



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
التعليم أولاً Education First



Private School Inspection Report

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for
Girls

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

lqraa



The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls

Inspection Date	February 8, 2016	to	February 11, 2016
Date of previous inspection	March 3, 2014	to	March 6, 2014

General Information		Students		
School ID	118	Total number of students	1405	
Opening year of school	2000	Number of children in KG	282	
Principal	Lisa Hewitt	Number of students in other phases	Primary: 653	
School telephone	+971 (0)2 619 5555		Middle: 309	
School Address	Mubarak Bin Mohammed Street, Al Bateen, Abu Dhabi		High: 161	
Official email (ADEC)	SheikhZayedacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae	Age range	4 years to 17 years	
School website	www.szpag.com	Grades or Year Groups	KG to Grade 12	
Fee ranges (per annum)	Medium to very high: AED27,600 – AED 63,700	Gender	KG – Grade 3 Mixed Grade 4 -12 Female	
Licensed Curriculum		% of Emirati Students	87%	
		Largest nationality groups (%)	1. Emirati 87%	
			2. Jordanian 3%	
Staff		3. American 1%		
		Number of teachers	104	
		Number of teaching assistants (TAs)	41	
External Exams/ Standardised tests	MAP tests g6-11, SAT g11-12, PSAT g10, PSAT g8-9, ACER ISA (International Schools Assessment) IELTS, TOEFL, CEPA, EMSA tests g5, 7, 9 and 11, PASS (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School).	Teacher-student ratio	KG/ FS	1 : 25
			Other phases	1 : 20
Accreditation	NEASC (New England Association of Schs. And Colleges 2009) CIS (Council of International Schools)	Teacher turnover	24% High	



Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	5
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	107
Number of joint lesson observations	7
Number of parents' questionnaires	158; (return rate: 11.2%)
Details of other inspection activities	Inspectors observed lessons, breaks, assemblies and events before and after school. They scrutinised students' work and reviewed a range of documentation. They held meetings with staff and parents, and spoke with many students.

School	
School Aims	'To honour the past and educate for the future, by developing confident, committed creative and caring young people of integrity who achieve to their academic potential and armed with an internationally competitive education and are well positioned to succeed in the world of tomorrow.'
School vision and mission	The school was established in 2000 to fulfil the vision of the Late President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, 'to provide the highest quality education in the UAE. Students are to be prepared to obtain the highest international standards and to take on leading roles in society: to be future leaders.'
Admission Policy	The school 'accepts applications for registration from international and UAE students of good standing'. Admission for Grades 6-12 involves entrance tests in Arabic, English and mathematics, an oral interview in Arabic and English, plus past school records and references. Admission for Grade 1-5 is similarly based on



	<p>entrance tests in English, Arabic and mathematics and previous school reports. Admission to KG is dependent on age and the school being able to meet the child's needs. The school will accept children with mild special needs in Arabic/English, dependant on the recommendations, following the assessment by the Learning Support committee.</p>
<p>Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)</p>	<p>The school is part of the Al Ain Educational Investments. There is a board of Trustees. The school is managed by GEMS Education. The new Leadership team of eight includes the principal, two heads of school, the head of Arabic and four assistant heads.</p>



Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

SEN Category	Number of students identified through external assessments	Number of other students identified by the school
Intellectual disability	0	2
Specific Learning Disability	6	7
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	0	3
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3	0
Speech and Language Disorders	0	0
Physical and health related disabilities	2	1
Visually impaired	0	0
Hearing impaired	1	1
Multiple disabilities	0	0

G&T Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

G&T Category	Number of students identified
Intellectual ability	0
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	140
Social maturity and leadership	0
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	0
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	0
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	0



The overall performance of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A	High performing (Outstanding, Very Good or Good)
Band B	Satisfactory (Acceptable)
Band C	In need of significant improvement (Weak or Very Weak)

School was judged to be:	BAND (A)	Very Good
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Performance Standards	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
Performance Standard 1: Students' achievement						
Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills						
Performance Standard 3: Teaching and assessment						
Performance Standard 4: Curriculum						
Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students						
Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management						
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall performance						



The Performance of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall performance

