



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



Summary Inspection Report

The British International School Abu Dhabi

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Iqraa

The British International School Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	29 th April – 2 nd May 2012
School ID#	190
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	English
Number of Students	812
Age Range	EYFS – Year 10
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Lesley-Ann Wallace
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of four inspectors. They observed 69 lessons and engaged in 27 discussions with parents, students and school personnel. They considered the school ethos, the standards achieved, and the quality of students' learning experiences, personal development and progress, and the teaching students receive.

Description of the School

The school opened in 2009, and the current principal joined in January 2011. It has a number of aims, summarised in a mission statement: 'To create an environment of respect, inter-cultural understanding and integrity. To be a place where everyone feels involved, valued and successful and to create a community where individuals know they can make a difference.'

This is a growing school and numbers fluctuate widely almost on a day-by-day basis. Around 53% of the students are Muslim and 37% Arabic. Students come from a wide variety of nationalities. The largest groups include UAE 25%, British 25%, Egyptian 7%, Jordanian 2%, other Arabic nations 3%, American 4%, Australian 3%, Canadian 2%, New Zealander 2%, South African 2%, Indian 2% and Irish 2%. Approximately 55% are boys. There are 34 students who have been identified as having special educational needs, and a further 28 are considered to require special support because of low proficiency in language acquisition and usage.

The school teaches the English National Curriculum, with adaptations to enable ADEC requirements to be met relating to the teaching of Arabic, Islamic studies, and social studies. There are no entry tests; students are admitted following interviews with parents. Annual fees range from AED 46,497 in KG to 55,752 in Grade 10. The teachers' salaries range from AED 10600 to 15,500.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band B

Grade 5

Inspectors judged the British International School Abu Dhabi to be in Band B; that is a satisfactory school.

The school has been through a difficult period since the last inspection. The headteacher left and the school had two other leaders prior to the appointment of the current principal. This was an unsettling time for parents and students. Behaviour degenerated, as did the quality of teaching and learning. Many students left. In the last 18 months the principal has successfully established a

positive culture in the school. This has been accomplished by rationalising the teaching force, applying an unequivocal approach to behaviour, introducing processes and practices to promote the smooth running of the school, and establishing a new senior leadership team (SLT) which is beginning to become effective. Parents and students were particularly positive about the success the principal had had in improving behaviour and improving teaching. Students now feel valued and confident that they can ask for support, knowing it will be forthcoming.

The principal has understandably focused her energies at the operational level to ensure: an improvement to behaviour, greater support from parents and to put the school on a more secure financial footing. She has achieved all these aims. The newly formed SLT intends to build on this and function at a more strategic level to plan and secure further development and growth. At present, the school's self-evaluation systems are not rigorous enough, and there is no relevant school improvement plan. The principal is addressing this, and the newly formed senior leadership team (SLT) have a significant part to play. They are committed to the process of school development and already display the capacity to increase and sustain improvement. The quality of standards and progress is fragile because of the transient nature of the student population. It is too early to measure the impact of the new management structure on raising standards. The SLT recognise the importance of middle leaders in promoting and being accountable for high-quality outcomes. Inconsistency in teaching is still having an adverse impact on standards. Evaluations of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous or closely matched to focused training. Some teachers have inadequate strategies for addressing the needs of all students, especially the many students who do not speak English as their first language. The transient student population makes reliable analysis of data difficult, and the school does not have an overview of whole-school figures which inhibits informed decision-making. Fees are very high in comparison to other local schools but with broadly satisfactory outcomes, the school is providing adequate value for money.

Standards fluctuate throughout the school. Entry assessments show that students joining the Early Years Foundation Stage to begin their education, arrive with the skills and experiences usually expected of children of a similar age. Their language development is weaker than other areas but they get off to an encouraging start and progress is positive. The significant numbers of students admitted later in their schooling have more variable prior attainment, particularly in English. This has an impact on standards overall which are inconsistent through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as these discrepancies are addressed. Students begin

to catch up and make better progress as they get older. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in English and science are broadly in line with international expectations. Students' performance in mathematics is even better and after a very slow start with classical Arabic, students' achievements improve considerably so that they exceed levels found in most schools.

