

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Ittihad Private School (BR)

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Ittihad Private School (BR)

Location	Jumeirah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ipsjumeira.com
Telephone	04-3945111
Address	Jumeirah, near Safa Park. P.O. Box. 37090 Dubai, UAE
Principal	Nehad Saeed Al Shamsi
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 /KG1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1960
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1764 (90%)
Date of the inspection	3rd to 6th March 2014

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The context of the school

Al Ittihad Private School (Branch) is located in the Jumeirah district. Approximately 90% of students were from Emirati backgrounds.

The school offered a United States of America curriculum which was matched to the Common Core curriculum in English and mathematics. Science was based on the US national science standards. The school followed the Ministry of Education curricula in Islamic Education and Arabic.

The school was organised in four phases. Kindergarten, for children aged three to five; elementary school for Grades 1 to 4, middle school for Grades 5 to 8 and the high school for Grades 9 to 12. Students graduated with the certified high school diploma. From Grade 5, girls and boys were taught separately.

Since the previous inspection, the school had gained accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and with the Council of International Schools (CIS).

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The students reached at least good standards and made good progress in all subjects in almost all sections of the school;
- Students had good learning skills;
- The school promoted Emirati values and culture consistently well;
- All aspects of students' personal development were at least good;
- Health and safety arrangements and leadership were outstanding.

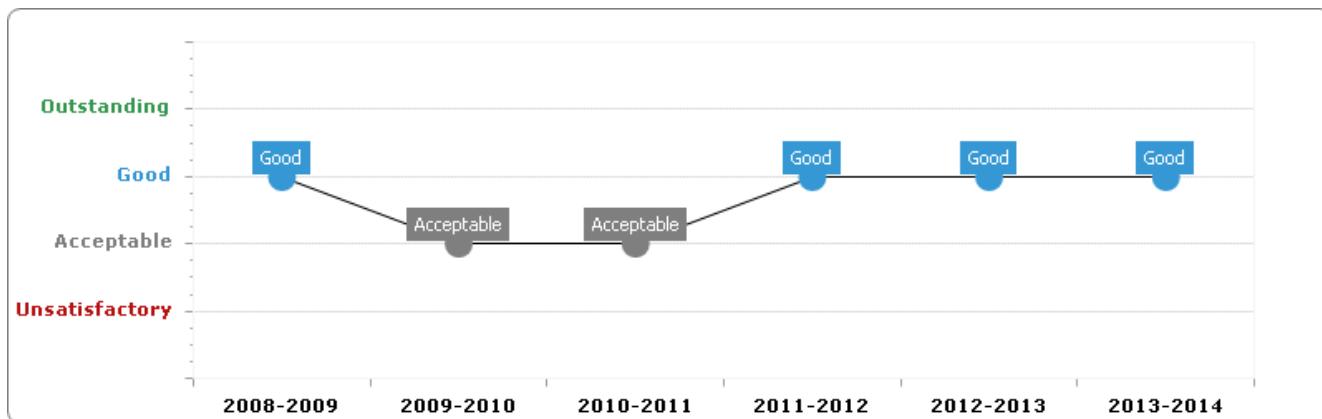
Recommendations

- Raise the level of attainment in science in the elementary section by, for example, encouraging the increased development of "hands on" investigative skills;
- Ensure that teachers make full use of assessment information to plan their lessons and modify curriculum delivery to meet the needs of all their students;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context;
- Improve the consistency of teaching by setting higher standards for the most able and using more varied teaching strategies;
- Provide dedicated support for high school students in terms of broader curriculum choice, career advice and university entrance;
- Build on the good start made in improving the provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) by embedding the practice in the middle and high school sections.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had made good progress on all of the recommendations of the last inspection.
- Progress in mathematics in the middle school and in science in the elementary school had improved.
- Assessment systems had improved and were being used to track the progress of all students but the data were not being used well enough by all teachers in their work.
- The school had made a good start in developing provision for students with special educational needs by improving leadership and putting some systems in place.
- The school had refined self-evaluation by introducing the expectation that all Grade 12 students were assessed using internationally recognised tests.
- The time allocated for Arabic as an additional language had increased and complied with the statutory requirements of the Ministry of Education.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language was good. Most students had good knowledge about the key Islamic principles, worship, and Seerah. Students' recitation and memorisation skills were not as well developed as was linking their knowledge to real life situations. In Arabic as a first language, students' speaking and listening skills were above expectations, especially in the elementary and upper end of the school. Younger students read with intonation and fluency and older students enjoyed independently reading selections of different genres. Writing for purpose remained the weakest of skills. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had good listening skills and could express basic ideas using a reasonable range of vocabulary. However, writing skills were less well developed. In English, students reached expected levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing from Kindergarten through to middle school. These skills provided students with the foundation and abilities they used in high school to conduct investigative research, write extended essays, and analyse literary genres. In mathematics, attainment in all phases was good. Kindergarten children could count and combine numbers with some accuracy. Elementary students could model using mathematics and could use efficient calculation methods. Older students were competent in a range of mathematical disciplines, recognising the place of mathematics in real life contexts. Attainment in science was acceptable in elementary classes and good in the other phases. Students acquired scientific knowledge which they applied to real life situations. In Kindergarten, children used simple investigative skills. Older students often developed hypotheses, conducted investigations, collected and recorded data, and evaluated findings. These skills of elementary students were less developed.

Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was good. Students made good progress in identifying the key aspects of Islamic principles and practice. Students also made good progress in their knowledge of Seerah but made slower progress in Qur'an memorisation and recitation. In Arabic as a first language, most students made clear gains in their language skills. However, more able students did not make similar progress in writing. In Arabic as an additional language, most students made better progress in developing their Arabic vocabulary and reading skills than in their extended writing. In English, Kindergarten children made outstanding progress in letter sounds, blending and emergent writing. Elementary and middle school students read fiction and non-fiction, and composed essays using correct punctuation and grammar. High school students made continued good progress in writing, and advanced their debating skills. In mathematics, progress was good across the school. Kindergarten children were increasingly aware of how they could represent groups of objects. Students could carry out procedures and explain why they worked. This applied with varying complexity as students moved through the school. Progress in science was good at all levels. Kindergarten children progressed steadily in developing a strong science vocabulary which enhanced content knowledge and communication skills. Students developed from conducting simple

explorations to formal investigations with real life applications. More advanced students made good progress in applying mathematical formulae.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good across school. Students were well motivated and were keen to participate in lessons. They were always willing to demonstrate their knowledge to their peers. When opportunities arose, most students collaborated effectively, supported peers and showed a good degree of maturity. They were able to make connections with previous learning, other subjects and aspects of the world beyond the school. A majority of students were able to think critically, formulating relevant questions and contributing thoughtfully to discussions. Students did not readily use ICT in their work because of the lack of opportunity. Their research and investigative skills were not consistently well developed. Often the tasks restricted students' opportunities to work independently, take risks or learn from their mistakes. When given the chance, students took responsibility for their learning, as in school research projects where they reflected critically on their work. However, these opportunities were not regular features of classwork.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was outstanding in Kindergarten and good in the rest of the school. Attitudes and behaviour were good and relationships between students and their teachers were respectful and considerate. Older elementary students responded to the needs of the younger ones in the 'Adopt a Class' programme. Students demonstrated good understanding of healthy living and used this knowledge to initiate a school Vitamin D campaign. Attendance rates were good but some younger students were not always punctual in arriving at school or lessons.

Students had good understanding of Islamic values, the importance of Islam in modern society in Dubai and they could explain many of Islamic values in different contexts. Students could identify and talk in depth about local traditions and heritage. They could discuss in detail local games and food. Students had a clear understanding and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. They had a general awareness of different cultures around the world and the other cultures in Dubai society.

Students' sense of community and environmental responsibility was good. All students appreciated the chance to be a class representative on the Student Council and to raise issues from their peers. However, further opportunities for older students to take responsibility were limited. Older students were enthusiastic

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about their 'Think Green' campaign and knew how they could make a positive impact on the environment. Kindergarten children celebrated 'Green Day' with an assembly which promoted a range of key environmental issues.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was good in all phases. Teachers knew their subjects well. Most taught skilfully as they implemented well-planned lessons. Teachers monitored the progress of students during lessons and provided support when needed. Lesson objectives were explained to students and typically reviewed at the end of lessons. Teachers built strong, positive relationships with students. Teachers used interactive whiteboards in most lessons but students' use of ICT in daily lessons was limited to the ICT suite or the Grade 7 project. Other resources for learning were effectively used. Teachers' questioning skills were good. In better lessons, teachers gave students sufficient thinking time following questions and encouraged responses from all students, not only those with raised hands. However, teaching was often insufficiently matched to the needs of all students. Small group learning was promoted in many lessons, but the tasks often did not require enquiry or critical thinking skills. Independent learning projects were uncommon. Investigations were usually teacher directed, although in better lessons teachers encouraged students to design investigations. Teaching in non-core subjects such as ICT and history was also good.

