



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
التعليم أولاً Education First



Private School Inspection Report

Al Dhafra Private School

Academic Year 2016 – 2017

Alqraa



Al Dhafra Private School

Inspection Date	October 17, 2016	to	October 20, 2016
Date of previous inspection	September 29, 2014	to	October 2, 2014

General Information	
School ID	17
Opening year of school	1983
Principal	Daniel Bokelman
School telephone	+971 (0)2 610 8400
School Address	ME09, Mohammed Bin Zayed City, Abu Dhabi
Official email (ADEC)	aldhafraad.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School website	www.dhafraschools.com
Fee ranges (per annum)	Average to high (AED 24,000 to AED 41,400)

Licensed Curriculum	
Main Curriculum	American
Other Curriculum (if applicable)	English National curriculum
External Exams/ Standardised tests	IGCSE, AS levels, A levels, SAT1, IELTS
Accreditation	AdvancED.

Students		
Total number of students	1630	
%of students per curriculum (if applicable)	Main Curriculum	97.5%
	Other Curriculum	2.5%
Number of students in other phases	KG	390
	Primary:	552
	Middle:	304
	High:	884
Age range	4 to 18 years	
Grades or Year Groups	KG to Grade 12	
Gender	Boys and girls	
% of Emirati Students	37%	
Largest nationality groups (%)	1.Egyptian 16%	
	2.Jordanian 11%	
	3.Syrian 10%	

Staff		
Number of teachers	129	
Number of teaching assistants (TAs)	30	
Teacher-student ratio	KG/ FS	1:14
	Other phases	1:13
Teacher turnover	15%	



Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	5
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	141
Number of joint lesson observations	15
Number of parents' questionnaires	137; return rate: 9.8%
Details of other inspection activities	Inspectors held discussions with the owner and governing body, principal, senior managers, teachers and other members of staff, children/students and parents. They reviewed a wide range of school documentation and students' and children's coursework. They observed assemblies, school activities, arrivals, departures and intervals.

School	
School Aims	'Al Dhafra Private Schools will enshrine educational excellence, where culture and tradition are honoured and everyone is safe. Students attending Al Dhafra Private Schools will become internationally- minded, global citizens, possessing the skills and character to thrive in a challenging and changing world.'
School vision and mission	'To provide a trusting and supportive school community, in which students are placed at the centre of learning, developing personal responsibility and self-discipline, as they become independent and creative learners and thinkers. Teaching will be inspiring and all students empowered to succeed within an innovative culture of high expectations, high standards, and outstanding quality.'



Admission Policy	The school has an inclusive admission policy with no selection. Priority is given to siblings of students on roll.
Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)	Ownership is through a Board of Trustees. The Board comprises the owner, the CEO, a financial representative, community representatives and parents. They meet at a minimum of four times a year. There are six members of the senior leadership team: the principal, vice principal and heads of KG, primary and middle, and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Middle leadership comprises six subject coordinators.



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 internally
Intellectual disability	1	0
Specific Learning Disability	4	3
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	8	6
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	6	2
Speech and Language Disorders	8	2
Physical and health related disabilities	4	0
Visually impaired	0	0
Hearing impaired	0	0
Multiple disabilities	3	0

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

G&T Category	Number of students identified
Intellectual ability	4
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	12
Social maturity and leadership	0
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	0
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	2
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	5



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 A	Good
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	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
Performance Standards						
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 school's overall performance is good. The school opened in 1983 and in 2012 moved to new purpose built premises in Mohammed Bin Zayed City. Life in the school is friendly and culturally diverse with a positive and inclusive ethos in which all staff and students support and respect each other. Students progress well in all subjects and across all phases. Attainment is good in most subjects. Arabic is acceptable for both native and non-native speakers in all phases. The school's provision for English National Curriculum (ENC) is now being phased out. Students' English speaking skills are fluent by the time they leave school. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teaching is good overall. A new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), appointed in 2015 for the two Al Dhafra schools, and a new vice principal have strengthened the school leadership. This has been done together with making recent appointments and restructuring the middle leadership. These steps are having a positive influence on school improvement. Al Dhafra is a popular and expanding school that continues to improve.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

The school has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory and improving. Attendance has improved from 93% to over 97%. The last report recommended a continued focus on the quality of teaching and learning to reach a consistently good standard. This has been achieved. The school has also made good progress in addressing the strategic use of data and increasing the rigour of lesson observations. The newly strengthened senior and middle leadership teams are making measurable improvements in teaching and learning. The school has the capacity to improve further as a result of its increasingly effective leadership.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