The overall performance of the school is very good. It is outstanding in kindergarten (KG). Attainment and progress in classwork is very good. For the last three years, all Grade 12 students were accepted at local or international universities. Students' progress is very good in almost all subjects across all grades with most students exceeding their expected Rasch Unit Scale (RIT) scores. Students' attitudes to learning and learning skills are positive. The school is a very safe, caring, attractive and well-resourced learning environment. Teaching is very good overall and outstanding in KG. The school is well led and efficiently managed. Staff morale is high. The new principal has the strong support of the Board of Trustees, GEMS, parents, staff and students. Attendance and punctuality are an area for improvement.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

The school has made effective progress since the last inspection in 2013 when it was good. All standards are now very good. The school has improved teaching and learning in all grades. Teaching is now more student centred and teachers rarely dominate lessons. Assessment is supporting learning much more effectively and lessons are suitably challenging. Attainment and progress in Arabic has improved from satisfactory to very good with similar improvements in Islamic education and social studies. This is due to changes in subject leadership and a programme of professional development for teachers. Students' progress and attainment has improved as a result of more consistent high-quality teaching. This is not yet reflected in results in external international examinations because only a few students have been entered in the past. The new principal is already having a positive impact based on having a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and what it needs to do to improve further. This includes a recognition that the school has not given sufficient prominence to the pursuit of academic excellence benchmarked to international standards. The school has very good capacity to sustain the present quality of education and to improve further.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

The development and promotion of innovation skills is not yet strong enough. Good practice across the school includes, for example, students' construction of abstract sculptures in art and product marketing in business studies. Students also develop innovation skills through a few extra-curricular activities. Students in all grades from KG to Grade 12 explore and investigate ideas and they like to solve problems



and be creative. Opportunities provided by the school to develop innovation skills remain too limited overall.

The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- the quality of educational provision in kindergarten
- the school's strategic leadership and governance
- promotion and development of Islamic values and celebration of UAE culture and traditions
- a coherent student welfare structure which ensures the care, safety and well-being of all students
- high-quality resources, premises and environment that support students' learning.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- further improvement to attainment of students, particularly as measured by external tests
- students' attendance rate and punctuality to school.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Very Good	Very Good	Acceptable	Very Good
	Progress	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Arabic (as a Second Language)	Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Social Studies	Attainment	Very Good	Good	Good	Very Good
	Progress	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
English	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Mathematics	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Science	Attainment	Very Good	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Language of instruction (if other than English and Arabic as First Language)	Attainment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	Attainment	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Learning Skills (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)		Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good



The majority of children enter school in kindergarten with language skills at age-expected levels. The large minority are below these levels. Numeracy skills are low for almost all children and only a few children can write numerals to 10 and count to 10. From these starting points, all groups of children make outstanding progress and, by KG2, attainment is above age-related expectations. Attainment for the large majority by this stage is outstanding. Children's speaking and writing skills in Arabic and English are outstanding for their age. KG2 children lead assemblies in Arabic and English. Children respond well in practical science activities. For example, in a lesson about direction, children constructed different models independently to test the direction of flow of marbles. Reading skills are very good indeed.

The number of students entered for external tests, such as SATs and IELTS (International English Language Tests) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) has been low in the past because the school did not have a culture of striving for success in these measures. As a result, these figures do not give an accurate measure of the actual quality of attainment now being seen in the school. The school has adopted a new policy this year of entering all eligible students for appropriate external examinations. This is an important step forward which is beginning to give students full recognition for their academic achievements.

Attainment in other phases of the school, as measured by internal tests and as observed in lessons, varies from good to outstanding. This is the case across subjects and phases with no particular patterns for ages or subjects. Attainment in Arabic, according to EMSA data and lesson observations, is very good in primary, good in middle and very good in high school for first language speakers, and good for students learning Arabic as a second language. Over the last three years, attainment in Arabic has improved for the large majority of students. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Attainment in Islamic education has also improved. Attainment in English and mathematics is stronger than science in higher grades. External tests results in SATs declined in 2015. Student attainment in mathematics, reading, and general science as measured externally by MAPs in Grades 6 to 11, is weak compared to US norms. In contrast, students' attainment in language is close to and exceeds US norms by Grade 11.

