



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



New School Inspection Report

Al Basma British School

Academic Year 2014 – 2015

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Al Basma British School

Inspection Date	20 – 23 April, 2015
School ID#	245
Licensed Curriculum	English National Curriculum
Number of Students	1059
Age Range	3 years to 13 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Susan Faragher
School Address	Al Bahia, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0) 2 562 3454
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School Website	Albasmaschool.ae
Date of opening	August 2014

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 rapid progress in establishing a new school with a positive ethos
- the progress made by students in core subjects from low starting points
- the positive behaviour of the vast majority of students
- the new building with its attractive environment is conducive to learning
- effective self-evaluation that accurately reflects the priorities for improvement
- the priority given to improving teaching and learning through effective professional development and support for middle leadership.

The main areas for improvement are:

- challenge for all students, particularly the most able
- increase attendance and further improve punctuality
- the deployment of teaching assistants and their effectiveness and impact on learning
- opportunities for independent learning and choice in the Foundation Stage and Kindergarten
- the support and resources for students with special educational needs
- governors' understanding of their role in improving the school
- the continued development of middle leaders.

Introduction

The school was evaluated by 4 inspectors. They observed 69 lessons, conducted several meetings with senior staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff, students and parents. They analysed progress data, scrutinized students' work across the school, analysed the 281 responses to the parents' questionnaire and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and vice-principal were involved throughout the inspection process and conducted 4 joint observations of lessons.

Description of the School

Al Basma British School opened in August 2014 in Al Bahia, Abu Dhabi; it is a new school that has not been previously inspected. The school's vision is 'we aspire to be a global community of thinkers, creators, innovators and leaders who will have a positive impact on the world of tomorrow. To achieve the vision we will inspire our students to thrive as global citizens within a happy, positive and respectful learning environment'. The school follows the National Curriculum for England.

The school currently has students up to Grade 7 and plans to introduce Grade 8 next year. The student population is 1059; 55% are boys, 59% are of Arabic heritage and 87% are Muslim. There are a number of nationalities, the main ones are: 30% Emirati, 15% Pakistani, 10% Indian, 8% Egyptian, 3% British 2% from the USA. There are 86 children, in Foundation Stage 1 (FS), who will move to their own purpose built nursery in September 2015. In Kindergarten (KG) there are 364 children, in grades 1-5 there are 534 students, and in grades 6 and 7 there are 75.

The school has identified 23 students with special educational needs (SEN) including 6 with specific learning difficulties, 8 with moderate learning difficulties, 6 with behavioural issues and 3 with speech and language difficulties; 17 students are identified as being gifted and talented (G&T). The school is very over-subscribed, and admission is based on tests from Grade 1 onwards; KG children are invited to spend some time in school.

The principal took up her post in August 2014. The leadership team comprises the principal, the primary vice-principal who was appointed in January, the secondary vice-principal who had been in post only a few days at the time of the inspection, and a senior teacher responsible for supporting the development of teaching. Next year the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) will be part of the leadership team when she becomes full time in the role.

The school has 71 teachers; 15 teachers are yet to be approved by ADEC. The fees range from AED 18,000 for KG to AED 35,000 for G7, which is in the high to premium category.

The Effectiveness of the School

Al Basma British School is satisfactory and improving. This is a new school at the start of its journey; it has already achieved a great deal in two terms. This is due to the shared commitment of all staff to improvement and leaders' clear understanding of best International expectations, systems and procedures. A harmonious and supportive school community has been quickly established.

Attainment throughout the school in most subjects is around international age-related standards. Students make gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding and progress is satisfactory and improving. This is due to the improving quality of teaching, opportunities to develop 21st-century skills, and the good development of both personal aspects and the quality of care and support students receive.

The new building provides a good quality, safe environment, which is conducive to learning. Resources are judged to be satisfactory; there are limited resources in the classroom to support active learning in the classroom and for students with special educational needs.

Students' attainment & progress

The attainment and progress of students is satisfactory and improving. The progress students make from relatively low starting points is never less than satisfactory across all subjects. Attainment is satisfactory in Arabic, Islamic education and information and communications technology (ICT). It is satisfactory and improving in social studies, English and mathematics. In science, it is below international standards. Students of all ages are making satisfactory and improving progress in developing 21st century skills because of the emphasis placed on the development of these skills. Students' collaborative and independent working skills are well developed; higher order and creative thinking skills are less well developed.

Almost all children enter FS1 speaking English as an additional language (EAL). Priority is rightly given to personal development and communication skills through language and literacy. Consequently, most children make good progress in these areas and are increasingly able to access other areas of the curriculum. Teacher's assessment procedures are thorough and provide detailed progress information for each child. Most are working broadly in line with international age-related expectations.