The quality of assessment was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in elementary, middle and high schools. Well-developed assessment systems were in place, but the systematic processes that indicated what students have learned were not used widely throughout the school. Teachers had good knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses, and often gave oral feedback to students, but written feedback was lacking in students' journals and written work. This was not sufficiently helpful for guiding students to improve their progress. The school had made a number of improvements since the last inspection, including a reliable student tracking system, which gave the school the ability to track and record progress accurately. Assessment information was detailed, reliable, and well analysed but it was not used widely enough to plan lessons. Self-assessment opportunities for students were infrequent.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum quality was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in other phases. The school's Islamic Education and Arabic curriculum was aligned with the Ministry of Education guidance. The curriculum in

English and mathematics was based on the US Common Core Standards and the science curriculum on the US National Science Standards. There was effective planning for progression within grades in all subjects. The kindergarten curriculum provided many opportunities for children learn through play and included daily practice in oral reading. Options in the high school included science and mathematics courses that prepared students for university studies, but elective courses were few. The curriculum was reviewed annually. Provision for students' personal development was included. Cross-curricular links were well planned. The curriculum included enrichment provision, including sports and journalism. However, the number of extra-curricular activities was limited. Community links included projects such as beach cleaning, recycling, and visits to an old people's home. Independent learning projects were included but not emphasised in routine lessons.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was good in the Kindergarten and Elementary, and acceptable in the middle and high school sections. At the lower end of the school, the curriculum was appropriately planned to meet the needs of most groups of students, especially the less able and those with special educational needs. In the middle and high school sections, some subjects, such as mathematics, were offered in classes based on attainment levels. However, across the school curricular modification was not always designed to challenge the more able students. In the upper grades, students only benefited from a limited "electives" choice and the science and business "options" did not fully meet the aspirations of all students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for the health, safety and security of students throughout the school were outstanding. The spacious and well-maintained premises provided a hygienic and secure environment in which students could study and develop. The clear evacuation procedures, relating both to fire and earthquake, were rehearsed regularly and monitored by Civil Defence. Maintenance records for all aspects of the premises were complete and current. There were regular health checks and the school had comprehensive records of all illnesses and incidents. Students benefited from thorough systems for monitoring catering on site and the promotion of healthy eating. Health professionals contributed to the design and delivery of programmes to help students make healthy lifestyle choices. Child protection procedures were documented and regular training was provided to ensure that all staff were fully aware of the school policy.

The quality of support was good in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle schools and acceptable in the high school. Relations were positive and cordial amongst all members of the school community which was conducive to learning. Attendance was well managed, and punctuality at the beginning of the day was markedly improved in the upper schools. A newly established department, with a qualified head for special

educational needs had extended the support offered to students. More robust systems had been introduced at the lower end of the school for the identification of, and in class and withdrawal support for student with special needs. However, this had not been embedded in the upper sections. Students in the high school, especially those in Grades 11 and 12, did not benefit from dedicated provisions for targeted career advice and university entrance processes.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding. School leadership provided a sustained drive for improvement and ensured that the school's values were widely shared. Leadership responsibilities were shared across senior and middle leaders who influenced practice. This resulted in the maintenance of the school's strengths and improvements in students' performance. Senior leaders were active in promoting aspects of school improvement. Middle leadership capacity had increased through important new appointments so that there was a good capacity to maintain improvement. There were efficient systems of communication amongst the broader leadership team, built on strong professional relationships which created a strong team spirit.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had well developed systems of self-evaluation that gave it a largely accurate picture of its strengths and areas for improvement. All aspects of school performance were evaluated in this process and led to curriculum development and well founded staff training. Monitoring of teaching quality was rigorous, especially for those new to the school and this was linked to continuing support. The monitoring processes were developed well and the staff concerned developed a shared understanding based on evidence. They used the outcomes to set priorities in departmental and whole school action plans. The recommendations of the previous report had been seriously considered and incorporated into the school's action plans.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were very supportive of the school and appreciated how it involved them in various ways including, consultation, keeping them up to date with their children's progress, and encouraging their involvement in school activities. The Council of Mothers provided a valuable link between home and school so that views could be represented and considered. Parents appreciated the way that the school listened to their views. There was regular communication between home and school through a variety of means that kept parents abreast of developments, such as the assessment of students' work. The school's involvement with the community took different forms. For example, the students supported local and world-wide charities, there were visits to areas of interest, student exchanges and student and staff involvement in KHDA events.