Progress also varies across different subjects and age groups, but is typically satisfactory. Students do well in history, and a good range of practical experiences helps them to do well in science at Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress in English is satisfactory overall, but a lack of opportunities for students to develop speaking and listening skills holds back their language acquisition and usage. This is most noticeable at KS1/2, and has a particular impact on the progress made by students who have special educational needs or speak English as an additional language. Students demonstrate an appropriate understanding of numerical concepts in basic operations for example with fractions and decimals. By the end of KS2 they are able to manipulate number, identify shapes from verbal clues and display a competence in computation. Students start school with limited skills in reading, writing and speaking Arabic. There is a similar pattern in Islamic and social studies, but in all cases progress is adequate and accelerates as they get older.

The school does not effectively analyse data, either at whole-school or classroom level, to check the performance of different groups by gender or nationality. Lesson observations indicate that there is no significant difference in performance between boys and girls. Students with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, benefit from some support during withdrawal sessions. Teachers rely too heavily on this. Many do not use appropriate strategies or adapt their lessons to meet the specific needs of these students, or to extend and challenge those who are gifted and talented. Opportunities for students to develop higher-order skills and work independently are better developed in mathematics and science than in English and Arabic. Testing and ongoing assessments are marked internally. Results at the end of KS2 indicate that the school is not achieving average outcomes. A significant percentage of students sitting these examinations do not speak English as their first language. Language proficiency increases as students get older. Progress accelerates and Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS) indicate standards to be in at least line with international expectations.

Students' personal development is good. Students come from a range of different nationalities, cultures and religious beliefs. They celebrate this diversity and relate to each other in an exceptionally positive way. Students are consistently respectful to each other and to adults. They have positive attitudes to learning.

They are increasingly being given opportunities to develop self-confidence from independent thinking.

Students relish these occasions, co-operate well and listen to others' viewpoints. Their very good behaviour is underpinned by a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. The culture of the UAE is explored in the curriculum, but not always well enough at the start of each day. The tribute to the UAE flag and singing of the national anthem do not take place regularly in some classes. Students take full advantage of the sports programme and other extra-curricular activities, including charitable work. Older students strongly express the view that they do not have a voice in the development of the school, and that their ideas on wider contributions to the community go unheard. Younger students say they see school as an extension of their family. The curriculum promotes students' understanding of how to live safe, healthy lives, often through relevant, real-life experiences. Students are articulate and confident in expressing opinions - good personal qualities for the next stage of life.

The quality of teaching is inconsistent. There has been a high turnover of staff and several are new in this growing school. This means focused professional development is even more important if the school is to ensure that the quality of teaching keeps improving. In most lessons students are suitably engaged in learning, but when teachers rely too much on the curriculum in a dull way and do not take sufficient account of different learning needs, students become confused or bored and the quality of the learning experience deteriorates. Teachers carry out regular assessments and use these to set individual curricular targets. When teaching is focused and directed at identified needs, students' knowledge and understanding develop in a coherent and sequential way. Teachers are careful to explain the learning objectives for each lesson and regularly refer to them but rarely use plenary sessions to assess learning at the end of the lesson. In many classes students have opportunities to work in groups. When teaching strategies encourage discussion and co-operative working, students become animated and engage fully with their learning. This was apparent in a history lesson where students re-enacted the battle of Hastings, and their excitement was palpable.

Students with special educational needs have Individual education plans. These are typically too vague, and are not systematically applied in the classroom. When assistant teachers are used effectively, they provide valuable support for less able students and those who speak English as an additional language. Too often they remain bystanders and a valuable resource is wasted. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to work independently and extend their thinking. One extremely articulate Year 10 student expressed the view that he

‘learned leadership skills, how to work as part of a team and new learning techniques when set challenges or independent research, but these opportunities were primarily in specific subjects like history, business studies and science’. Able students in KS3/4 felt they were not sufficiently challenged in subjects such as geography or English, where discussion was inhibited because teachers talked for extended periods. This didactic style of teaching is particularly inappropriate for students with limited language skills.