Students' progress in all subjects across all phases is very good. No groups of students underachieve, including those who have special needs. In almost all lessons, students are engaged well in learning. Group work is widely used in all phases based on effective collaborative learning. Students at all ages work well together and support each other's learning. Students have strong communication skills in Arabic and English. They are articulate, confident and fluent at all phases appropriate to age expectations in both languages. In middle and high school, students have



opportunities to develop and use their ICT, research, problem solving, enterprise and creative skills. In primary and KG they are encouraged to explore, investigate and solve problems. Skills in innovation are less developed.

Performance Standard 2: Students’ personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Students’ personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Personal development	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Students’ personal and social development are very good with some outstanding features. Students’ attitudes to learning are positive. This is exemplified by the large number of students undertaking personal research in the school library at lunch times. Students are respectful and polite. They are confident and articulate in both Arabic and English. Behaviour is almost always exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Students work well together at all ages. They show concern for each other. They make healthy choices by selecting appropriate food in the school restaurants. They all participate actively in physical education (PE) lessons and in after-school sports clubs. Grade 4 students’ enthusiasm for their weekly swimming lessons is very apparent. Older students take part enthusiastically in relay races. Weekly health education lessons and a structured daily personal and social development programme enhance their personal development.

Attendance across all age groups is weak at 92%. The large minority of students are late for their first lesson of the day. This disturbs the lesson for other students and has a negative impact on their own learning.

Students’ appreciation of Islamic values and understanding of UAE culture and traditions is a strength for all age groups. Students take part in early morning ‘Holy Qur’an memorisation sessions’, and a ‘My Identity’ programme. The school is involved



in a wide variety of charity events. Students work with the ‘Helping Hand club’ to support local families as well as international charities. Students care for their school. They take part in activities to improve the environment. They are keen to accept responsibility. All middle and high school classes have representatives on the school council and they are joined by representatives from primary Grades 3 to 5. Grade 12 students recently persuaded the school to allow them to have their own social room. All students speak with pride of their school.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Assessment	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Teaching and assessment are very good overall with some outstanding features. Teachers’ subject and pedagogical knowledge is strong in all phases. In KG, teachers understand and apply best practice in how young children learn. In higher grades, well-qualified specialist subject teachers support and challenge students’ learning effectively. For example, students in Grades 10 to 12 are challenged well by studying Shakespearean texts in English. Teachers’ detailed lesson planning ensures that learning is well structured for almost all students. Explicit learning outcomes are shared with students. A wide variety of activities motivates and engages students. Time and resources are used effectively to ensure suitable pace and challenge in lessons.

Child-led activities in KG allow children to develop their own interests and independence. In other phases, students have the opportunity to be active and independent in their learning. They research topics, give class presentations and are encouraged to reflect and think critically. From Grades 6 to 12, all students have their own laptops. These are used effectively in a variety of lessons to support learning. Technical issues with bandwidth restrict whole class access to the internet. In most lessons, teachers plan for and use different activities for different groups of students. Differentiation has improved since the last inspection. A few lessons are not meeting the needs of all students.



Teachers support students by monitoring their work in class and providing constructive, formative marking and feedback based on the targets they have been set. As a result, they know how to improve their work. They assess their own and their peers' work in all phases by using age-appropriate methods. Internal assessment of progress and learning is rigorous. Students' progress is tracked using benchmarks and termly test scores. The large majority of teachers use this data to inform lesson planning. The minority of teachers have still to adopt this effective practice. All teachers have very good knowledge of their students and they keep a careful up-to-date record so that they can provide the necessary support and challenge, as appropriate.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Curriculum design and implementation	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Curriculum adaptation	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Good

The design and implementation of the curriculum is very good. The KG curriculum is outstanding. It provides very well for all areas of early learning with an appropriate balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Children have suitable opportunities to make choices and explore. Links between subjects are a strength of the KG curriculum.

The curriculum has a clear rationale. In primary, middle and high school, staff apply the American curriculum alongside the Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic education, Arabic and social studies. Students have a choice of electives in the high school, including subjects such as psychology, business studies, French, PE and art. Music and swimming are provided up to grade 5.

Continuity and progression are planned both into the curriculum and into the school curriculum leadership structure. Heads of subject have responsibility for grades 1 to 12. The science curriculum lacks continuity across different aspects of science in the middle and higher grades. Cross-curricular links are not as strong in middle and high schools as in KG and primary where they are particularly effective.



