



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



# Private School Inspection Report

Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

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Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

<b>Inspection Date</b>	February 22, 2016	to	February 25, 2016
<b>Lead Inspector</b>	Phil Taylor		
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	May 5, 2014	to	May 8, 2014

General Information	
<b>School ID</b>	49
<b>Opening year of school</b>	1994
<b>Principal</b>	Annmarie MacInnes
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Fatima Assad
<b>School telephone</b>	+971 (0)2 644 4703
<b>School Address</b>	Tourist Club Area, PO Box 27161, Abu Dhabi, UAE
<b>Official email (ADEC)</b>	<a href="mailto:adgrammar.pvt@adec.ac.ae">adgrammar.pvt@adec.ac.ae</a>
<b>School website</b>	www.agsgrmmr.sch.
<b>Fee ranges (per annum)</b>	Low to high: AED 19,236 – AED 37,296

Students	
<b>Total number of students</b>	1032
<b>Number of children in KG</b>	71
<b>Number of students in other phases</b>	Primary: 486
	Middle: 308
	High: 167
<b>Age range</b>	4 years 8 months – 18 years
<b>Grades or Year Groups</b>	KG2 – Grade 12
<b>Gender</b>	Mixed
<b>% of Emirati Students</b>	6%
<b>Largest nationality groups (%)</b>	1. Jordanian 15.5%
	2. Egyptian 12.5%
	3. Syrian 10%

Licensed Curriculum	
<b>Main Curriculum</b>	Canadian (Nova Scotia)
<b>Other Curriculum</b>	-----
<b>External Exams/ Standardised tests</b>	Nova Scotia Diploma (Grade 10-12); TIMMS and PIRLS; EMSA in Arabic 2016
<b>Accreditation</b>	Nova Scotia Dept of Education & Early Childhood Development

Staff	
<b>Number of teachers</b>	79
<b>Number of teaching assistants (TAs)</b>	15
<b>Teacher-student ratio</b>	KG / FS 25:1
	Primary 25:1
<b>Teacher turnover</b>	Middle 23:1
	High 12:1
<b>Teacher turnover</b>	13% (2-year average)



## Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	4
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	78
Number of joint lesson observations	8
Number of parents' questionnaires	112 responses; (response rate: 11.7%)
Details of other inspection activities	Inspectors conducted meetings with the principal, senior staff, faculty leaders, teachers, students, parents and governors. They attended assemblies, analysed test and assessment results, scrutinised students' work, observed lessons and considered many of the school's policies and other documents.

School	
School Aims	'To help all students develop their full potential cognitively, affectively, physically and socially, and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for them to continue as thinking, learning, physically active, valued members of society.'
School vision and mission	The school's vision is 'to continue its tradition of excellence by offering enriched and challenging programmes of learning for students from uniquely diverse and multicultural backgrounds.'
Admission Policy	The school's admission policy is based on interviews in all grades. Other than in KG, potential students also sit entrance tests in English, mathematics and Arabic. The school is heavily over-subscribed at all grade levels.
Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)	Ownership of the school is shared by three governors, one of whom is also chair of the governing body. The current principal has been in post for 5 years. The vice principal in charge of the High School has been in post for 4 years. A new vice principal was appointed in September



	2015 to oversee students in Grades 4 – 8. KG is coordinated by 2 members of staff. A tier of 9 middle leaders operates in other phases of the school.
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### SEN 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	0
Specific Learning Disability	3	0
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	7	0
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	0	0
Speech and Language Disorders	0	0
Physical and health related disabilities	0	0
Visually impaired	0	0
Hearing impaired	2	0
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)	0
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

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

School was judged to be:	Band (B)	Acceptable
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	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
Performance Standards						
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: <b>The school's overall performance</b>						



## The Performance of the School

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### Evaluation of the school's overall performance

The overall quality of the school's performance is acceptable. Senior leaders and staff have begun to improve all performance standards. This improvement is due to their commitment to teamwork and robust professional development. Staff collaborate in a shared vision, underpinned by an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Students are making at least acceptable progress in all subject areas. Recent assessment results for the lower grades in the school have shown a strong rise in standards over the last twelve months. This is because teachers have higher expectations and because levels of support for most students' learning have been significantly enhanced. Provision and planning for the most able is less well developed. High quality resources and an attractive learning environment support the effective delivery of the curriculum.

### Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

The school has secured steady improvements since the previous inspection. In the majority of areas there is evidence of recent rapid improvement. As a result, the school is well on the way to providing a better quality of education. Almost all of the issues identified in the last inspection report and recent monitoring visit report have been tackled effectively. Key staff have been appointed in nine areas to improve students' attainment and progress. The curriculum has been revised, notably in mathematics. Significant work remains to be done to analyse assessment data and to use it to shape learning. Staff morale is very high. Leaders and managers have the capacity to bring about further improvement.

