the quality of teaching is weak. This impacts on students' attainment and progress. Assessment procedures are not sufficiently focused on identifying students' needs. Procedures for supporting students' individual needs are weak. Consequently, students with special educational needs (SEN) and those who are more able, make limited progress. The curriculum lacks breadth and balance, particularly in meeting the learning needs of younger children. The school's leadership expresses a commitment to raising standards; it is unable to articulate clear and comprehensive plans for achieving this.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

The school has not made sufficient progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection. More structured lesson planning has led to improvements in Arabic and Islamic education lessons, especially in the younger classes. There have been insufficient improvements to standards of achievement in English, science and mathematics. The school has improved its technology resources by setting up a specialist room as well as equipping four additional classrooms with interactive whiteboards. Other learning resources remain sparse and teachers continue to teach using textbooks as their only resource. Teachers do not use assessment information to identify and meet students' learning needs. Leadership procedures for reviewing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning remain inadequate.

The school's leadership team has demonstrated only a weak capacity to improve the quality of education, and will require external support to do so.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

Across the school, students are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop innovation skills. Almost all lessons are teacher led and directed, and focused on low-level textbook exercises. Children in the Kindergarten (KG) classes have too few opportunities to learn outside their classrooms, despite the availability of a free-play space. Lessons are restricted to worksheets or repeating and reciting words and numbers. There are limited opportunities for KG children to develop their fine and gross motor skills, make choices or be creative. In most lessons, students are not routinely encouraged to ask questions, reflect on and

report their learning. Opportunities for students to take initiative or work collaboratively are limited. A few students demonstrate their ability to carry out independent research and create presentations to share with their peers. This practice is limited to a few lessons such as an English lesson for Grade 9 where a student led a classroom activity about food chains. A great deal of classroom time is given over to learning and memorising text and formulae for the end of semester assessments. This limits students' opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills to prepare them for their future in education and work.

The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- students are respectful and most have positive attitudes towards learning
- relationships between teachers and students in most lessons are mutually respectful
- students' progress in speaking, listening and reading skills in Arabic are in line with curriculum expectations
- the introduction of new buses and security systems enable all students and staff to feel safe.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- students' attainment and progress in most subjects
- the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all students make expected progress in lessons
- assessment practices to accurately identify gaps in students' knowledge and the effective use of these to plan learning
- detailed curriculum and lesson planning to ensure support for students who are less able and appropriate challenge for those students who are more able learners
- involvement by subject coordinators in monitoring, evaluating and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their subjects
- accurate and rigorous measurement of the school's performance, and ensuring that improvement planning is focused on student learning
- effective use of the available information, communication and technology and learning resources to support student learning
- the systems for monitoring and improving students' attendance and punctuality.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Weak	Weak
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Weak	Weak
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic (as a Second Language)	Attainment				
	Progress				
Social Studies	Attainment	N/A	Acceptable	Weak	Weak
	Progress	N/A	Acceptable	Weak	Weak
English	Attainment	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
	Progress	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Mathematics	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	Acceptable
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	Acceptable
Science	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Language of instruction (if other than English and Arabic as First Language)	Attainment				
	Progress				
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Learning Skills (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)		Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

There is limited data available to analyse trends in attainment over time. Analysis of the school's Ministry of Education (MoE) assessments shows inconsistent trends between subjects and grades. The school's analysis of assessment data is not always accurate; it does not track the academic progress of students. A large majority of students do not make expected progress in relation to age appropriate curriculum expectations in most subjects. Most students achieve in line with curriculum expectations in Arabic in all phases and in Islamic education in Kindergarten (KG) and the primary phase. Attainment and progress are weak in English and science in all phases, and in mathematics except in the higher phase. Students' work in lessons demonstrates attainment that is consistently lower than tests results indicate, especially in English and science.

Attainment and progress in speaking, listening and reading in Arabic across the school, are acceptable. This is due to teachers' subject knowledge as well their commitment to the use of standard Arabic in all lessons. Progress in the development of writing skills, particularly extended writing, is inconsistent due to the lack of opportunities to create imaginative stories or write to share their opinions. Most children arrive in KG with limited Arabic skills. Their language skills develop reasonably well and by the end of their time in KG, children are able to describe what they are doing and answer simple questions.

Students come from a very low starting point in their English skills and most do not speak any English on entry to the school. Attainment and progress are very weak across the school as lessons mainly focus on grammar skills. Their progress in English in KG is limited due to the emphasis on learning the alphabet one letter at a time. KG children do not develop age appropriate personal, social and emotional skills, as they are not given sufficient opportunities to engage in role-play or practical activities. Most students are too shy to speak in English and even those who have several years' experience of the language are unable to answer simple questions such as, "where were you born?" or, "how long have you been at this school?" There are limited opportunities, or resources, for students to read Arabic or English fiction, for pleasure.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education is acceptable in the primary phase. Many students in Grade 1 are able to identify the pillars of Islam and students in Grade 5 are able to reflect on how their Islamic beliefs impact on their daily lives. Progress in Islamic education is weak in lessons in the middle and higher phases as teachers' expectations are low, lessons focus too much on recitation rules, and students are not encouraged to reflect on their learning.

