



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First التعليم أولاً



Inspection Report

Al Dhafra School

Academic Year 2014 – 15

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Al Dhafra School

Inspection Date	29 September – 02 October 2014
School ID#	17
Lead Inspector	Bruce Berry
Licensed Curriculum	British and American
Number of Students	1418
Age Range	4 to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Daniel Bokelman
Proprietor	Sultan Bin Ghanoum Al Hamili
Chair of Governors	Sultan Bin Ghanoum Al Hamili
School Address	Po Box 25801, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 610 8400/ +971 (0)2 610 8401
Fax Number	+971 (0) 2 559 9883
Official Email (ADEC)	aldhafraad.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.dhafraschools.com
Date of last inspection	11 – 14 February 2013

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 4
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the significant improvement in the quality of teaching
- the very positive and caring relationships within the school community ensures that students are enthusiastic, willing and happy learners
- the well-developed care and guidance procedures create a safe and supportive environment for students
- the buildings and facilities provide a high-quality environment for learning.

The main areas for improvement are:

- continued focus on the quality of teaching and learning to reach a consistently good standard
 - increased effectiveness of leadership and management particularly in the strategic use of data and by increasing the rigour of lesson observations.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 87 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, heads of department, support staff, students and parents. They analysed test and assessment results, scrutinised students' work, analysed the 531 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and senior leaders were involved throughout the inspection process and undertook joint observations of lessons.

Description of the School

Al Dhafra School opened in September 1983 and relocated to villa premises in Abu Dhabi in 1995. In 2012, the school moved to new purpose built premises in Mohammed Bin Zayed City. The school's vision is 'To be an innovative, comprehensive school whereby students are engaged daily in the highest levels of learning across the curriculum.' and the mission is to 'develop every student's full potential academically, socially and morally, regardless of gender, race, disability, creed or personal background; to create competent and responsible citizens of today's global society who will be good members of their society in the UAE or abroad, and to collaborate with students and community members in the lifelong learning process'.

The student population is 1418, with 61% being boys. The school has students from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12. KG to Year 4 is mixed gender, in Grades 5 to 12 boys and girls are taught in single gender classes, with the exception of a few electives and some International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) classes. There are 248 students in KG, 524 in Grades 1 to 5, 306 in Grades 6 to 8 and 340 in Grades 9 to 12. The school follows an American curriculum from KG to Grade 8; from Grade 9 to 12, students can choose to follow the American or British curriculum. The Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum is used in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. Students electing for the British curriculum take IGCSE examinations in Year 11, Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) in Year 12 and Advanced Level (A-level) in Year 13; American curriculum students follow the Virginia State standards and graduation requirements. Students following the American curriculum through to Grade 12 receive a high school graduation diploma.

The school caters for students from many different nationalities: 33% are Emirati, 15% Egyptian, 11% Jordanian, 10% Syrian, 10% Lebanese and 21% from other nationalities. Of the total numbers, 89% of students are Muslim. The school has designated 4% of the students as having special educational needs (SEN), with most having learning difficulties; 3 students require language support; 3% are

identified as Gifted and Talented (G&T). Admission to the school from Grade 1 to Grade 12 is determined by interview and entrance test.

The principal has been in post for 3 years. The leadership team comprises of the principal, assistant principal, head of ICT and examinations officer, head of elementary, special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), guidance counsellor and science coordinator. The school has 117 teachers, with a 16% turnover last year. For students who were at the school prior to September 2012 the school fees range from 13,100 AED to 16,700 AED. For students joining the school after 2012, fees range from 22,000 to 38,000 AED, which are in the high to premium categories.

The Effectiveness of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness

Al Dhafra School has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. It now provides satisfactory and improving education. There has been a strong focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning. A high proportion of lessons are now at least satisfactory, and an increasing number are good or better. The students' personal development and care, protection and guidance provided are good and this creates a safe, caring and supportive environment for learning. The improving quality of education is further supported by the very good buildings and facilities.

The challenge for the school now is to sustain the improvements and to accelerate the pace of change by: creating more consistency in teaching and learning; stepping up the rate at which students learn; providing higher levels of challenge for the more able students; targeting the development of students 21st Century skills and ensuring that students take more ownership of their learning through clearly defined personalised learning goals.