The English National Curriculum is fully covered in the primary section of the school. The small student numbers result in limited course options for senior students. The curriculum is adapted to incorporate knowledge about the values and culture of the UAE. This is done particularly well through the history curriculum and national days that celebrate all cultures. Students say that they enjoy these occasions. Lesson planning is generally appropriate, with clear outcomes based on the curriculum. These are not always precise enough in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Too often the planning to meet the needs of specific ability groups does not have enough depth or breadth to meet their needs. Students enjoy a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, visits and invited speakers. The school is developing increasingly productive links with Abu Dhabi University, including access to the university library.

The protection, care, guidance and support provided for students are extremely positive features of the school. Students value and respect the majority of their teachers, and feel they can confide in an adult if required. The school has worked hard to recruit a bilingual counsellor to increase the level of care and guidance, but has been unsuccessful to date. This means that students are not fully prepared for their next steps in education. Students in the higher grades say they are unfairly treated by a small number of teachers. Students report that there are no incidences of bullying or anti-social behaviour. Importantly, they also state that this has not always been the case. They say that before the current principal arrived there was unrest, unruly behaviour and a virtual breakdown in discipline. This is completely at odds with the peace and harmony that are now prevalent across the entire school. Parents and students attribute this transformation to the tireless work of the principal. The school has an effective set of procedures for rewards and sanctions. These are fully understood by the students and fairly administered by staff. Corporal punishment is banned. Muslim students have access to good prayer facilities. The school has carried out all relevant checks on personnel, in full compliance with ADEC requirements.

The building is new, and provides extremely good accommodation on a large site. The classrooms and corridors are light, airy and well ventilated. The school

facilities include well-equipped science laboratories, art and music rooms, a library and modern information and communication technology (ICT) suites. This high level of provision enhances the quality of education. All hazardous substances are kept safe and secure. Exits and assembly points are clearly marked and evacuation procedures are in place. Security guards check all adults arriving at the school, and insist on identification before allowing entry. The many access points are guarded or locked during the day.

Resources are extremely good, and students work with high-quality materials and equipment. There are sufficient qualified teachers, with a student/teacher ratio of 13:1, but their varying competence causes inconsistency in learning. Corridors and classrooms are adorned with students' work, which adds to the rich environment. Each classroom is equipped with a 'smart board' that integrates technology into learning. The large library houses computers and an adequate number of Arabic and English books, in addition to magazines and stories. The well-equipped laboratories enable students to develop investigative and scientific skills. Sports provision is good but the school has no separate gymnasium. This results in a high demand for the hall, especially in hot weather. Outdoor provision is exceptional. Large covered play areas with climbing equipment enable students to explore and challenge their physical abilities. Secure shaded courtyards with safety flooring provide wonderful opportunities for the youngest students to socialise and engage in imaginative role-play. School transport is well maintained. All the buses have seat belts, first aid boxes and fire extinguishers, so safety is not compromised. The canteen is licensed and hygienic, and serves healthy food.

What the school should do to improve further:

- 1 Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that the SLT:
 - i. develop a strategic view of school development, underpinned by rigorous school self-evaluation;
 - ii. produce a school improvement plan with a realistic timescale that clearly identifies actions to be taken and who is responsible for their implementation;
 - iii. hold those responsible accountable for fulfilling their roles; and
 - iv. collect, analyse and utilise reliable data to identify trends in learning outcomes and the reasons for them.
- 2 Increase and improve the range of all teachers' skills and strategies to enable them to meet the full range of students' learning needs, specifically by:

- i. taking every opportunity to promote the speaking and listening skills of students who speak English as an additional language;
- ii. sharpening the individual education plans for students with special educational needs, and referring to them regularly in lesson planning;
- iii. extending the learning opportunities for the most able students, so they are appropriately challenging; and
- iv. increasing the range and depth of lesson activities, and deploying assistant teachers more effectively to support them.