In mathematics, students make weak progress in the primary and middle phases. Students' knowledge of number bonds is weak in the primary phase. By the time, they reach Grade 12, most are working in line with curriculum expectations and many students are able to confidently derive the functions of algebraic equations. In science, attainment and progress are weak across the school. Students have too few opportunities to participate in practical experiments and the development of scientific enquiry skills is very limited.

In many lessons, students are expected to participate by simply filling in gaps on worksheets that do not challenge their thinking. Students are not routinely asked to explain their thinking, make connections between subjects or link their learning with real life experiences. Their critical thinking skills are underdeveloped. There are too few opportunities, even in lessons where they are capable of achieving success, for students to solve problems or participate in investigative theories.

Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
---	----	---------	--------	------

Personal development	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

Students' personal development is acceptable. Most students demonstrate a positive commitment towards their learning. Students' behaviour in most lessons is respectful and courteous. Relationships between staff and students are mutually respectful. Many students report they feel cared for and valued by their teachers. At the start and end of the day, between lessons and at break times, a minority of students' behaviour leads to some disruption and disorder around the school. Many students bring healthy food for their break time snacks and are aware of the importance of healthy eating.

Students have an acceptable understanding of Islamic values in UAE society. Special events such as National Day are organised to deepen their knowledge,

understanding of, and connection with, the culture and heritage of the UAE. Many students are involved in reciting passages from the Holy Qur'an during morning assembly. There are planned opportunities for students to learn about and appreciate their own cultures, such as the demonstrations of traditional Yemeni and Palestinian dance forms in assemblies.

Younger students have too few opportunities to contribute to the running of the school. Student councillors take leadership roles in managing behaviour and act as mentors for students who find it difficult to follow school rules. Many older students lead assemblies and organise special performances and activities. There are limited opportunities across the school for students to develop enterprise and entrepreneurship skills. Most students have a limited understanding of the environmental and sustainability issues facing the world.

Attendance for the previous year, at 92%, is acceptable. During the inspection week, many students in the higher phase decided to remain at home to revise for the upcoming examinations. Average attendance during the inspection week was 87%.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
------------------------------------	----	---------	--------	------

Teaching for effective learning	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Assessment	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

The quality of teaching is weak across all phases of the school. The quality of teaching ranged from a very few good lessons to the large majority deemed weak or very weak.

Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of how students learn best is inconsistent across subjects. It is acceptable in the higher phase where the specialist knowledge of teachers ensures accurate learning. Lesson objectives are not routinely shared and often relate to the activity, not the skills or understanding to be attained. Teachers do not leave time for effective plenary sessions at the end of lessons to assess learning. This leads to students not being able to judge for themselves whether they have achieved the lesson objective.

In the KG, many teachers do not have an accurate understanding of how young



children learn best, leading to inappropriate teaching methods. Learning resources, other than workbooks and worksheets, are limited. A few teachers supplement the school's modest resources by bringing materials from home, such as providing kinaesthetic experiences for counting, using pasta shapes, in KG classes. Very few teachers employ a range of teaching strategies to motivate the students. Many lessons are lecture style and do not engage all students. Most teachers' use of questioning is weak. Students are usually required to give factual answers, quickly, which limits the opportunity for them to engage in meaningful discussions, think more deeply or reflect on their responses.

Few teachers successfully meet the needs of all learners in their class. In many lessons, students with learning needs are not supported sufficiently well to help them make appropriate progress. In the majority of lessons, more able students are expected to complete the work and wait for others to catch up with them and are not provided with extension activities. This is particularly noticeable in English lessons where students who are new to English are not supported in any meaningful way. As most tasks are teacher directed and controlled, the development of critical thinking, problem solving, innovation and independent learning skills is weak. Most classrooms have bare walls and little is done to display or celebrate students' achievements.

The school carries out regular MoE assessments to measure students' attainment and progress in core subjects. These are efficiently administered and a great deal of lesson time in the month before the examinations is spent preparing for them. The assessment data is not analysed in sufficient detail, or accurately enough, to identify gaps or the next steps in individual students' learning. There are no processes in place to track individual progress other than overall scores, or systems for setting individual targets for improvement. The school does not evaluate students' skills, understanding or application of their knowledge. As a result, teachers have insufficient knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of their students.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Curriculum adaptation	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

Curriculum design and implementation are weak. The KG curriculum does not take sufficient account of how young children learn and gives children too few opportunities to learn through play. The time allocated to Arabic, Islamic education and social studies in the higher phase exceeds the requirements of the MoE curriculum. In other subjects, different classes within each grade receive different numbers of lessons with no rationale for this arrangement. The review and development of the curriculum is weak and does not cater for the academic needs of all students, especially those who have SEN.

Continuity and progression are weak. In English, there are too few opportunities for students to develop conversational skills. In science and mathematics, students have too few opportunities to develop their problem solving, enquiry and investigational skills in a systematic way. The school now complies with the range of choices available for Grade 11 and 12 students, having introduced a science stream for girls since the previous inspection.

