

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Ittihad Private School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Ittihad Private school

Location	Al Mamzar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ittihadschools.com
Telephone	04 296 6314
Address	P O Box 5126, Dubai
Principal	Mrs Amna Mohamad Rafi
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten-High School
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1773
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1458
Date of the inspection	3rd to 6th February 2014

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014.....	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	14
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	14
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next?	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

Al Ittihad Private School is situated in Al Mamzar and caters for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) through to Grade 12. The school had 1773 students on roll. Classes were of mixed gender up to Grade 4; they were separated from Grade 5 onwards. Approximately 80 per cent of the students were Emirati; other students were mainly from Arab countries.

Since the last inspection, the school had been accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). All students studied Arabic as a first language whether it was their first language or not. The school followed a US curriculum using the Common Core curriculum standards. Most High School students chose to take external examinations such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students from Grade 5 and above were required to take the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in the current academic year.

The staff included 145 full-time teachers, supported by 19 classroom assistants, and a large administration and ancillary support team. Almost all teachers held a first degree, and approximately a third held a recognised teaching qualification. Approximately ten per cent of teachers were new to the school this year.

Eighteen students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN).

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The students' good personal and social development throughout the school;
- Good teaching, learning and assessment in the High School phase;
- The good curriculum quality in all phases;
- The school's effectiveness in protecting and supporting students;
- The good partnership with parents and the community.

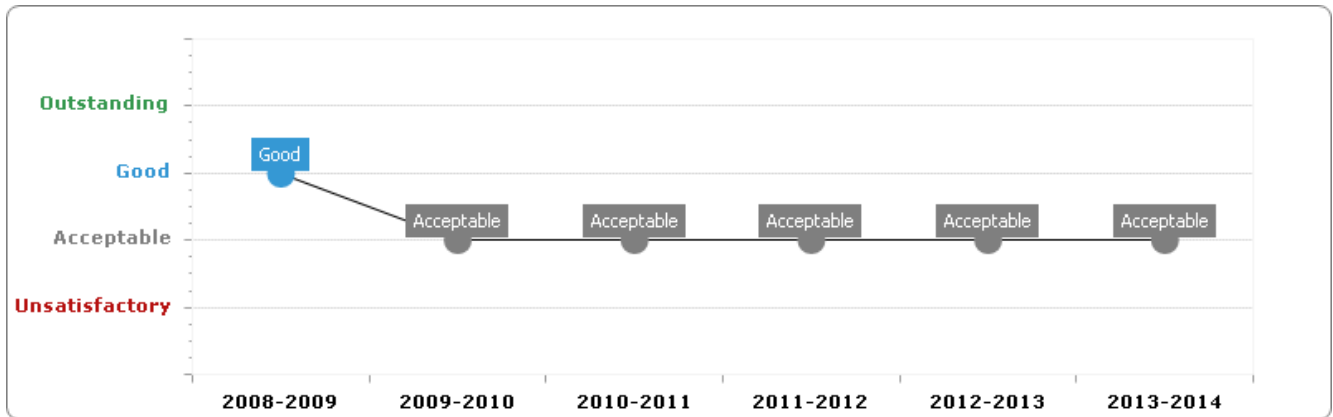
Recommendations

- Raise students' progress in key subjects by improving the quality of teaching and learning, and providing the appropriate level of challenge for all groups of students.
- Improve feedback to students so they better understand how to improve their own learning.
- Evaluate teaching and students' outcomes more accurately in order to inform improvement priorities more effectively.
- 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.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had sustained its effectiveness in almost all areas and had raised its quality from acceptable to good in several respects.
- The self-evaluation process had become more widely distributed among the school's middle leaders.
- A significant curriculum review process had ensured progression of skills across all phases and within subjects.
- Good arrangements were in place to ensure students' health, safety and security in and around the school.

