



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



Summary Inspection Report

Japanese Private School

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Japanese Private School

Inspection Date	20 th – 22 nd May, 2012
School ID#	110
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Japanese (Monbusho)
Number of Students	80
Age Range	KG – Grade 9
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Satoru Onondera
School Address	PO Box 8120, Al Muroor Street, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of four inspectors. They observed 38 lessons and held meetings with staff and students. They considered the school ethos and the quality of students' learning experiences, personal development and progress, and the teaching they receive.

Description of the School

The Japanese School was established 34 years ago so that Japanese nationals working in Abu Dhabi could access the Japanese education system. The school moved to a new location in April 2012, three weeks before the Inspection. It is located in the Bateen Area of Abu Dhabi opposite the Crown Prince's Diwan. The facility was formerly Umm Habiba Girls School and has been extensively refurbished for the Japanese School. The school is completing minor repairs but is fully operational. The governing board has plans to add awnings for the playground and softer, plastic composite flooring for the outdoor play areas.

The school is owned and operated by the Embassy of Japan – Abu Dhabi. The Japanese Ministry of Education recruits and employs the teachers. In 2006 the Japanese school accepted the invitation of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to enrol UAE national students. This is an innovative and unique program. Representatives of the Government of Qatar will soon visit the school to consider replicating the program. The intent is to teach nationals fluency in the Japanese language. In grade 9 students have the option of continuing their higher education in Japan. A non-profit organisation, the UAE-JAPAN Association for Youth Development and Exchange (NPO), was established to recruit licensed KG teachers from Japan. It funds three staff members in KG and three one-to-one tutors in grades 1–9. ADEC funds five Arabic teachers in grades 1–9 to teach Arabic, Islamic studies, and social studies.

Japanese national students are accepted into the school through a formal testing/interview format. UAE nationals are also tested and interviewed. The number of UAE students accepted is restricted to four per class. There are currently 65 Japanese, 13 UAE and two Egyptian (children of staff) students. Two students have been identified as having special educational needs. The school year is longer (200 days) than government schools and the daily periods are each five minutes longer.

School fees range from AED 13,550 (KG1) to 29,600 (Grade 9). The school has announced a 35% increase in fees for next year.



The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 3

Inspectors judged the Japanese School – Abu Dhabi to be a high-performing school.

The Japanese School in Abu Dhabi is an effective institution. It has well defined goals, a successful history, an active and supportive parent community spearheaded by a dedicated governing board, and a highly motivated staff. The school is successful in meeting its aim to serve the needs of the Japanese community in Abu Dhabi. The last inspection was in 2010 in the old premises. The recommendations from that report related to buildings and facilities issues. The school has since moved and the structural issues are no longer a concern. The 2010 report also placed the school to be a high performing school.

Students normally return to Japan before their final year, and so there are only two students in grade 9. The Japanese Ministry of Education examines students entering high school in Japan and has prepared a special examination for returning expatriates. The school is not aware of any student having difficulty meeting these requirements and re-adjusting to their former system. This indicates that the standards students achieve are comparable with those achieved by students in Japan.

There is a positive, supportive and active environment throughout the school. Students are happy and well behaved, and both formal lessons and informal activities are conducted with efficiency and rigour. The school has a formal reporting structure each term. Teachers are diligent in recording students' progress and measuring it against Japanese Ministry of Education standards. Teachers prepare regular, and in some cases daily, reports for parents summarising their children's progress. Progress in Japanese language written and oral acquisition was reported as equal to or better than comparable standards in Japan. UAE nationals have the benefit of a one-on-one tutor in Grades 1–3 to support their Japanese language learning and are making good progress. Standards in numeracy and literacy are satisfactory and reported as above Japanese home country standards. English language competency is satisfactory. Students prepared a full school presentation to visiting students from the British School of Abu Dhabi, and every student in grades 1–9 spoke and performed well in English. Progress in science is satisfactory.

Although Arabic, Islamic studies and UAE social studies are given less time during the week than in other UAE schools, lessons and terms are longer. UAE national



parents are clearly informed of the discrepancy before accepting a place in the school. Arabic students attend the school to learn Japanese, but are making satisfactory progress in Arabic language, Islamic studies and particularly Quran reciting. The school encourages UAE cultural awareness and understanding through displays and celebrations. The five Arabic teachers ensure students' ongoing progress in Arabic studies.

Art, music, and physical education classes are engaging and enthusiastic so students make good progress in these areas. The school has a fully equipped and functional computer room but there are no computers in individual classrooms. Information about the development of students ICT skills was not available.

Teaching is effective and the students are engaged, attentive and diligent in all lessons. Boys and girls make similar progress. In the younger grades, students benefit from interactive learning with planned activities that are typically modified according to students' differing ability levels. Teachers use stimulating resources that encourage the students' interest and motivate them. Teaching assistants are sensitive to the individual needs of students and they offer support although this is more effective for students having difficulty. In the older grades there is more textbook-based didactic teaching but teachers encourage students to think deeply about what they are learning. There are too few interventions for gifted students during lessons. Teachers hold afternoon classes to supplement students' learning further.