The school has introduced innovative practices in the curriculum and in teaching and learning. For example, in English enrichment lessons in Grade 8 students opt to learn English through the medium of either drama, debate or media. Access to these options through the two lessons per week are popular with students and effective in improving English speaking and writing skills. In grades 10 to 12, a new programme of Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC) is having a positive impact on innovation skills because it supports creative problem solving and reflection. In KG, the school has moved away from a teacher-led delivery to a more child-initiated approach. This approach includes the introduction of talking partners, a home reading programme, reading buddies and guest parent readers. This innovative focus on accelerating literacy skills is improving children's achievement.



The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- progress made by all students, in all subjects, in all phases
- a friendly and culturally diverse learning community where all staff and students support and respect each other
- focused, decisive and effective senior leadership in moving the school forward
- the positive impact of improvements to teaching and assessment on students' achievement
- an attractive, well-maintained and resourced building that provides a safe and welcoming learning environment.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- the need for a larger, more representative Board of Trustees, which includes parental representatives from the newly formed parents' association
- the need to develop further the team of middle leaders, such as heads of phases and subject coordinators, to strengthen their impact on teaching and learning
- further improvement to student achievement in Arabic in particular.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

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



Students' achievement is good overall. Children enter KG with low academic starting points and 98% of them have no English. The school has a positive impact on their learning, as illustrated this year when all students in Grade 12 were accepted for university and almost all without the need for a foundation year in English skills. There are good levels of attainment in MOE Arabic and Islamic assessments. The majority of students study English, mathematics and science up to Grade 12. Younger students do not sit any externally standardised test to help benchmark their performance against curricular and international standards. External examination results and assessments of older students in IGCSEs, SATs and IELTS are generally above the expected curriculum standards. This all represents good progress throughout the school.

In Islamic education, the majority of students attain levels that are above curriculum standards in all phases. For example, in KG, children can read small verses from the Holy Qur'an, and the majority can recite Surat Al Fatiha correctly. By Grade 10, most students can name the main jurisprudential schools in Islam and the majority can make comparisons and explain the differences, demonstrating deep understanding. All students at all phases make good progress in lessons.

In Arabic as a first (AFL) and second language (ASL), attainment is acceptable and progress is good in all phases. Most students demonstrate levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in line with curriculum standards. For example, in KG most of the children can identify the letters they have learned by their sound or shape and read them. By Grade 6, AFL students can read a passage and answer related questions correctly. The majority read fluently with expression and with few language and grammar mistakes. They can summarise the main ideas and answer challenging questions confidently. In 2016 Grade 12 MoE exams, almost all students achieved levels above curriculum standards although this level of performance is not borne out by work in lessons presently. Most ASL students in Grade 3 can recognise the vocabulary related to family members and house objects, and the majority can answer simple questions correctly and write short sentences which describe a certain scene.

In UAE social studies, attainment and progress are good. For example, by Grade 9 the majority of students can explain confidently the accomplishment of the founder of UAE the late Sheikh Zayed in raising awareness of environmental issues locally and internationally and how he used the different resources to achieve sustainability. They can give examples of sustainable use of resources from their own context and the world.

Achievement in English speaking, listening, reading and writing is good throughout the school. For example, by Grade 8 most students can speak confidently in English and make presentations to their peers. A minority did not need notes to do this. By Grade 12, almost all students speak English fluently in a range of contexts including,



for example, where Grade 12 boys analysed and discussed a poem entitled 'A thing of Beauty'. They could sustain a discussion well and link their opinions maturely to their Islamic beliefs. Higher grade students are working at levels above curriculum standards.

In mathematics, attainment is good in KG and acceptable in primary, middle and higher phases. Progress is good at all phases. Most children start the school knowing their numbers and beginning to count. By Grade 8, most students' attainment is in line with expected levels. In Grade 12 in the American curriculum, large majority of students performed above the acceptable level of 75%. Of the small proportions students who follow the ENC, most gained A* to C at IGCSE, and there was a similar positive picture for A levels.

In science, student attainment and progress in all phases is good. In Grade 1, most students can explain how to keep plants alive. By Grade 6 they can define the water table and use scientific vocabulary. By Grade 10, a large majority of students can use scientific knowledge to conduct experiments and test for the presence of lipids and carbohydrates. Students in all phases use tablet computers effectively including when lessons are practical and experimental.