The adaptation of the curriculum is weak. The large majority of teachers do not make appropriate modifications to meet the needs of students. In Arabic and English lessons, no provision is made to support those students who are new to learning the language. The curriculum is focused on knowledge acquisition. There is insufficient focus on developing students' skills at the appropriate level. There are very few extracurricular opportunities and few visits or educational trips arranged to help students learn about the world outside of school. Cross-curricular links are not consistently identified within the planned school curriculum. Presentations during assemblies enable students to gain adequate knowledge of the culture of the UAE and Islamic values.

Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
---	----	---------	--------	------

Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/ safeguarding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Care and support	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

The school's safeguarding procedures are acceptable. There are cameras and staff monitoring all entrances. Parents and students report feeling safe in school. A few technology lessons focus older students' attention on how to stay safe on the internet. The school nurse ensures that students with health needs are well supported and keeps comprehensive records. Emergency evacuations are conducted regularly and new fire equipment has been installed. The supervision of students at key times between lessons and at the start and end of the day is weak. Limited attention is paid to the promotion of safe and healthy living. For example, KG students are not supervised when they visit washrooms and not encouraged to wash their hands afterwards. There are limited references to living healthy lifestyles in lessons.

Procedures for the care and support of students are weak. In a minority of lessons, behaviour management is poor, resulting in wasted learning time. The school's systems for recording, monitoring and promoting attendance are weak. During inspection week, ineffective responses were made to the pre-examination absences of large groups of students. There are no records of the actions taken when a student is absent or late.

The systems for identifying and supporting those with SEN are weak. Support and guidance for these students is weak. The leadership has identified numbers of students with additional needs, without reference to any medical or psychological experts. The list of identified students has not been shared with teachers. They have been given very general guidance as to how to support SEN students that does not target individual needs. There are no individual plans to meet their needs; communication with their parents is limited and their progress is not monitored.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Weak
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Weak
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Weak
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Weak

The school's leadership and management are weak. The principal maintains a high profile around the boys' section of the school and his presence impacts positively on students' behaviour. Relationships around the school are cordial. Staff morale is low with curriculum leaders expressing concerns about the lack of cohesion and strategic direction. The role of the vice-principal and subject leaders are unclear and not appropriately focused on student learning. The leadership team does not have adequate knowledge and understanding of the best practices in teaching, learning and assessment. Their capacity to improve the school without support is limited.

The school's self-evaluation is uncoordinated, unrealistic and does not provide sufficient evidence for its generous judgments. Leaders have an inaccurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school does not have effective procedures for collecting and analysing assessment information in order to identify areas in need of improvement and to inform teaching strategies. The school development plan is not widely shared, resulting in teachers sharing limited responsibility and accountability for improvement activities. The monitoring of teaching and learning is weak. Classrooms observations are mainly carried out by the principal as coordinators have heavy teaching workloads. Observations lack rigour in identifying the effectiveness of student learning and do not identify meaningful next steps for either staff or students.

The school maintains regular communication with many parents. The principal meets with parents regularly to inform them about the school's policies and procedures. Parents who responded to the survey and attended the inspectors' meeting indicated acceptable levels of satisfaction. Parents receive examination results and have the opportunity to meet with teachers on a monthly basis. Attendance at these meetings is low at around 30%.



The school's governing council, made up of parents, the owner, the principal and staff representatives, rarely meets. The governing council does not engage sufficiently in discussions about school standards or hold the leadership team sufficiently accountable for the quality of the school's performance. The school's owner is actively involved in financial and operational decisions to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

The day-to-day procedures and routines are not effective. Clear expectations are not laid out for staff or students and they are not supported or held appropriately accountable for their actions. Staffing is not sufficient to support students' academic needs. Science teachers are reluctant to carry out practical experiments without the presence of a laboratory technician. Activities and supervision in the KG classes are impeded by the absence of a support assistant. Learning resources in all areas are inadequate to support effective learning. The school has invested in professional development training for all teachers; the areas addressed are too general and there is limited monitoring of its impact on student learning. The school makes few contributions to the community.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that most students make the expected progress in relation to individual starting points and curriculum standards by ensuring that:
 - i. lesson planning includes clear and specific learning outcomes which are assessed at the end of each lesson
 - ii. assessment information is used to set appropriate targets for all students, particularly those who are less able and require additional support, and more able learners who require additional challenge
 - iii. probing questions are routinely asked to extend students' thinking and evaluate their understanding
 - iv. high quality learning resources, including technology resources, are provided to engage students' interests
 - v. learning activities enable students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.
2. Improve the quality of strategic leadership, to ensure that all improvement activities are focused on learning, by ensuring that:
 - i. there is an agreed and well planned strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - ii. teachers are given precise and accurate targets for improving their practice through more focused lesson observations
 - iii. clearly defined roles and responsibilities for subject leaders are established that relate to improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their subjects
 - iv. using assessment information more effectively to identify areas in need of improvement and set clear priorities for improvement planning.
3. Improve the systems for accurately recording, managing and promoting students' attendance and punctuality.