Students' attainment & progress

Attainment and progress are satisfactory and improving. Standards are aligned to both Virginia State and the English National curriculum. Students work at age-appropriate levels in most lessons. In English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) attainment and progress are better than satisfactory. In Arabic, attainment is satisfactory, but progress is higher because of students' relatively low starting points. Attainment and progress are satisfactory in Islamic education and social studies. In other subjects attainment and progress are better than satisfactory. Students' acquisition of basic skills in speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, and use of ICT is better than satisfactory; thinking skills are less well developed.

On entry to KG, most students are beginners in English. They make good progress in their development of spoken English. By Grade 1, students are able to access all curriculum areas in English. In all phases, students make good gains in their understanding of spoken English and subject-specific vocabulary. Students make satisfactory or better progress in all age groups and in most subjects.

Attainment in school based and external tests indicate that standards are in line with international levels and in some subjects above. The IGCSE, AS and A-level results taken by a minority of Grade 10, 11 and 12 students are above international standards. Those following the American curriculum make similar progress, with almost all Grade 12 students gaining university places. SEN students and those needing additional help with language development are well supported and make similar progress to other students. The progress made by higher ability students is only satisfactory in some lessons because of insufficiently challenging learning opportunities. The school effectively uses a series of standardised benchmark tests to check student progress.

Students' personal development

The personal development of students is good. Students in all sections of the school have highly respectful attitudes to each other and to adults. Teachers show genuine warmth and respect for their students. Most students display good levels of interest and engagement. Their behaviour is generally good in classrooms and as they move around the school. In a small minority of lessons, students become restless when learning is insufficiently challenging or they have periods of inactivity.

Students show high levels of respect for the values, heritage and culture of the UAE. This is seen in lessons, assemblies and special celebrations. The in-school Hajj celebration enables students to practically experience the rituals and activities involved. Leadership opportunities are gained through membership of the student council and in a monthly rolling programme of classroom leadership duties. Students have limited opportunities to be involved in community activities. They have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives, which is promoted through the curriculum and through the choice of food offered in the canteen. Attendance last year was at 93%.

The quality of teaching and learning

There has been a significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection, which has resulted in satisfactory or better practice in most classrooms. It is good or better in a few lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to motivate and engage students. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and a solid understanding of the

curriculum content. They have high expectations of behaviour. Relationships between teachers and students are respectful; teachers care about students and encourage their efforts. Students are actively involved in their learning, there is good pace and activities have challenge matched to their needs. In a small number of unsatisfactory lessons, students are often passive learners, spend lengthy periods listening, are not actively involved and have insufficient challenge.

Children in KG are very enthusiastic and motivated learners. There is an over reliance on whole class teaching in some KG classes. Baseline assessments are not used well to plan activities aligned to individual children's learning needs. Small group learning is used in only a few lessons. In other age groups, some teachers are using a variety of activities to engage students actively in their own learning. In these lessons, problem solving, research, collaborative and group activities contribute well to developing students' 21st Century skills. This is not yet established as a consistent feature in lessons across the school. Teachers undertake regular assessments; in some lessons, they are not used effectively to plan activities matched to students' needs. In particular, expectations are too low in some lessons for higher achieving students. Teachers have good opportunities to access professional development and the performance management programme provides further guided support for them.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The broad and balanced curriculum provides an improving programme for continuity and progression to learning. In KG to Grade 8, the core subjects are enhanced by music, art, physical Education (PE) and ICT. French is taught from Grade 1. From Grade 9 to 10, the American curriculum focusses well on helping students to meet graduation requirements. In Grades 10 to 12 students are able to choose a suitable range of elective subjects. In the British curriculum, Grades 9 and 10 study a wide variety of subjects including 3 separate sciences, ICT and business studies. In Grades 11 and 12 they take 3 subjects to AS and A-level.

SEN students and those who need help with their language development have suitably modified curriculum support to enhance their learning. The development of 21st Century skills across subjects is inconsistent. In some lessons, the curriculum is not consistently adapted to provide appropriate challenge for higher achieving students. There has been significant improvement to the range of extra-curricular activities available for students, including sports, arts, scouts, Zumba, Model United Nations, robotics and many others. There is a high level of student take-up in all the activities.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The high levels of care, guidance and support create a good environment where students feel safe and are happy and enthusiastic learners. Students receive good pastoral and academic support from all adults. The pastoral care system has several lines of responsibility, starting with the homeroom teacher and further effective support is given throughout all grades. Social workers are also available to provide further support and counselling for students. Students are supported well when making choices, particularly in Grade 9 when deciding between the American and British curriculum. Academic progress is monitored regularly by teachers and subject leaders. There is insufficient rigour and consistency in some subjects in using the data to identify areas of concern.

