

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Ittihad Private School -Al Mamzar

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Ittihad Private School - Al Mamzar

Location	Al Mamzar
Type of school	Private
Website	NA
Telephone	04-2966314
Address	PO Box 5126, Dubai
Principal	Mrs. Mona Al Jassmi
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,736
Number of Emirati students	1,447 (83%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 21st November 2011 to Thursday 24th November 2011

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The context of the school

Al Ittihad Private School is situated in Al Mamzar. It is one of four branch schools that comprise the Al Arabia group of schools. The school provides education to both girls and boys between the ages of three and 18 years. Almost all students were Emirati. There were 1,776 students on roll at the time of the inspection.

The school has a US curriculum based on Connecticut standards. Students undertake US assessments, including the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

A senior management team led 175 teachers who were supported by 18 teaching assistants in Kindergarten. All teachers had teaching qualifications and they were deployed appropriately across the range of grades and subjects. Several new teachers had taken up posts in the elementary school this year. The school had also employed a co-ordinator for students with special educational needs. A small number of students had been identified as requiring specialist support.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Al Ittihad Private School provided an acceptable education for its students. It had several good features. It had developed its mission and vision since the last inspection to be a more inclusive school and aimed to ensure that all students learned effectively. A highly committed and diligent senior leadership team had developed a number of key strategies to secure ongoing improvement. They sought to ensure that teachers understood the need for improved teaching strategies and it was evident that teachers were beginning to implement new methods. Improvements had been made in the performance of high school students in Islamic Education, English and science. However, standards in Arabic as a first language had not been so well developed.

Most students displayed positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. There were mature relationships between most students and their teachers. A detailed review of the curriculum had taken place. However, there remained only limited enrichment opportunities available for high- and low-

achieving students. The school gathered large amounts of data about students' progress, but teachers used these too inconsistently to know the specific needs of students and implement appropriate teaching strategies. The school had developed detailed action plans and a comprehensive self-evaluation document. However, the judgments made as part of this process were not all accurate enough. Nevertheless, the school had a good capacity to continue its improvements across the key aspects of its work.

Key strengths

- Students' progress has improved in Islamic Education, English and science in high school;
- Students had good Islamic values, civic understanding and environmental awareness;
- There was more consistently good teaching and learning in the high school;
- The arrangements for the health and safety for students were well developed;
- A committed and experienced senior leadership team had succeeded in creating the conditions necessary for teaching to improve further.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress in Arabic, English, mathematics and science consistently across the school;
- Ensure that teaching strategies consistently provide for effective learning in Kindergarten, and the elementary and middle phases;
- Expand the levels of challenge within the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners, especially those with special educational needs;
- Through accurate self-evaluation, enable middle managers to understand the link between teaching practice and improved students' outcomes;
- Put procedures in place to facilitate greater stakeholder access and the school's accountability to governors.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was good across each phase. Students applied their learning to their own personal development and displayed good recitation and memorisation skills. They described the key elements of being a good Muslim in Dubai today and they demonstrated respect for each other in their knowledge and understanding. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was good in primary but acceptable in middle and high schools. Students' skills in speaking and writing were age-appropriate.

However, most used colloquial Arabic terminology excessively when speaking and did not have well-developed understanding of standard Arabic in order to communicate effectively. Writing for different purposes was underdeveloped and students required significant support in order to complete writing tasks. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was mostly acceptable. Students demonstrated appropriate knowledge and understanding of key speaking, reading, writing and problem-solving skills. High school students' English skills were better than this and they debated, wrote for a range of purposes and used a variety of literary techniques well. In mathematics and science, students' skills were developed in line with syllabus expectations but they did not solve problems independently enough, construct hypotheses and explore them thoroughly.