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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was good in Islamic Education and Arabic a second language. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was good in Elementary, but acceptable elsewhere. In English and mathematics, attainment was good in Kindergarten and the High School, and acceptable in Elementary and Middle. Attainment in science was acceptable, except in the High School where it was good. In Islamic Education, the majority of students had a well-developed knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and could explain meaning of Qur'anic verses they studied. Students' understanding of Islamic concepts was appropriate. The majority of Elementary students displayed good knowledge and skills in Arabic as a first language. Throughout the school, a majority of students were confident to speak and express their ideas clearly. In the Middle and High School phases, most students displayed acceptable language skills, including speaking standard Arabic. The majority of students learning Arabic as an additional language demonstrated good listening, speaking and reading skills. In English, students in Kindergarten attained well for their age as they practised their skills in all subjects and in normal daily routines. Most students in Elementary and Middle were attaining at expected standards in all aspects of English. Attainment improved further in the High School as students became confident and articulate speakers, readers and writers. In mathematics, children in the Kindergarten were confident in using their counting and number recognition skills in real-life contexts. Elementary students could identify and describe shapes using technical language. High School students demonstrated an ability to think critically when solving problems. In science, students had age-appropriate knowledge, except in the High School where knowledge was not underpinned by sound understanding of concepts.

Students' progress mirror their attainment, except for High School Arabic as a first language and Elementary mathematics where progress was good. The majority of students made good progress enhancing their knowledge and application of the recitation skills and in understanding key Islamic concepts. In Arabic as a first language, progress in speaking was steady, particularly in the Elementary phase. Students continued to develop their knowledge of grammar and the use of relevant vocabularies in the middle and upper grades. Most students in the Middle phase were making acceptable progress in lessons and over time. The slowest progress was observed in writing both in Middle and High School phases. Progress in English was good in the Kindergarten because of the immersion of students in a rich language environment. Students' progress in Elementary and Middle phases was steady and created strong foundations for the more rapid development of all English skills in the High School. Kindergarten children improved their mathematical skills in everyday classroom routines and Elementary students grasped mathematical concepts well. At the upper end of the High School, students' ability to think critically about problems enabled them to make good progress. In Kindergarten and early Elementary science, students rarely found things out for themselves and had little opportunity to develop enquiry skills. By Grade 5, students had good understanding of the processes of

scientific enquiry. Older students did not develop these skills as effectively although they made better progress in understanding of concepts.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable in most phases; they were good in the High School. Most students had positive attitudes and were enthusiastic learners. When given the opportunity, as in a majority of High School lessons, students enthusiastically collaborated, participated fully and confidently presented and explained work. In the majority of lessons in other phases, there was a lack of opportunity for students to show independent learning skills and work collaboratively. In Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 3, students had little opportunity to develop skills of enquiry. In most English lessons, critical thinking was used effectively to challenge students but, elsewhere in the school in a majority of lessons, critical thinking was often limited by broadening knowledge rather than deepening understanding. Students were insufficiently challenged to identify links with the real world to think analytically or given time to research within lessons.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

All aspects of students' personal and social development were good, although Elementary students had outstanding understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness. In lessons and around the school, most students were well behaved and responded well to comments from their teachers. Students were respectful to their friends and visitors, and had good relationship with their teachers and staff. Most students were fit and adopted healthy life styles although, occasionally, younger students made unhealthy food choices. Attendance was acceptable in the most recent term; a few students arrived late to the morning assembly. Students' knowledge of the Emirati culture, traditions and history was sound. Students in the elementary had above expected knowledge of other cultures. Older students' global awareness and knowledge of their non-Emirati friends and their cultures were adequate. Across the school students were well aware of their civic responsibility towards their school and community and were keen to have a more active role; they participated well in school-organised initiatives such as donation collection. Children in Kindergarten completed their work in an organised fashion, and older students demonstrated a good work ethic; girls were particularly articulate in presenting and sharing their work and ideas. Students' understanding of environmental issues was appropriate; students could explain in detail the impact of pollution on the ozone layer.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching and assessment were good in the High School and acceptable elsewhere. Most teachers in all subjects had good subject knowledge and the majority used well-established routines and effective strategies to manage students' behaviour. In lower grades, a substantial minority of teachers had less secure understanding of how to organise active independent learning. In all phases, a minority of teachers did not effectively modify lesson plans to meet individual learning needs. Good or better teaching in most subject areas occurred in all phases but was more frequently seen in the High School where lessons expectations were high and there was effective planning, good classroom control, good pace and a range of learning activities. In a substantial minority of lessons, particularly with younger students, the level of challenge and expectation was insufficient and teaching was over-directed. Insufficient opportunities were provided for students to participate in the learning either independently or in groups. In a majority of lessons, teachers identified critical thinking opportunities but these often lacked challenge and too little time was allowed for reflection by students.