In Islamic education, attainment is in line with expectations for schools following the same curriculum. For example, in KG up to Grade 2, students memorise short Qur’anic verses (surahs), and know the 5 pillars of Islam. By the time they reach Grade 7, students are aware of Islamic values and show an understanding of how to apply these to their daily lives. What they learn is reflected in their good behaviour. Reading the Holy Qur’an using the correct recitation rules is weaker. In Arabic, students are making satisfactory and improving progress and their attainment is similar to schools following the same curriculum. Non-native Arabic speakers can read statements and understand the meaning of different vocabulary and some can form sentences in Arabic to use in daily life. Native Arabic speakers’ listening and reading skills are better than their speaking and writing skills. In social studies, students have an age-appropriate understanding of the history and geography of the region.

Almost all students learn English as an additional language. Their attainment and progress is satisfactory and improving. English literacy, phonic and communication skills have developed significantly for most students from low starting points over a short period of time, particularly in the early years. Listening skills are well developed; this has been an appropriate focus for the school in supporting English as an additional language learners. Reading and writing skills show progress across the school due to the implementation of a new writing programme in Grades 1-2. There is no reading scheme in grades 3-5 which hinders development. Teachers use library books to ensure regular reading opportunities. Skills in the use of ICT are not well developed in the higher grades.

In mathematics, children in FS1 have a good grasp of the concept of number so that by KG2 they understand number bonds to at least 10 and the more able can double numbers. By the end of primary, students have good mental agility, knowledge of number bonds and multiplication facts and use these to calculate and solve number problems. In grades 6 and 7, attainment in both mathematics and science is inconsistent due to gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding and limited opportunities to carry out investigative work. Science across the school now has strong emphasis on investigative work and progress is beginning to improve.

Students’ personal development

Students’ personal development is good. Students show high levels of respect for one another and their teachers and display a good sense of right and wrong. This is largely due to the effective modelling by teachers and a whole school emphasis on respect.

All students appear to enjoy school and are keen and enthusiastic learners. Confidence is growing, with a strong focus on developing 21st-century skills. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is good and has a positive impact on learning. Leadership roles are a strong feature in classrooms and in the school community, for example, as members of the school council and the eco team. The views of these groups are listened to and acted upon.

Students show respect and understanding for the values of the UAE and sing the national anthem with enthusiasm. They show an understanding of the diversity of UAE society and understand its heritage. In lessons, the awareness of different cultural backgrounds is not always emphasized. The school reinforces healthy lifestyles through, for example, the lunchbox challenge, the 'Fit for Schools' initiative and numerous sporting activities. The majority of students appear to put their understanding into practice.

Attendance at 92% is average. The school has put strategies in place for improving attendance and recognise the need to work with parents to emphasise the link between attendance and academic achievement.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and most have a good understanding of how children learn most effectively. The quality of teaching across the school is improving due to the effectiveness of professional development, sharing of good practice and the determination to improve. Relationships in almost all classrooms are excellent. Teachers respect and care for their students and provide a safe, secure learning environment. Students in turn have positive attitudes to learning.

Teachers in KG prioritise practical and multisensory activities using the available space and resources. Teachers across the school are developing a range of strategies to use the available resources. Students listen and work well together, independently, or in small groups. A few teachers are sometimes overly directive and do not allow students to take ownership of their own learning. Teachers' questioning skills are improving, but do not sufficiently promote higher order, critical and creative thinking. Students have access to technology in the IT rooms but not in classrooms, other than interactive whiteboards. As a result, they do not have sufficient opportunity to carry out independent research.

Almost all teachers use the available assessment data to plan for a range of abilities. This does not always consistently translate into what actually happens in lessons. Some students are not effectively challenged, particularly the most able, in some lessons. There are no teaching assistants to provide additional support for learning after KG1. Consequently, learning is not personalised for students

with SEN and they do not make better than satisfactory progress. Each class in FS1 and KG1 has a helper; these helpers lack experience and do not have sufficient impact on learning. Some of them do not have a good command of English, which does not help the children who speak EAL.

Students are increasingly involved in competently assessing their own work and that of their peers. They are also improving their ability to identify next steps in learning and use their target sheets and feedback from teachers to identify these areas. Assessment of learning is a strong feature in many lessons especially in revisiting objectives and success criteria to check individual progress.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The implementation of the curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Almost all students are motivated to learn because the curriculum is increasingly broad, balanced and relevant. The English National Curriculum has been recently updated and teachers have come to terms with the new requirements quickly. It is still a work in progress and needs to be embedded, especially in how it is adapted and modified to meet the needs of all students. The non-core subjects are at an earlier stage of development. Subject leaders have devised their own assessment methodology to identify students who are 'emerging', 'working towards', 'working at' and 'working above' the expected levels, which is useful in measuring the progress of individuals.

English lessons use a range of strategies that enable students to effectively access the curriculum adequately. In KG, children are immersed in the English language with teachers taking every opportunity to introduce them to new vocabulary and engage them in frequent speaking and listening activities.

