



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



Inspection Report

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for
Girls

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa



The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls

Inspection Date	3 – 6 March 2014
School ID#	118
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	1302
Age Range	4 to 17 years
Gender	KG – Grade 5 - Mixed Grade 6 – Grade 12 - Girls
Principal	Heather Mann
School Address	PO Box 42989, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 619 5555
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Official Email (ADEC)	sheikhzayedacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.szpag.com
Date of last inspection	4 – 7 March 2012



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 A;	GRADE 3
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the principal provides high quality strategic leadership which is having a positive impact on raising achievement
- school leaders and teachers demonstrate the capacity, commitment and dedication to continue improving the educational provision in the school
- there are respectful attitudes at all levels of the school, which provides a safe and caring learning environment
- the high quality buildings and resources provide students with stimulating, exciting and varied opportunities for learning.

The main areas for improvement are:

- creating greater challenge for higher achieving students
- further increasing attainment levels in Arabic, Islamic education and UAE social studies
- acceleration of students' progress and attainment levels across the senior school.



Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors who observed 93 lessons. They met with school leaders, teachers, students and parents. They observed students' arrivals at and departures from the school, assemblies and break times. The inspectors reviewed and analysed data and documentation provided by the school. In addition, responses from 67 parents to a questionnaire about the school were analysed.

Description of the School

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls opened in September 2000 in Al Bateen district of Abu Dhabi. The school's vision is 'Honouring the past. Educating for the future' and the mission is 'developing confident, responsible and caring young people of integrity who are well educated and prepared to meet the challenges in an ever-changing world'.

The student population is 1,302, with 76% being girls. The school has students from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12. KG to Grade 5 is mixed gender, with Grades 6 to 12 being girls only. There are 348 students in KG, 594 in Grades 1 to 5, 243 in Grades 6 to 9 and 117 in Grades 10 to 12. The school follows an American curriculum. The Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum is followed in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies.

The school caters for students from several different nationalities: 88% Emirati, 2% Jordanian, 2% USA and 8% from other nationalities. Almost all students are Muslim. The school has identified 4% of students as having special educational needs (SEN), with some having learning or behavioural difficulties; an additional 6 % of students require language support. Admission to the school is determined by interview and an entrance test.

The principal has been in post for 1 year. The leadership team comprises of the principal, the heads and assistant heads of primary and secondary schools, and the head of Arabic. The school has 94 teachers, with a 25% turnover last year.



The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Students make good gains in relation to their starting points across most subjects. Standardised test data demonstrates that standards are above similar schools and comparable to international standards. In many lessons, teachers have high expectations and a substantial percentage of students in the lower school are demonstrating attainment levels above international standards. Attainment and progress are good in English, mathematics and science. In many lessons, information, communication and technology (ICT) skills are integrated very effectively in learning activities. As a result, attainment and progress in ICT are good. In Arabic, attainment and progress are satisfactory and improving overall. They are good in some classes in KG to Grade 5, where teaching is more motivating and inspiring. Attainment and progress are satisfactory and improving in Islamic education and social studies.

The development of speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy, thinking and ICT skills are good. Reading, speaking and listening skills are above age-related expectations in KG and Grade 1. Students make good progress in their English speaking skills as they move through the early grades. SEN students and students with identified language needs make good progress due to the high quality support strategies provided by the Learning Support Team. Gifted and talented students do not make as much progress as other students. This is because learning activities are insufficiently differentiated to challenge their higher order problem solving and thinking skills.

Assessment strategies are good. The school is using standardised tests to monitor student progress and to set challenging goals for individual students and classes. Assessment for learning is used well by many teachers. It is not consistently used to create sufficiently challenging learning activities for different groups of students.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is very good and they form positive relationships and share good levels of respect across the school community. Most students demonstrate high levels of interest and motivation. They show advanced levels of concentration and application when they have the opportunities to work collaboratively in activities that challenge and develop their 21st Century Skills. Teachers apply consistent classroom routines and have high expectations of behaviour from KG through to Grade 5. This creates a highly positive and orderly



learning environment. Most students in Grades 6 to 12 demonstrate self-confidence and positive attitudes to their learning.