The school has adapted the curriculum to support SEN and gifted and talented students although, presently, these adaptations are not well established for the gifted and talented. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, visits and speakers enhance the curriculum, alongside a few examples of enterprise and innovation programmes such as the ‘Dragons’ Den’ and the ‘Young Enterprise’ schemes. Overall, innovation programmes remain limited in scope.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and modified. A strength of the curriculum across the school is the links with Emirati culture, traditions and values. Displays, assemblies, special events and lessons promote UAE values positively and enhance students’ cultural awareness and pride.

Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/safeguarding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Care and support	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

The protection, care guidance and support of students is very good overall, with many outstanding features. The school’s procedures for health and safety, including arrangements for school security, child protection and safeguarding, are outstanding. The site and premises are attractive and well maintained. Buildings are well adapted for SEN students, including lifts for access in KG and primary buildings. All staff are trained in child protection. All staff and all Grade 10 and 12 students are trained in first aid.

The school has a coherent and effective pastoral care structure which promotes and oversees students’ well-being. Two members of staff are responsible for the home room pastoral programme. Home-based tutors regularly mentor, monitor and record students’ personal development. This is recorded on a computerised personal tracking system during the daily timetabled session. An age-appropriate schedule of activities is used each day to promote the personal and social development for all students. This includes programmes such as SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), ‘My Identity’ and topics such as anti-bullying, cyber bullying and health



education. The nurse, the academic and two social counsellors and two learning support teachers provide further support and guidance, including effective career guidance to help with university applications.

Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Behaviour is well managed and is almost always exemplary. The school has robust systems in place for identifying students with SEN and those who are gifted and talented. Individual action plans support the learning of SEN students. The school has a variety of strategies and systems in place for addressing the low attendance figures and the poor punctuality at the start of the school day. These have yet to make sufficient impact.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Very Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Very Good
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Very Good

Leadership and management are very good. A new, highly-experienced principal was appointed in September 2015. She has a clear vision and strategic plan for the future of the school which is shared by all stakeholders. The principal is very well supported by a strong senior leadership team which includes effective middle leaders. This approach has resulted in improvements in teaching and learning including, in particular, better continuity and progression in learning for students across ages and phases. The principal is promoting a stronger approach to distributed leadership involving all staff and including students. Staff morale is high and, together with students and their parents, everyone shares a real pride in the school. Relationships and communication are very positive at all levels. The school's capacity to innovate and improve is high but this has yet to have a decisive impact in lessons. The previously high staff turnover has reduced but remains a concern for governors and school leadership.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and detailed. It correctly recognises past underachievement in Islamic education, Arabic and social studies and has underpinned improvements in these areas. It acknowledges weak achievement in



external examinations and the low attendance of students. The school development plan is a working document which sets clear targets to address the school's weaknesses.

Parents are very supportive of the school and what it is doing for their children. They are involved in the life of the school and are represented on the Board of Trustees. Governance of the school is outstanding. The school enjoys both the support and challenge of the Board of Trustees and GEMS. They hold the principal and the school to account effectively and set clear targets and measures to be achieved. They have identified the need for more effective computerised management systems for the school and the need to improve staff retention. The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The school's ICT infrastructure requires updating. The learning environment and resources, in all phases, are outstanding and support effective teaching and learning and student achievement.



What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the attainment of students, particularly as measured by external tests by:
 - i. entering all students for SATs and MAP tests, and other external assessments the school considers appropriate by needs and age
 - ii. implementing an academic support programme which prepares students for such examinations
 - iii. monitoring, tracking and reviewing the school's performance against US norms and other national and international standards
 - iv. promoting a culture of academic excellence and successful external accreditation for higher grade students.

2. Improve attendance and punctuality among all students by:
 - i. doing more to make students and their parents aware of the impact of poor attendance and lateness to lessons on educational performance
 - ii. stepping up the sanctions and rewards used to promote attendance and punctuality, involving students and their parents in agreeing them.

3. Improve students' innovation skills by:
 - i. raising teachers' awareness of the vital role innovation will play in students' futures
 - ii. develop and implement clear guidance for all teachers on planning for innovation in lessons across all phases and subjects
 - iii. monitor and evaluate students' acquisition and use of innovation skills through classroom observations and other means as appropriate.