Common assessment processes operated throughout the school to record the attainment of students and track their progress, including that of students with special educational needs. Strengths and weaknesses of students were identified, targets set for improvement and data used to inform to curriculum planning. However, assessment grades tended to be over-generous compared with those from the international tests taken by most students. Teachers produced differentiated worksheets, but a majority did not plan class teaching which appropriately challenged all groups of students. In most High School lessons and in a majority in other phases, teachers were effective at questioning to test understanding. In a substantial minority of lessons, teachers asked closed questions, giving too little time for thinking. Most teachers marked work regularly but few included guidance on how to improve. Students assessed their own or other students' work; however, they were rarely challenged to suggest how to improve. Parents received regular detailed reports but not guidance on how to help students improve.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good. A significant curriculum review process had ensured the progression of skills across all phases and within subjects. The curriculum had breadth and balance offering art, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT) as part of the regular schedule. There were frequent cross-curricular links between mathematics, science, English, ICT and Arabic, especially in the Kindergarten. However, opportunities to develop independent learning, research and critical thinking skills were underdeveloped. The school provided after-school enrichment classes, clubs and workshops for all

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

students although mostly younger students took advantage of these opportunities. Links with the community were fostered by the graduation requirement of 40 hours of community service and one week of work experience in local companies for Grade 12 students. The curriculum was enriched by regular field trips and participation in special events and competitions.

The curriculum design was acceptable. The curriculum challenged the needs of most learners appropriately but was not skilfully modified enough to meet the needs of all groups of students. Individual education plans (IEPs) were effectively used to adjust learning activities for the majority of SEN students. The curriculum did not consistently provide challenge for more able or gifted students. Students participated in a broad curriculum but opportunities in and out of classrooms to study subjects and to develop their talents and interests were limited to the after-school activity programmes and special competitions. Two curriculum streams in the High School allowed older students to select class options from either stream.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Good arrangements were in place to ensure students' health, safety and security in and around the school. A majority of students stated that they felt safe at school. The school premises and resources were clean, regularly checked and well maintained. However, students with mobility problems would struggle to access the upper floors. The medical team worked closely with teachers to promote healthy lifestyles; they had visited classrooms and contributed to the 'Healthy Week' programme. All of the necessary medical and maintenance records were well kept. The school canteen offered healthy choices. There was a continuing review of traffic management as the majority of students came by car. Drivers were not always responsive to traffic managers, and this created hazardous situations.

