

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Ittihad Private School - Jumeirah

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Ittihad Private School - Jumeirah

Location	Al Safa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ittihadschools.com
Telephone	04-3945111
Address	P O Box 37090, Dubai
Principal	Nehad Saeed Al Shamsi
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,913
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1,690 (88%)
Dates of the inspection	3rd to 6th March 2013

## Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013 .....	4
Key strengths .....	4
Recommendations .....	4
Progress since the last inspection .....	6
Trend of overall performance.....	6
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	7
How good is the students' personal and social development? .....	8
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment? .....	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students? .....	9
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school? .....	9
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	16
What happens next? .....	17
How to contact us .....	17

## The context of the school

Al Ittihad Private School is located in Jumeirah. At the time of the inspection, 1,913 students were enrolled, most of whom were Emirati. Up to Grade 4, boys and girls were taught together, then separately up to Grade 12.

The school taught a US curriculum aligned the state of Connecticut standards. Students in the Kindergarten and the primary and middle schools were assessed using internal tests. High school students took examinations for a high school diploma and some wrote the US-based SAT for entrance to universities.

The school was at the 'candidate' stage for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the Council of International Schools (CIS). One hundred and fifty teachers were employed. Almost all had appropriate teaching qualifications.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- Students across all phases made good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and English;
- In the Kindergarten, children's behaviour was excellent and they had extremely positive attitudes, responding enthusiastically to an outstanding curriculum;
- High school students had an outstanding appreciation of Islam, local traditions and cultures;
- Excellent leadership had a powerful impact on sustaining the school's vision and direction.

### Recommendations

- Accelerate progress in mathematics in the middle school and in science in the primary and middle schools, by building on the most successful practice, including:
  - setting tasks in lessons which challenge all groups of learners;
  - the use of open-ended questions during lessons;
  - activities to promote critical thinking.
- Improve assessment systems to carefully track the progress of all students, including:
  - those with special educational needs;
  - students working at different levels;
  - boys and girls.
- Further develop the provision for students with special educational needs by:
  - ensuring students who find learning difficult or who have particular gifts and talents are identified quickly;
  - ensuring teachers and support staff have sufficient understanding of how they can support and challenge all students during day-to-day lessons, and monitoring how successful they are at doing so;
  - improving the quality of the support provided when students are taught in small withdrawal groups;
  - improving the leadership and management of the provision for students with special educational needs.

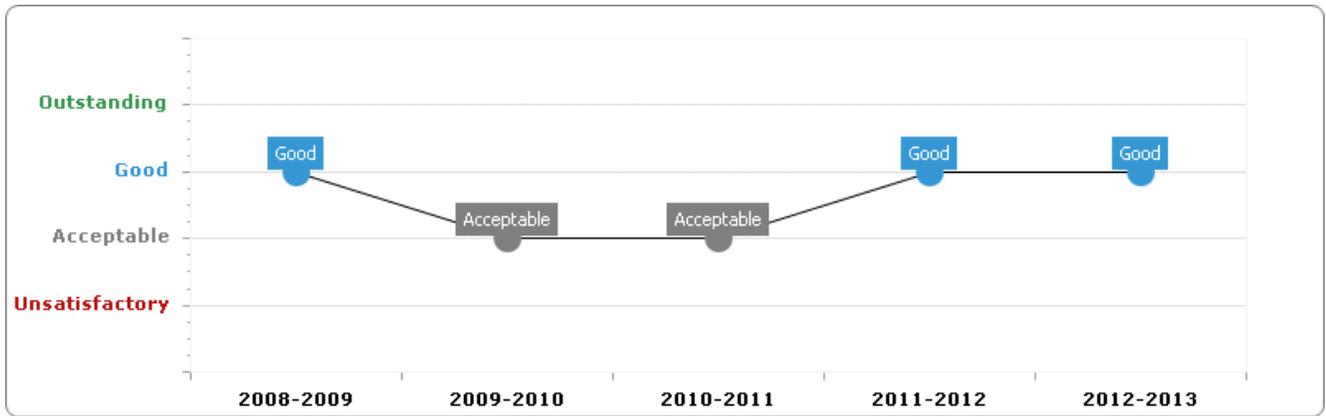
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- Refine self-evaluation by sharpening the use of assessment information in reviewing students' performance and introduce the expectation that all Grade 12 students are assessed using internationally recognised tests.
- Ensure that the time allocated for Arabic as an additional language complies with the statutory requirements of the Ministry of Education.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Progress had risen in the primary school in Arabic as a first language;
- In the Kindergarten, children's behaviour and attitudes had improved to outstanding levels;
- Leadership and governance had improved.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects was mostly good. In Islamic Education, most students could recite Qur'anic verses in an appropriate manner and read the Hadeeths with understanding. In the higher grades, students showed good understanding of Sunnah and knew the teachings of Islam well. In Arabic as a first language, most students' listening skills were secure. Most could speak standard Arabic fluently and confidently. In reading, students' skills varied and were stronger in the high school. Writing was the least developed skill. In Arabic as an additional language, students' listening skills were good and the majority could respond appropriately using standard Arabic. Children in the Kindergarten read and wrote simple English words. Older students had built well on these skills. In Grade 12, students discussed texts with confidence and expressed their thoughts and opinions well orally and in writing. In mathematics, children in the Kindergarten used numbers confidently to represent quantities and solve problems. Students in the elementary phase were developing fluency with whole numbers, decimals and fraction operations. Middle school students did not display the same level of confidence, and girls' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and their ability to apply mathematics skills were markedly better than those of the boys. High school students, especially in the two highest years, demonstrated an ability to solve real world and mathematical problems with proficiency. In science, students attained the levels expected at each phase. Across the key subjects, girls outperformed boys in most phases.