Good levels of behaviour and high levels of respect are a strong feature throughout the school. Positive attitudes to learning are evident in most lessons. The school has a strong commitment to students' safety and well being. All staff are trained on the application of the child protection policy and are aware of their responsibilities. New teachers receive training as part of their induction programme. The school has 5 prayers rooms to cover the needs of all sections of the school.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The buildings provide high quality spacious facilities to support and stimulate learning. Teaching groups are well organised in phases throughout the building. The 7 science laboratories enable students to experience stimulating hands-on practical learning. The 5 ICT rooms are used well to develop a key component of students' 21st Century skills. The art and music facilities provide curriculum breadth for students' learning. Classrooms are spacious, flexible and support varied teaching and learning strategies.

All available space is used creatively; the extensive roof space has been converted into an effective sports facility. Other sports facilities include an Olympic sized swimming pool, KG splash pool and the large central covered area for a variety of sports. There is a gym and an equipped area for KG children to learn through play. The outdoor KG curriculum area has insufficient shading. There are 2 libraries, one in each of the senior and junior sections of the school.

Security is very well coordinated throughout the campus. The health and safety officer ensures that all equipment is regularly checked. Medical facilities are very good, with 3 clinics, staffed by 3 licenced nurses and 2 medical assistants. Emergency evacuation practices regularly take place and the school community is fully aware of the procedures.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are satisfactory and improving in supporting the school's aims. The school is fully staffed, with 12 extra teachers successfully recruited to cover the 10% growth in student numbers. All teachers have secure subject knowledge and are suitably qualified. Classroom assistants provide valuable support for students and teachers. Classrooms and specialist areas are well resourced.

The ICT facilities are well equipped with sufficient computers to allow students to work independently. Classrooms have interactive white boards, which are used well by teachers. The school has purchased 300 iPads, which will be part of a future project involving the elementary school and Grade 10. Well-resourced science laboratories enable students to learn through hands-on practical activities. The senior and junior libraries have an adequate stock of books, but do not adequately meet the needs of the 21st Century learning community.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team has a positive impact on improving the quality of educational provision for students. Leadership and management have developed since the last inspection and are now satisfactory and improving. Governors have effective accountability strategies in place to ensure senior leaders meet their agreed targets. These are suitably aligned to the key initiatives in the school development plan (SDP). The leadership team and teachers are fully focused on improving the quality of education.

There is a very calm and caring ethos in the school and it runs smoothly on a daily basis. The school operates a performance management system, which leads to all staff having annual goals and identified professional development plans. Senior staff and middle leaders undertake regular lesson observations and provide feedback to teachers. They are not always sufficiently followed up to ensure identified improvement areas become embedded in practice. Assessment data is collected regularly, but there is inconsistency in the rigour of the analysis and use of the findings to accelerate progress.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) is an accurate appraisal of the present position of the school. It is well aligned to the key areas of development in the SDP, which is well focused on the school's identified improvements. The school has good links with parents, who provide feedback to the school via the school, ADEC and Advanced Education questionnaires. Parents are positive about most aspects of the school. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place for dealing with parental complaints.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. The school has invested heavily in targeted training to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The quality in most lessons across the school is now satisfactory or better. There are still some inconsistencies in setting learning goals for students and in providing appropriate challenge for higher achieving students.

The curriculum implementation has improved. There are more opportunities for students to develop ICT skills. There is evidence of more teachers planning activities to develop students' investigative and practical skills, but this is not consistent. The extra-curricular programme is a major success story, with a wide range of clubs and high levels of student participation.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Continue to improve teaching and learning to a consistently good or better standard by:
 - i. using the outcomes of assessments of students' prior knowledge and skills to design learning activities matched to their identified needs
 - ii. raising expectations and challenge, particularly for higher achieving students
 - iii. increasing the opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways to develop and enhance their 21st Century skills
 - iv. ensuring that students have regular improvement targets in all subjects.
2. Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - i. assessment data is rigorously and regularly analysed and used to accelerate progress
 - ii. lesson observations are followed up to ensure identified improvement areas become embedded in practice.

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								

Possible breaches of regulations and health & safety concerns

Al Dhafra School

Regulations	
1.	
2.	
3.	
The UAE Flag is raised/ flown every day?	Yes
Is playing of the UAE National Anthem a daily feature at the morning assembly?	Yes

Fees:
1.
2.
3.

Health and Safety Concerns:
1.
2.
3.

Lead Inspector	Bruce Berry	Date	03 October 2014
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