The school's support for students was good. There were strong student-staff relationships across the school. Behaviour was well managed with respectful interactions between students and staff. Although the school consistently followed attendance and punctuality policies, low attendance and a few students arriving late to school were still areas of concern. A medical team, careers counsellor, social worker and three special education teachers provided a comprehensive support system for all students. In Kindergarten, two teachers and an aide in each classroom attended to the needs of the children. The school maintained an inclusive admissions policy. Teachers and SEN staff utilised a variety of assessment strategies to ensure the early identification and support of SEN students. Well-developed monitoring systems and frequent parent-student-staff conferences allowed staff to give effective guidance to all students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable with an increasing number of good features. The Deputy Director General supported the school community in promoting a clear vision for the school and, with senior colleagues, had overseen improvements in key areas, such as the quality of the curriculum. The senior leadership team, along with departmental heads and middle managers, was committed to planning and implementing further improvement strategies. The school was developing arrangements to match professional development training to the needs identified as part of teachers' performance management procedures. There had been improvements made in building the capacity of middle managers, enabling them to evaluate the impact of their subject departments on students' learning. By combining the strengths of the whole leadership team, the school was well placed to improve overall student learning and progress.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The improvement and action plans reflected detailed analysis and provided the school with a clear pathway for future improvements. However, performance management procedures were not yet fully or consistently embedded, and lacked a clear enough focus on the outcomes of students. The procedures were inclusive; a broader range of stakeholders were becoming involved in the processes and staff at all levels were making contributions and committed to planning and implementing strategies for improvement. Lesson observations were made as part of teachers' performance management but there was a lack of rigour in linking the quality of provision to students' learning outcomes. Acceptable progress had been made in responding to a majority of the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were kept well informed about school issues. Three formal conferences were arranged to discuss students' progress, and parents were able to schedule additional conferences when needed. Some parents were active in the Mothers' and Fathers' Councils. There were links with the community and educational field trips which enhanced students' learning opportunities.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The Board of Directors did not include elected representatives of the school's stakeholders. This impacted upon the Board's objectivity and effectiveness in terms of holding the school accountable. However, whilst having little direct influence on decision making, the Mothers' and Fathers' Councils were promoting parents' viewpoints.

The day-to-day management of the school was good. Students had the benefit of spacious grounds in which to socialise and they followed the established routines well. Qualified staff were suitably deployed in all areas. A good range of resources were seen but technology was not integrated enough into lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The progress of students with SEN was in line with the progress of other students in their classes. There was an inclusive school policy that ensured the enrolment of students with special needs. Leaders, staff and students were committed to the ethos of inclusion. Three qualified SEN teachers provided in-class and withdrawal support for identified students. IEPs were developed for identified students and action plans were provided for high and low achievers. Based on these plans, SEN staff worked with classroom teachers to assist with appropriate curriculum modifications and tracking the progress of students. The leader of the SEN team provided staff training and teachers had a strong awareness of the needs associated with SEN students ensuring early identification. Teachers used checklists for initial screening. SEN teachers followed up with observations and referral to outside agencies when appropriate. Parents were actively involved in identification, IEP development and ongoing conferences to discuss their child's progress. Although differentiation within lessons was observed, the curriculum was not modified skilfully enough to meet all the needs of students with SEN, including the gifted and talented.

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

The quality of teaching Arabic as a first language varied across the school. Teaching in Elementary classes was better than that at other stages. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge; however, their ability to teach particular age groups was not always evident. Their class management and control were not always effective, particularly in the upper grades of the Middle phase. Teachers had a positive impact on students' language skills when they encouraged them to apply correct pronunciation and use standard Arabic. Lesson planning was appropriate overall; however, expectations were not always high enough and work was too dependent on text books. Teaching strategies were not always sufficiently varied to meet needs. The curriculum was compliant with the Ministry of Education requirements. It had a clear rationale and its delivery was appropriately planned. The Arabic Department reviewed the curriculum on an annual basis. However, the curriculum was strictly based on the text book and lacked appropriate enrichment to make it more interesting for students especially in the Middle phase.

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	264	31%
	Last year	308	36%
Teachers	85		65%
Students	248		96%

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

Most parents, students and staff were pleased with the quality of education provided by the school. Most parents felt that their children made good progress, particularly in Islamic Education, English and mathematics. The majority of parents were also happy with Arabic and science. Almost all parents regarded the school as a safe environment and the majority of students said they felt safe at the school. Most teachers and the majority of parents felt that the school dealt with bullying well, although only a minority of students were of that mind. Most parents were pleased with the support provided for students identified with SEN, and felt involved. Both students and parents felt that the school provided a good understanding of Islam and helped students to become positive members of the community. Most teachers and parents were supportive of the school leadership. However, only a minority of students and a majority of parents felt that the school listened to their opinions.

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

Copyright © 2014

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.