Attainment and progress in other subjects including physical education (PE), information and communication technology (ICT), music and art is good overall. It ranges from good to outstanding in the wide range of higher examination option subjects including business studies, psychology, drama and economics. No groups of students are underachieving.

Progress in learning skills is good. Most lessons involve active, problem-solving activities, and independent learning skills. Students of all ages use tablet computers to research, record and calculate. Experimental practical work is effectively and frequently used in science where students are encouraged to investigate, research and to be enterprising. From time to time, students apply critical-thinking and innovation skills, although they would benefit from being given more opportunities on a daily basis.



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
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Personal development	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Students’ personal development is very good. Almost all students are responsible, polite and positive. Their attitudes and behaviour for learning are very good. They are keen to learn. Students in primary, middle and higher phases seek and respond well to critical feedback. In a Grade 5 English lesson, for example, students assessed their peers in a critical, constructive way. Students and parents agree that poor behaviour is rare. Students from different nationalities respect and support each other. Relationships in all phases of the school are positive. Class advisors act as mediators and support their peers.

Students demonstrate a secure understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. They initiate and participate in activities that promote healthy lifestyles. For example, the school council organised a breast cancer awareness day for the school community which involved speakers from a local hospital. Students enjoy participating in a range of sporting activities. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now very good at 97%. It is particularly high in the middle and high phases, and lowest in KG.

A strength of the school is students’ understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures. This is seen in lessons, assemblies, displays and artefacts around the school, especially commissioned artwork and special celebrations. Students from Grade 1 upwards use the five prayer rooms to pray.

A high profile and very active school council demonstrates all the attributes of intelligent, socially responsible and politically aware youngsters. They are keen to volunteer, organise full school events, take on leadership roles and participate in shaping school policies and the life of the school. They are role models for younger students.



Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Almost all teachers in all phases and in all subjects have strong subject knowledge and know how students learn. As a consequence, students are well prepared for external examinations in higher grades, and make good progress in all phases and all subjects. Detailed lesson planning ensures a structured learning experience appropriate to the age group and subject. All teachers share learning objectives with students ensuring students are clear of what is expected of them. In the large majority of lessons, teachers use a wide variety of activities to gain students' interest. This results in students' good behaviour for learning with enthusiasm and high motivation. These approaches now need to be extended to all lessons. In better lessons, teachers' questioning skills probe and deepen students' understanding. Not all teachers use open targeted questions to further students' learning, however. Group work is widely used in classrooms. In KG, children know how to share, take their turn and work collaboratively. In higher grades, students prepare joint presentations, undertake scientific experiments, prepare role plays and debates, and support each other's learning.

The effectiveness of assessment is good. The majority of teachers use a variety of assessment for learning techniques to check students' understanding and progress. In a large minority of lessons, students assess their own and their peers' work. In KG, teachers record their observations of children's achievement as the lesson progresses. In primary and higher phases, teachers record and track progress in their mark books and prepare differentiated tasks for higher and lower attaining students. Marking is not consistent, however. Not all teachers are using formative comments that show students how to improve their work. A minority are not using assessment information to plan work that meets all students' needs. There is a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in a minority of lessons.



Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

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

The school at present has an American curriculum from KG to Grade 12. It has recently adopted the Virginia Common Core Standards. In grades 10 to 12, students have been able to opt for either the American Curriculum stream or a British curriculum stream which includes IGCSEs, AS and A levels. The curriculum provides continuity of learning and is broad and balanced for all phases. There are appropriate time allocations for all core subjects, including MoE subjects.

In high school, students have a wide choice of options from grade 10 to 12, including subjects such as three separate sciences, psychology, business studies and ICT. The curriculum is planned to celebrate Emirati culture. Links with Emirati culture and UAE society are incorporated into lesson plans and the daily life of the whole school. For example, in a Grade 9 English lesson about caring, students spoke knowledgeably about their Islamic values. There are displays of heritage culture around the school and in classrooms.

Cross-curricular themes are built into lesson plans. For example, different subjects contribute to cross-curricular activities such as, in Grade 1, an integration station day. Learning is linked to real life when appropriate. The curriculum is regularly reviewed. It provides continuity and progression across all phases. Students report they receive appropriate advice for university choices. A large minority of students take part in a programme of extracurricular activities including scouting, gymnastics, basketball, dance, football, karate, marching, KG club, swimming and model United Nations.