Students show respect for the culture and values of the UAE. These are very effectively promoted through social and Islamic education lessons and celebrations of special occasions. The unique 'My Identity' program has been created, developed and implemented at the Academy over the last two years to successfully foster UAE identity and personal growth. There are high quality displays around the school that celebrate the UAE, including a large map made from coloured pencils and a well-designed heritage room. Students develop very good awareness of how to live healthy lives through various curriculum areas. Attendance is good at 96%.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In KG to Grade 5, it is good in the majority of lessons. It is more variable in Grades 6 to 12, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. Classroom management skills and student behaviour are very good in most classrooms, ensuring that lessons run smoothly and at a good pace. Students work well in groups and they demonstrate the ability to make choices about their own learning. In the best lessons, students work enthusiastically together to solve problems and draw conclusions in well-planned activities that provide appropriate challenge for different groups of students. The least effective lessons are often teacher dominated and students have few opportunities to be actively involved in their own learning.

In KG classes, teachers have good knowledge of how young children learn best. They provide good cross-curricular links during investigation sessions and guided reading is used well to support reading development. Across the school, many teachers use good questioning to help students acquire deeper understanding of their learning. There is good use of formative and self-assessment strategies to check students' understanding of the intended learning. Plenaries are used well in some lessons to check students' understanding, but the practice is not consistent.

Many lessons support students in developing 21st century skills through independent work, critical thinking and problem solving. In some lessons, teachers provide differentiated activities to meet the varying needs of groups of students. Those students with SEN have effective support, resulting in good progress in lessons. There is insufficient challenge for higher achieving students in many lessons across the school.

Teachers have access to professional development within the school and through outside training organisations. The programs are highly differentiated to the needs of each teacher as identified through lesson observations.



Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The school's broad and balanced curriculum provides a good programme for meeting students' needs. The alignment of the curriculum to the Common Core and new generation standards provides a framework that ensures rigour and sets benchmarks that match international standards. In the lower grades, the core curriculum is extended through art, music, ICT and physical education. There are some elective subjects available for G12 students. In KG to Grade 5, the school sets high expectations by aiming the curriculum above international age-related expectations. The impact of this is best exemplified in KG 2 and Grade 1 by students' increased knowledge and use of English across all subjects. The curriculum and lesson plans are insufficiently modified to create enough challenge for higher achieving students in some lessons.

There is an extensive extra-curricular programme for an hour after school on Sunday to Wednesday, with each teacher providing one session a week. The school has an E-Sports programme that is run by professional coaches. Extensive programmes are available for students to gain a wider perspective of the world. These include the Model United Nations, Duke of Edinburgh Award, orphanages in Nairobi and building schools project in Zanzibar, together with many other activities and charities. The school also has positive links with Khalifa Medical Centre, Zayed University, and Emirates College. The curriculum prepares students for the next stages of their education and working lives in a satisfactory and improving manner.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students are good. The school provides a safe and caring learning environment for students. The two social counsellors, one in each of the elementary and high school sections, provide good pastoral support. They act as one of the links between teachers and parents. An academic advisor provides suitable guidance and support to older students in respect of careers and university applications. The learning support team provides highly organised academic and pastoral support. Senior staff, subject coordinators and grade leaders consistently monitor academic progress based on the outcomes of standardised tests. The pastoral system does not provide sufficient monitoring, tracking and intervention strategies to accelerate the academic progress of high achieving students.

The school operates very consistent and effective behaviour management routines throughout KG to Grade 5. This leads to all students being fully focussed on their learning and builds their self-discipline. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are reasonably consistent in the upper section of the school; a small



number of students' lack self-discipline and respect for others. The school has a child protection policy and staff have been fully trained on the procedures. There are two well-staffed clinics that provide appropriate support for students' needs. There are 2 prayer rooms, one in each of the elementary and high schools.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school's buildings are modern, very high quality and enhance the learning opportunities for students. They are all spacious, well equipped and aligned to the educational needs of the age groups they serve. The wide corridors, elegant shared areas and attractive grounds present students with a stimulating learning environment. There are 2 science rooms in the secondary building and 1 for elementary, a gym in each building, playing fields, tennis courts and games courts. The 2 libraries in the secondary and elementary buildings are very spacious. There is a large ICT laboratory in elementary, an early years' laboratory and an ICT teaching room in the secondary building. Most classrooms are roomy, well organised and offer good opportunities for teachers to use a variety of strategies to enhance the learning experiences of the students. A few rooms in the elementary department become relatively cramped.