The students appear happy, confident and focused. Those from Japan integrate well with those from the UAE. There is a respectful attitude amongst students and staff. Teachers greet the buses each day, eat lunch with their classes, assist students in completing their chores such as watering plants in a school beautification project, and support learning through extra-curricular programs – including a field trip to London. There is no obvious segregation by gender, nationality, age or academic capability. Students interact positively to keep the school clean including sweeping and dusting every day. The entire school cooperated together to entertain and host the grade 5 students from the British School.

The small size of the school population lends itself to co-operation and a secure, 'family' atmosphere. Cooperative learning was observed in the art room, physical education (PE) and music classes. The KG program operates in a separate classroom area, but the youngest children interacted with the oldest during fire drills and assemblies. The emphasis on the Japanese ethos of orderliness and discipline is actively modelled in the school. Students are developing positive self-images in a safe, relaxing and supportive environment.



Japanese staff and NPO resource teachers are selected through a highly competitive recruitment process in Japan. They are hired on two- or three-year contracts directly through the Japanese Ministry of Education. The principal inspects classes regularly and writes detailed reports on teachers' capabilities. Staff meetings are held regularly. The Arabic teachers are also well qualified. The teaching staff interacted regularly and positively with students throughout the day. There is a high energy level in the school. Teachers are respectful and patient with the students, but clearly conveyed expectations during assemblies and when overseeing response to a fire drill. Teachers engage in self-directed professional development. Individually and co-operatively they are researching UAE culture and geography and sharing their learning with colleagues and students.

The school follows the national curriculum of Japan as mandated and distributed by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Teachers are accredited by the Japanese government. The school exists to teach the Japanese curriculum in Abu Dhabi which has good breadth because of the extended language learning and the inclusion of effective music, PE and art courses. The inclusion of Japanese cultural activities such as kendo, ikebana and calligraphy also enhance the curriculum. There are clear systems for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum through annual reviews, for example, in relation to the attainment of students in the KG. This information is also used to scrutinise student progress and the school is conscientious about sustaining student progress.

Vetting procedures for staff are rigorous. The school conforms to the Embassy of Japan regulations concerning employment checks and there is a detailed central record. Other welfare policies, including that for child protection, are supplied by the Japanese Ministry of Education and well understood by teachers.

The school is still settling in to its new premises and there are some teething problems, but health and safety are given an appropriate priority. The school closed for a day when the water system backed up the toilets. A practice fire drill was held during the inspection and adjustments made to implement the best fire safety program for the new buildings. Each teacher has a specific responsibility for safety in their classroom and designated duties in other rooms in the school. Contracts for water and electrical maintenance have not yet been finalised with a qualified contractor. There is a first aid room in the school and a full-time nurse. There are some first aid boxes in the school, but not in every classroom. Discipline is positive and part of the school culture. Students are respectful and cooperative. No corporal punishment is allowed. Parents say they are comfortable that their children are being well cared for.



The new school accommodation is clean, safe and well maintained, and has been refurbished to update the classrooms. The school has added Japanese features such as tatami mats for the KG students and a culture room for ikebana (flower arranging) and Japanese calligraphy to complement learning. There is a mosque for staff and students. There are plans to repave the playground with soft vinyl and provide awnings for the hot weather.

The school is well resourced with learning books from the Japanese Ministry of Education, although some of the texts are in need of updating. Scientific equipment, mathematical resources, art supplies, and learning through play materials in the KG classes are adequate, but a wider range and newer materials would enhance learning. The library is well stocked with Japanese books, but there are few Arabic or English research and reading materials.

The school has a well-defined system of management from the Embassy of Japan to the classroom level. The principal is contracted from Japan on a two- or three-year contract. The governing board is chosen from amongst Japanese businesses operating in the UAE. Traditionally, the board chairman is from the United Petroleum Development Co Ltd (Japan). Financial responsibility is handled through this company and KPMG provide annual audits. The system works well. The board members are knowledgeable and actively involved in the affairs of the school.

Given the size of the school, leaders have created a tight community where there is an emphasis on shared dialogue between teachers so the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. Students are well known and teachers are accessible to parents so there is effective communication about progress particularly in the KG. There are more formal opportunities for parents to support their children's education through the parents' association.

Fees are high compared to similar schools but the school operates on a tight budget and parents are satisfied with the educational value provided. The leadership and management structure is dictated according to the demands of the Japanese Ministry of Education, but the school has successfully integrated UAE nationals into its system through co-operation with ADEC.



What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - i. ensuring that older students routinely benefit from the good practice seen in the younger grade classrooms, particularly in terms of interactive learning and well-considered support for students at different levels of ability; and
 - ii. continuing to seek innovative ways to maintain and expand UAE culture and understanding into the daily life of all students at the school.
2. Consider purchasing computers for each classroom, to support students' learning and research skills in all subjects.
3. Address the following to ensure a healthy and safe environment:
 - i. monitor and restrict student access to unsafe areas;
 - ii. ensure all buses are parked off ground; and
 - iii. add more first-aid boxes to teaching areas and ensure all water and electricity maintenance issues are dealt with.