Students' progress in the key subjects was mostly good. In Islamic Education, students made good progress in deriving evidence from the verses and Hadeeths. They demonstrated growing understanding of worship and showed proper application of the mosque etiquette. Students learning Arabic as a first language made better progress in listening, speaking and reading than in writing. There was clear improvement in the skills they developed over their years of study. Those learning Arabic as an additional language made good progress in listening, responding and oral reading, but their progress in writing was slower. Progress in all elements of English was good. Progress in mathematics continued at a good rate through the Kindergarten and elementary grades, when students' increased confidence allowed them to think critically about mathematical problems. Middle school students progressed more slowly. High school students built effectively on their learning and older students were beginning to think critically on all aspects of mathematics. In science, most students made the progress expected for their grade levels, although progress was more rapid in the Kindergarten and in the middle grades. Across the key subjects, students with special educational needs did not make consistently good progress because some activities were not accurately matched to their individual needs.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of students were outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in the primary, middle and high school grades. Almost all students were courteous and respectful toward adults and each other. They were respectful of and followed school rules. In a few cases, older boys acted irresponsibly and disrupted their classes. Most students had appropriate knowledge of healthy lifestyles and knew the importance of good diet and exercise. Attendance was good and almost all students arrived to school on time. Students' appreciation of the values of Islam was illustrated by daily practice of Islamic teachings, active participation in the 'Rayaheen Qur'an' competition, and their support for local orphans. Students showed strong respect for the UAE's heritage and culture. Strong understanding of other cultures was evident on the Multicultural Day, when diversity was celebrated. High school students understood the benefits of diversity for Dubai society and had visited other countries. Community and environmental responsibility was developed to good levels. Students contributed actively to the life of the school and wider community whenever offered the opportunity. They valued the School Council, which gave the opportunity to influence leaders' decisions, although there were no formal structures in place for feedback on the quality of their learning experiences. Most students had a positive work ethic and understood the benefits of hard work and perseverance. They willingly took the initiative and demonstrated creativity and entrepreneurship. All students took care of their immediate surroundings and some were aware of the important local environmental issues. The 'Eco Rangers' club successfully promoted students' active involvement in sustainability and conservation.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge but some did not consistently employ teaching styles appropriate to effective learning. In the best lessons, the teacher was the facilitator of student learning. The lessons were well-planned and organised, with excellent time management. There were clear learning objectives, which resulted in high student achievement. Students were given adequate time for thinking and reflection, and encouraged through activities to develop both critical thinking and higher order skills. In the Kindergarten, for example, a well-planned range of activities took account of children's starting points and teaching was supported by very good practical resources. Occasionally, too much teacher talk and direction of activities prevented students from achieving meaningful and relevant learning. Most lessons were organised and structured, but more than a few did not offer sufficient opportunities for students to develop enquiry and critical thinking skills. Teachers' use of modern technology was developing, and was particularly successful in enriching science teaching in the Kindergarten and high school grades.

The quality of students' learning was good. Almost all students were highly motivated and responded most enthusiastically to their teachers. Students collaborated, co-operated and thrived on any opportunities they were offered as leaders, both within the classroom, in assemblies and during extra-curricular activities. There were still insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to improve students' enquiry and research skills. Sometimes students were too reliant on their teachers for the next steps in their learning. Many did not know how to continue learning without directions from their teachers. Students enjoyed opportunities to share their knowledge and ideas with other individuals and groups in their classes. Students increasingly made connections between different areas of learning and applied knowledge to real-life issues.

The assessment of learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the primary, middle and high school grades. Across the school, students were involved in assessing their own learning. Assessment information was collected regularly and organised efficiently. Analysis was undertaken to identify broad trends and some individual students' progress. Teachers' limited levels of understanding of the data and lack of consistency in their ability to analyse them, constrained the tracking of individual students' progress. As a consequence, teachers did not have comprehensive knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Assessment information was not consistently used by teachers to meet the learning needs of all students, including those with special education needs. The school had not used international benchmarks to assess the learning outcomes of students. This was a significant barrier to further raising attainment and improving progress.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in the primary, middle and high school grades. The curriculum had a clear rationale. It was broad and balanced, providing courses in art, ICT, physical education and French. High school students had a good range of choices within and across the business and science streams. Curriculum plans generally ensured continuity and progression, with the exception of mathematics, where alignment to the US Common Core Standards did not always match the school's grade-related expectations. There were effective transitions between phases. The Kindergarten curriculum provided wide opportunities for children to make choices and learn through play. In the other three phases, different tasks were typically included in the lesson plans but were not consistently evident in lessons. The curriculum was reviewed annually. Cross-curricular projects were a strength of the school. Educational field trips, recreational outings and interest clubs enriched the curriculum. Students thrived on opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills, but they were not planned to fully develop the students' leadership potentials. Strong community links enhanced the curriculum. The business community