There are a number of shaded outdoor play areas and a very well equipped play area for KG. There is extremely tight security on all the entrances to the school and uniformed security officers are in evidence in all buildings and outdoor areas throughout the school day. There is a dedicated person for health and safety and systematic maintenance checks are made on all major equipment. Regular evacuation practices are undertaken, with all exit routes clearly signposted.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are outstanding in supporting the school's aims. The school has a full complement of qualified teachers. The high quality and wide range of resources provide students with stimulating, exciting and varied opportunities for learning. KG classes have high quality resources that are used well to stimulate students' learning and outdoor facilities to help students to learn through play. In the elementary section, graded readers are matched to students' reading levels.

The ICT resources are plentiful and are used effectively to motivate student learning. All classrooms have interactive white boards that are used by teachers to provide high quality visual stimulation. The specialist ICT rooms give students the opportunity to learn the functionality of computers through meaningful real-life topics. Grades 8 to 12 have their own personal laptops for use in lessons and Grades 6 and 7 are able to use sets of iPads. The science laboratories are well resourced and provide students with very good practical learning opportunities. The spacious school libraries provide a pleasant environment; they have a limited



variety of both fiction and non-fiction. The vast range of sports resources allows students to experience a variety of activities. Arrangements for the preparation, storage and consumption of food in the canteen and the storage of hazardous chemicals in science areas are carefully managed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are very good. The school functions extremely well on a day-to-day basis. The proprietor and Board members have highly effective monitoring and support systems in place to ensure that the leadership team is held accountable for delivering the agreed improvement goals. The principal provides high quality strategic leadership that is providing the driving force and momentum for change and is having a positive impact on raising achievement. She is ably supported by other senior and middle leaders. They demonstrate the commitment and dedication to continue improving the school.

The self-evaluation form is very well constructed, has a measurable evidence base and provides an accurate appraisal of the school's performance. The school development plan is equally comprehensive, well constructed and has measurable success criteria and costing. It links all the agreed developments effectively with the eight inspection performance standards. Senior and middle leaders regularly monitor data to check the progress of students, the effectiveness of teachers and the outcomes in each subject. The school has appropriate financial systems in place.

The performance management programme is very thorough and results in all staff having clearly defined and challenging goals. The performance of teachers is monitored through a robust and thorough lesson observation programme. Senior leaders undertake formal observations and teachers receive valuable feedback. Lessons that are seen as less than satisfactory automatically trigger an action plan for improvement. Support is provided through coaching or professional development. Further observations follow to ensure that the agreed improvements are embedded in practice. Senior leaders acknowledge that these actions have yet to secure sustained outstanding academic performance.

Parents generally have positive views about the school. The school holds a regular parents' forum and sends out questionnaires to seek their views.



Progress since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there is good evidence of more student-centred learning, particularly in the elementary phase. Some teachers are providing appropriate challenge for higher achieving students; more development work is needed in this area.

Some teaching has improved in Arabic with more emphasis on group activities and using real-life situations to develop students' skills. This is a much stronger feature in the younger age groups, less so in the senior section of the school. There is still a gap in the attainment levels in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies to those in other core subjects, but it is closing.

The school met its 75% retention of teachers target last year. There is good evidence of staff commitment and support for the development agenda set by the school. The school uses data well to monitor student progress and set targets for teachers and students.

The school has clearly demonstrated that it has very good capacity to sustain the current quality of education and to make further improvements by addressing the recommendations made in this report.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Continue to improve teaching and learning in order to:
 - i. Create greater challenge in lessons across the school for higher achieving students by reviewing the curriculum and ensuring that lessons consistently make provision for their needs.
 - ii. Further increase attainment levels for learners in Arabic, Islamic education and UAE social studies, particularly in Grades 6 to 12.
 - iii. Accelerate overall student attainment and progress by ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the senior school.



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								