The school has made significant modifications to the curriculum including, for example, enrichment English lessons in Grade 8, TASC in grades 10 to 12, and changes to the KG curriculum. All SEN students have individual education action plans (IEPs). These plans involve curriculum modifications and individual intervention strategies. However, the curriculum is not adequately modified, nor enhanced to meet the needs of high-attaining and gifted and talented students.



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

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/safeguarding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Care and support	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

School procedures for safeguarding students are very good. All staff receive regular training and parents are made aware of the procedures at the start of each year. Photographs of adults with designated responsibility for child protection are prominently displayed around the school. Students say they feel safe and know how to deal with bullying, including cyber bullying. Lifts and ramps ensure the school is accessible for all.

Staff and student relationships are very positive. The school is a caring, friendly, culturally diverse learning community. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm and orderly for all phases. Staff supervision at all times of the school day is effective. The school has a comprehensive pastoral structure. Three school counsellors, social workers, heads of sections, qualified male and female nurses, the SENCO and senior staff, are all available to support and help students. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality are effective.

The school is inclusive. A strength of the school is its identification of students with special education needs (SEN). SEN students all have individual action plans which are implemented generally well in lessons. Support for highly attaining and gifted and talented students is inconsistent and less effective, however. These students are not given regular challenges to increase the depth of their learning or to develop and consolidate a suitable range of learning skills, including higher-order thinking skills. They are not yet stretched sufficiently to achieve what they could. The school provides students with academic guidance about subject choices, future careers and university applications.



Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of the school is good. The new CEO, principal and new vice principal have a clear vision and are focused and decisive. The recently strengthened middle leadership team, comprising heads of section and subject coordinators, is beginning to have an increased impact on teaching and learning. Relationships and communication within the school and between school and home are a strength. Students are issued with communication books which are an effective means of home-school contact.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) is an accurate, detailed and clearly written document. The school has analysed systematically a range of performance data. It knows its own strengths and weaknesses. The SEF provides the foundation for identification of priorities in the school development plan (SDP). The whole school focus is targeted, appropriately, on improving teaching and learning and raising standards.

Parents are supportive and positive about the school. The parents' association has only recently been established. Parents and other stakeholders have limited involvement in the decision making of the school.

The Board of Trustees is small and lacks wide parental and other stakeholder representation. It is not yet holding the school to account effectively for educational outcomes, and does not have influence on or responsibility for the school's performance.

The day-to-day running of the school is very good. For example, staggered break times, different timetable timings for different phases of the school and clear routines ensure a calm and orderly atmosphere. The premises provide an attractive, vibrant learning environment. The building is spacious, well maintained and secure with a wide range of specialist facilities. Science laboratories, ICT rooms, sports facilities, a large swimming pool and a smaller one for KG, music and art rooms and two well equipped libraries, provide well for students of all ages.



What the school should do to improve further:

1. Continue to improve attainment, progress and teaching by:
 - i. using external testing, such as Measurement of Academic Progress Tests, to measure progress from Grade 3 to Grade 10
 - ii. improving the quality of teaching to enable the use of important learning skills in all lessons, particularly in Arabic
 - iii. reviewing the pace and challenge in lessons to maximise students' learning opportunities
 - iv. planning and delivering more effectively targeted learning experiences for students who require additional support or challenge
 - v. ensuring that up-to-date student assessment data, both from internal and external sources, informs teachers' lesson planning and delivery.

2. Improve the effectiveness of school governance by:
 - i. enlarging the membership of the Board of Trustees
 - ii. electing parent representatives from the newly formed parents' association
 - iii. strengthening communication between the Board of Trustees and parents and other stakeholders
 - iv. involving parents and other stakeholders in the decision-making processes of the school
 - v. providing training for all Trustees in their roles and responsibilities, especially regarding school accountability.

3. Increase the impact of middle leaders on students' learning by:
 - i. providing them with a programme of effective professional development
 - ii. providing time and support for them to coach and mentor other colleagues
 - iii. encouraging them to spend time observing in other colleagues' classrooms and providing effective feedback and appropriate follow-up interventions where necessary
 - iv. ensuring they stay informed of recent developments in their subject and changes in pedagogy for their students' age groups.