Progress was good in Islamic Education except in high school where it was outstanding. Here students demonstrated high rates of improvement over time in their understanding of the meaning of Islam in their lives. Progress in Arabic was in line with attainment except in high school where progress was good. Here, students were able to use different grammatical devices to write more independently. Progress in English and science in the high school was good because students worked more independently more often than in other phases, using their knowledge well to write imaginatively and explore outcomes in experimentation. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress overall. Their specific needs were not known to all teachers and, as a result, the expectations of the students were not always realistic enough.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students demonstrated good attitudes and behaviour in Kindergarten, and elementary and high schools; in middle school, these were acceptable. Students built a good relationship with their teachers and their peers, which resulted in raising their self-confidence and creating a supportive environment. Middle school students lacked initiative but they enjoyed their work and they were happy to be involved in their activities. Healthy eating was well established amongst the students. Attendance levels were good, though a few students were not punctual in arriving to school in the morning or to a minority of lessons. Understanding of Islam and the appreciation of local traditions and culture were outstanding in high school and good in middle, elementary and Kindergarten. Older students knew the importance of Islam in UAE heritage and of a Muslim's life. They had very rich knowledge about UAE culture as well as being open to the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. They had a significant role in the school environment. Students in the other phases were very proud of their identity and they could explain the impact of Islam on their lives. Although students had a very high sense of loyalty and national culture was thoroughly celebrated across the school, there were inconsistencies in the capacity of some students to explain this well. Students' economic and environmental understanding was good throughout the school. The student council facilitated communication with administration and helped organise events. Younger students had a basic understanding of Dubai's economy and, by the time they entered high school, most students understood its main strengths and challenges. Students of all ages kept the building clean and tidy, and used the school's recycling facilities well.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle phases and was good in the high school. Most teachers had good subject knowledge and well-written planning documents. Learning objectives were stated in most lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers checked that students understood learning objectives and outcomes. Effective teaching in classes incorporated active learning and real-world activities for a purpose. In the high school, teachers tended to use open questioning to draw out students' understanding, not just knowledge, and to discuss their learning. This encouraged critical thinking and independent learning. In the very best lessons, the learning needs of all students were met; however this was not consistently the case in all subjects and across all phases. There was not always a strong focus on meeting the needs of all learners as a critical purpose for teaching. The use of critical thinking and enquiry was not a feature of lessons. Challenge and differentiation were not seen in a sufficient number of lessons.

Learning in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle phases was acceptable and good in the high school. In the most effective lessons and especially in the high school, students took responsibility for their own learning such as their own topic choice and presentations. They showed depth and breadth in their understanding using enquiry and research rather than mere fact gathering. They could talk about their own strengths and weaknesses as learners. Across all phases, in the most effective learning settings, students were active, engaged and interested. There was a high level of collaboration and shared understanding amongst learners. In a few lessons and a few subjects, there was an appropriate application of understanding in other contexts. However, in many lessons, learning tended to be based on curriculum content and the textbook rather than skills-based development, with limited opportunities to apply understanding to the real world. Research, enquiry and critical thinking were not routinely incorporated in all lessons especially in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle phases.

Assessment was acceptable at all phases. The school used a range of assessments, including some standardised assessments, diagnostic tests and summative evaluations. Assessment data was analysed to identify students meeting or exceeding standards, but did not always identify the full range of attainment. Almost all teachers could identify stronger and weaker students well, but only some had identified the next steps for each student. Most teachers used praise well to encourage performance. A majority of teachers provided opportunities for students to talk about their learning at the end of lessons. A few provided opportunities for students to give each other feedback against clear criteria and to record suitable points for improvement. Most teachers had begun to increase their use of assessment to inform their teaching. Most concentrated on the middle range of each class, and so did not use assessment information skilfully enough to identify and provide sufficient levels of challenge for the most able, or to provide modifications that supported the less able.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable. Subject plans had been reviewed to ensure students developed essential skills as well as acquired knowledge. This work, however, was at the early stages of development and had not yet been consistently implemented in all grades. Teachers and students were aware that people learn in different ways and some lessons took account of this. The needs of students with different abilities, however, had not been adequately addressed. English skills were well developed in most lessons but chosen topics did not always interest and motivate boys in the middle grades. There had been improvements in enrichment activities in Islamic Education, but not in Arabic. Students were able to study art, music and physical education, but were not able to study any additional foreign languages. There were invaluable opportunities for students to learn beyond lessons such as work experience, trips abroad and the vegetable garden.

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

Arrangements for health, safety and security in almost all parts of the school were good. The premises were well-maintained and provided a safe environment for students to develop. Laboratories were well-equipped with ample protective gear and chemicals were safely kept in locked cupboards. Accidents and injuries were uncommon as there was a good supervision system in place. Medicines and student health records were managed effectively. Safety checks and safety routines such as fire drills were carried out regularly and effectively, and records of these were well-kept. Transport arrangements were good, as school had appointed professional personnel to monitor students' arrivals and departures and to spot potential problems. The school effectively promoted a healthy life-style with considerable success as most students were aware of the significance of healthy living. Although almost all staff dealt sensitively with students' needs and concerns, there was, however, an inconsistent understanding amongst staff and students of child protection procedures.