The quality of governance was good. Governance was well organised to support the school and guide its strategic direction. Parents made their views known to the board in a range of ways and the governors took their views into account when making their decisions. Through regular contacts and reports, the board had a good understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses and performance. Governance had consistently supported the school's improvement over time, ensured it met national requirements and provided finance for development.

The quality of management was good. Routines were well established so that students and staff knew what to do on a daily basis. The new management information system was used well to improve efficiency. Staff were well qualified. Selection and induction procedures were rigorous and a good range of training kept staff up to date. The premises provided for the full range of the school's curriculum. The site was spacious and well looked after. There was a media centre, library, specialist rooms and indoor and outdoor activity areas accessible to all students. There was a good range of resources, especially in Kindergarten and in ICT to enliven learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

A qualified special educational needs coordinator had been recruited and this appointment had a positive impact on the provisions and quality of support for students with SEN, particularly in the Kindergarten and elementary phase of the school. A newly designed identification process was being implemented which included a school SEN toolkit. This comprised of referral forms – including DSIB generated ones - which had been translated into Arabic for optimal usage by all teachers. The toolkit also included screening material, standardised assessments and a school based diagnostic test to aid with the identification process. For students identified as having specific needs, support was provided in either mainstream classes or withdrawal sessions. For a few, support was extended to both settings. Parents were becoming increasingly involved, especially in formulating Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their children. In the Kindergarten, the introduction of "Play Therapy" sessions for a few students was aimed at supporting their social and emotional well-being. These improved provisions were beginning to impact on students with SEN, who were making incremental progress, particularly at the lower end of the school. Modifications to the curriculum were at its very early stages, especially in the middle and high school where an increased number of teachers were not fully aware of effective strategies to support these students.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge and were able to use resources effectively, especially ICT. However, students were not using ICT sufficiently to present or enhance their learning. Most teachers, particularly in the elementary and the girls' sections, knew how students learn and were able to motivate them with effective questioning. Lessons did not focus entirely on the prescribed books and students were increasingly exposed to "exterior" selections to enrich their experiences. However, choice was limited and many lessons were over-directed by teachers. In all phases, teaching and curriculum coverage emphasised students' speaking and reading skills, but independent writing tasks remained a developing feature. In Grades 11 and 12, for both boys and girls, teachers were providing more opportunities for students to improve their critical thinking and higher order skills. However, in a minority of lessons when tasks were completed in groups, oral and written questions did not sufficiently encourage students to compare, deduce, analyse or synthesise. In effective lessons, teachers designed their lesson objectives around what the students "will know", "understand" and "do". They often referred to these in the assessments during the lessons. However, in a minority of lessons across the phases, teachers did not challenge students enough, especially the more able. Tasks were short and often done in groups. The school's curriculum was based on the Ministry of Education standards. However, there were not enough appropriate opportunities for students to develop their writing skills further.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received		Number	Percentage
Parents	This year	268	27%
	Last year	273	29%
Teachers		81	72%
Students		270	97%

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Just over a quarter of parents responded to the survey. Almost three-quarters of the teachers and almost all of the students responded. Parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school and thought that their children's academic progress was good, particularly in Islamic Education and English. There were a few concerns about progress in Arabic and about too much homework being set. Most thought that the quality of teaching was good. Parents, teachers, and students agreed that the school was a safe environment where students were looked after and that any bullying was dealt with well. Parents and students agreed that there was a good understanding of the UAE culture and Islamic values. They also believed that the school provided good support for students learning with technology. Parents and teachers agreed that the school was led well and teachers felt that they played a meaningful part in reviewing the curriculum.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

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How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
inspection@khda.gov.ae

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