supported high school students by participating in the career fair and by providing placements for work experience. The school did not provide enough time for the learning of Arabic as an additional language as required by the Ministry of Education.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The health and safety aspects of the school were outstanding. The school provided students with a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. Students were offered nutritious food in professionally run canteens. The school also provided a full-time physician and a nurse. The school had very efficient child protection procedures, including an anti-bullying programme. The school had implemented a procedure which required designated adults to pick up children personally from the lower grades. The parking area continued to be a concern regarding safety; however, the school had procedures in place to improve supervision and the compliance of drivers who dropped off or picked up students.

In almost all classes, relationships between staff members and students were good and at times outstanding. Issues of poor behaviour management were rare. Students generally benefited from good advice and support, although there were weaknesses in the provision for those with special educational needs. There were well established systems to ensure that students were well supported when they transferred from phase to phase, or if they had any concerns. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality were thorough and focused on involving students and their parents.

[View judgements](#)

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

The support for students with special educational needs was in an early stage of development. Two specialist teachers for special educational needs had identified a small number of students who had special educational needs. These generally received adequate support in their classes or when supported in one of the 'I Can' centres. However, at times, they were given activities which did not accurately match their abilities and needs, so they made less progress than their peers. Students who found learning difficult, but who had not been identified as having special needs, were not always given appropriate help during lessons, so their progress was often too slow.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were outstanding. The senior management team successfully shared the school's central values, which meant that teachers, students and parents had a clear understanding of the school's vision and ambitions. The principal's sensitive and insightful approach was effective. Leadership roles were, for the most part, distributed effectively. Middle leaders and teachers felt empowered to suggest, innovate and act as critical friends. Strengths in leadership were evident in most subjects, and particularly so in the English and science departments.

Self-evaluation by school leaders was good. Senior leaders kept a check on the quality of teaching by visiting lessons, sometimes giving notice and sometimes unannounced. The information from lesson observations was often used to share good practices or provide additional training. This was most effective in the Kindergarten and the elementary grades. Peer observation was also strongest in these phases, and provided good opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. The views of parents and students were sought informally and through occasional surveys. A parents' forum had been set up with representatives from each phase. Development planning was generally good. Staff members had developed assessment systems that provided information about students' attainment and progress, and data was being analysed. However, analysis had not developed sufficiently to provide a succinct overview of results in each grade and phase. This limited the school's ability to evaluate its performance and set precise targets for improvement.

The school's partnership with parents and the community was good. Parents held the school in high regard and appreciated the 'open-door' policy. Home-school communication was fluid, with parents and teachers exchanging information through informal contact, e-mails and newsletters. Parents of younger students were kept well informed about how to support their children at home and felt welcome when visiting or working as volunteers in the classrooms. This was clearly evident, for example, in the positive ethos when parents attended an assembly presented by children in Kindergarten. Community links were strong. For example, students benefited from talks by external speakers and local businesses offered work experience for all Grade 12 students. The local community was used effectively as a learning resource, with students visiting historical and environmental sites to extend their studies.

The quality of governance was good. Board members ensured that the commitment to parents was at the forefront of developments. The school's motto 'A generation of heritage guardians and global thinkers' underpinned their strategic planning. They were rigorous in holding the school to account. The Board had been re-constituted shortly before the inspection. Opportunities had been widened for parents to make their views known through regular meetings involving board members and parents. Sub-committees had

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been set up and members from the community with specific expertise, for example, in education, had been invited to join.

The management of the school was good. There were sufficient, well-qualified teachers in each section of the school. Teachers were generally deployed effectively according to their expertise and experience. For the most part, teachers were knowledgeable about the processes of child development and learning, although some teaching did not always reflect this. Class sizes were not too large. In the Kindergarten, adult to child ratios were particularly good, with three adults in every classroom. Buildings were very well maintained and the grounds were spacious. Resources for learning were generally good. The ICT equipment had been increased substantially since the previous inspection. A well-equipped media centre had been established and was frequently used by students. Four interactive white boards had been acquired for each section and plans were in hand to provide wireless internet access across the high school. A 'learning platform' had been set up and was beginning to be used as a portal for communication by teachers, students and parents. However, students' access to computers to support their daily learning in the elementary school was limited.

[View judgements](#)

## 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	241	25%
Teachers	78		49%
Students	237		89%

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

Just over a quarter of parents responded to their survey. Most were happy with all aspects of the school. They appreciated the way the school promoted Islamic values, while at the same time encouraged their children to respect other traditions. They were well informed about how well their children have progressed. Parents of children in the younger grades said that teachers were always on hand for informal discussions. About half of the teachers responded to their survey and were positive in their views. Most students responded to their survey. They reported that they enjoyed school, were well looked after and that teachers helped them to improve.

## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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