The quality of support for students was acceptable overall. Good features included respectful and caring staff-student relationships where all showed care and concern for the needs of others. Behaviour management strategies were understood and implemented well by most of the staff, and students had opportunities to contribute their views. Parents received information about how staff dealt with any instances of misbehaviour and, when appropriate, were involved in all discussions. The career guidance counsellors provided support and guidance for senior students on future education and career options. Students' concerns were dealt with sympathetically and in confidence by counsellors. Although counsellors provided families, teachers and students with advice regarding students who had difficulties with learning, the quality of support for students with special educational needs was still only beginning to develop. A teacher with specialist expertise had been recently appointed to advise teachers and the school had made a start in identifying students with any special need. However, there were no robust early intervention strategies in place to address students' specific learning needs and no individual education plans to help them make better progress. Appropriate steps were taken to monitor students' attendance and punctuality. Procedures were fully understood by everyone in school and parents supported the school in this matter.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

Leadership was good overall. Senior leaders had re-designed the vision and mission for the school, and distributed these to all stakeholders. They brought great enthusiasm and energy to their work, and cared deeply for the progress of the students and the effective promotion of the school in the community. Clear responsibilities were delegated across the leaders in the subjects and phases. Leaders had been effective in raising standards in the high school in Islamic Education, English and science, and in some grades in other sections of the school. Leaders had successfully constructed a new culture of student-led learning in a few areas of the school and were strongly committed to the expansion of this new thinking across all other phases and subjects.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Detailed self-evaluation and action plan documentation had been compiled. Senior leaders had ensured that all teaching staff and subject leaders had been involved. However, the interpretation of data and other evidence in order to reach individual judgments was inconsistent. Some data did not support the school's views in a number of key areas. Teacher appraisal had improved but the proportion of the teaching staff judged by senior leaders to have successfully improved their practice was inaccurate. The school had addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection but there was still considerable work to do in a few areas for impact to be evident.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. The school had a loyal and long-serving group of parents who placed great trust in its work. Parents reported high satisfaction levels with communication, access, quality of reporting and overall achievement levels for their children. An active Mothers' Committee was in place and worked with the Islamic Education and physical education departments in particular to support their children's progress. Strong links with the community were in place supporting purposeful networks with local businesses, charities and other educational institutions. International field trips were in place and this work had contributed to improved outcomes for students.

Governance was acceptable. Governors ensured compliance with regulations and had supported work developing the school vision. Annual performance management procedures were in place for all staff. There was a weak link, however, between the governors and the stakeholders, particularly the parents. With the exception of the on-going development of the campus, the governors had not been successful in involving parents in developing a new direction for the school. While parents' views were welcomed, it was not standard practice for governors to communicate directly with parents and provide appropriate opportunities for involvement in decision-making.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The day-to-day life of the school was managed efficiently although, in a few classes, there had been too many substitute teachers. All staff were suitably qualified and a programme of professional development was in place. The facilities and resources were sufficient to support the curriculum and the library was well stocked. Laboratory equipment was appropriately maintained. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) had improved. However, students' use of these resources to support their learning was underdeveloped.

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	222	17%
	Last year	217	17%
Teachers	65		52%
Students	215		88%

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

More than a few parents responded to the survey, about the same as last year. They were broadly supportive of the school and its leaders. Most indicated that their children were making good progress in the key subjects and were safe and cared for while at school. Most believed that the school was well led, but a few disagreed. Although most parents found reports regular and informative, only about a third of students found the reports useful. About half of the teachers responded to the survey. They were also broadly supportive of the school and its leaders, but only about half indicated that they participated in decision-making. Most senior students responded to the survey. A few disagreed that they were making good progress in Arabic as a first language and mathematics. More than a few senior students did not agree that the behaviour of most students was good, an opinion shared by a few parents and teachers. About a quarter of students disagreed that most of their peers appreciated all the different nationalities and cultures in Dubai; a similar proportion of teachers held this view. Although a majority of senior students indicated that they enjoyed lessons, about a quarter did not. More than half of the senior students believed that leaders did not listen to their opinions about the school. More than a few students indicated that they were not involved in improving the school and a few parents and teachers held the same view. Overall, most parents were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school, but a few parents, teachers and senior students expressed dissatisfaction.

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.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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