A wide range of extracurricular activities contributes to students' development of 21st century skills, teamwork, independence, business and leadership skills. The school links well with a variety of other agencies and organisations and arranges visits and visitors to enhance and extend learning. Examples include the 'F1 project', links with schools in the UK and a trip to NASA in the USA.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students are good. The school has a very positive ethos that ensures a sense of belonging; this is a key feature of the leadership style, which permeates the school. Assemblies consistently reinforce the sense of community, where students and teachers feel valued. Students benefit from high levels of care from all adults in the school. Students say they feel safe and that there is no bullying. There is a whole school approach to the

improvement in student behaviour and positive attitudes, which is followed by all staff. The reward system contributes strongly to the management of behaviour.

There is a clear child protection policy in place. All adults have been trained and are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection and safeguarding procedures. Students know who to approach if they face any difficulty. Leaders confirm that all adults have been suitably checked and meet ADEC requirements. The clinic is fit for purpose, the nurses are fully qualified and medicines are stored securely. The record keeping and understanding of medical histories is limited.

The school has effective systems to track academic progress. Students with SEN do not always receive the support they need because there are few additional resources, no teaching assistants after KG1 and the SEN coordinator is currently only part time.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The quality of the school's building and premises are good. The new purpose-built school is conducive to learning as classrooms are clean, spacious and with suitable lighting and ventilation. Classrooms and corridors have attractive displays that celebrate student's work. The facilities for specialist subjects are good and make a significant contribution to the enjoyment of learning. Some outside play areas are not yet shaded, but the school has plans to improve this. In KG, the building has been designed with no immediate flow to outside areas, so that children have to be taken outside for structured activities. This is not conducive to independent learning.

All equipment is regularly checked and regular evacuation practices are recorded. Security is rigorous.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are satisfactory in supporting the school's aims. Teachers are adequate in number, appropriately qualified and demonstrate dedication to the school and students. Few teachers are supported by additional adults in lessons which reduces the support students receive.

All classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards, which are used well by most teachers and sometimes students. The school has plenty of ICT resources in specialist rooms and a robotics lab; this provides engaging and enjoyable experiences for students in design technology and the 'F1 project.' The library is an inviting space, but has a limited number of books, particularly Arabic fiction. The areas for the storage, preparation and consumption of food are hygienic and sufficient. The schools procedures to ensure safe transport are appropriate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The effective leadership of the principal and vice-principal ensure the school runs calmly and smoothly and that students make academic progress. There has been rapid progress in establishing effective policies and procedures. There is a real ethos of improvement throughout the school, where teachers are effective in taking ownership of their own development. The self-evaluation form (SEF) is detailed and judgements are realistic and suitably evidenced. The school development plan (SDP) clearly identifies the key objectives for development and appropriately maps responsibilities, actions, timescale and resources.

Professional development has, by necessity, had a strong whole school focus so far. This has meant that some new teachers have not yet had sufficient support. Priority has been given to improving teaching, learning and assessment and this is further reinforced by staff collaboration and action planning in teams to improve their understanding. The primary vice-principal and a senior teacher have been instrumental in monitoring and improving teaching and learning. Senior leaders have identified potential middle leaders and are supporting them and providing middle management professional development. They are still developing and need continued support.

A governing body has been established; its members currently have a limited understanding of their role. The principal keeps them informed and guides them well. Parents recognize the huge improvements that have been made since the beginning of the year and have been kept well informed, particularly through the dedicated client relationship manager (CRM) whose sole responsibility it is to communicate with parents.

Capacity for further development

The leadership team with the support of the whole staff, has laid solid foundations. They are passionate about learning and 'strive to become the best school in Abu Dhabi.' The leadership team understands the school's priorities and appropriate policies, procedures and plans are in place. The school has its own 'capacity to improve' document, which is organic and updated when feedback is received from any stakeholder. It rightly prioritises improving teaching and learning, but also includes safety and security, parent and student voice and management. The senior leadership team is well-qualified and experienced and demonstrate good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise standards and progress, particularly in science, by:
 - i. increasing the range of teaching strategies, including teachers' questioning to ensure that students develop critical thinking skills
 - ii. continuing to improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is good or better
 - iii. using data more effectively in lesson planning in order to create greater challenge in lessons and homework, for all students, but particularly the more able.

2. Improve the range and quality of resources to support student success in the curriculum by:
 - i. creating more opportunities for independent learning and choice in the KG
 - ii. improving the support and resources for students with special educational needs
 - iii. improving the effectiveness and impact of teaching assistants on learning.

3. Improve the impact of leadership by:
 - i. developing the role of middle leaders so they are able to take full responsibility for the leadership and management of their areas
 - ii. ensuring the governing body understands its key role in holding senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and students' academic progress

4. Increase attendance and further improve punctuality by ensuring parents understand the link between attendance and academic achievement.

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								