### Development and promotion of innovation skills

The school has begun to develop plans for the more effective development and promotion of students' innovation skills. Teachers have started to build opportunities for active and purposeful enquiry into lessons. A few lessons in mathematics and science provide opportunities for investigation, critical thinking and collaborative learning. This approach to encouraging innovation skills is not yet consistent in all areas of the school.



## **The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:**

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- impact of the principal and senior leaders on the recent rapid improvements in the school's quality of education
- positive relationships within the school as shown in students' good attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning
- students' understanding of UAE and other world cultures
- development of students as caring, well rounded individuals.

## **The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:**

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- consistency of students' achievement across all phases of the school
- levels of challenge in lessons, especially for the most able
- planning of learning experiences in the curriculum to promote students' critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation skills
- strategic use of data to inform teaching and learning and to more effectively track students' progress.



## Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic (as a Second Language)	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Social Studies	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	N/A
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	N/A
English	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Science	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Learning Skills (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)		Good	Good	Acceptable	Good



The overall achievement of students is acceptable. Most groups of students in all subjects reach standards which are in line with curriculum expectations and a few are above. Most make acceptable or better progress in relation to their individual starting points and the curriculum standards. KG children entering the school have average mathematical ability and skills in Arabic. 85% of them do not have English as their first language. They soon begin to develop learning skills which are appropriate for their age. Assessment data shows that high achieving students are not doing as well as Nova Scotia averages. The school is only just beginning to foster a climate for innovation.

Attainment in Islamic education is acceptable throughout the school. Teachers do not track students' attainment against national standards and do not know how well students are performing in comparison to other schools. Students make progress appropriate for their ages. For example, almost all Grade 6 students understand and can recite clearly the verses of 'Surat Al Hasher'.

In Arabic, students' progress and attainment is acceptable. Both first-language and second-language students in Grade 1 can read words with letter "Da" in different positions. Grade 12 second-language students understand the present tense rules and can apply them correctly in different positions with different prepositions. Attainment is not as strong as it might be because, in a large minority of lessons, activities to challenge students or develop higher-level thinking skills are too few.

Attainment and progress in social studies are in line with age-related expectations. For example, in Grade 5, students can identify important features of the demographics of the UAE. In the lower school, students are taught Arabic dramatic arts in order to educate them in culture and heritage. Students also learn about Canadian social studies but the depth and range of their understanding need to be increased.

Students acquire good speaking and listening skills in English despite the large majority speaking it as a second language. Standards in writing develop particularly strongly. By the time they reach Grade 10, students outperform the majority of other students following the Nova Scotia curriculum. Lessons benefit from lively teaching and a rich selection of real-world contexts. Lower attainment in reading is now being improved by the recent introduction of the Running Record programme and guided reading in classes. Recent Nova Scotia provincial assessment results for Grades 3 and 6 show scores almost doubling.

Standards and progress in mathematics have improved. Recent Nova Scotia provincial assessment results show a sharp rise in students' scores in Grades 4 and 6. This is the result of a new curriculum, better resources and professional



development. Students have an increasing number of opportunities to develop research and collaborative learning skills. For example, Grade 12 students worked in groups to experiment with glass apparatus to determine complex time and water flows. In the lower grades, learning technologies are not used well enough to help students develop skills in mathematical operations, innovation and problem solving.

In science, attainment and progress are acceptable in the lower grades. Achievement is good in Grades 10-12. Students in the primary phase develop a sound understanding of a range of basic topics. In Grade 7, students develop their understanding of science research, experimentation and innovation by investigating and building their own air thermometer. In the high school phase, physics students know Newton's Laws of Motion and can apply this to calculations of mass. Biology students understand and can explain a range of disabilities. Chemistry students can use science equipment safely and effectively to measure the specific heat of metals.

Attainment and progress in other subjects are acceptable overall, with wide variations. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now embedded within lessons by using tablets and laptops. Students in Grade 12 science and in Grade 8 Arabic give effective ICT-based presentations. A Grade 11 graphic art lesson used typography guidance to very good effect to create vibrant visitor posters about the UAE. Students make acceptable progress in physical education (PE) overall; progress is slow in Grade 4 PE because lessons are hindered by noise from break time play.



## 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	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good	Good	Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

Students' good personal development is a real strength of the school. They have enthusiastic, positive attitudes towards learning. They are self-reliant and enjoy being at school. Students behave responsibly in almost all situations and follow school rules. They are courteous and relate well to adults and to all of their peers. There is no bullying in the school. Students understand the reasons for making healthy eating choices and taking exercise. Not all students follow this advice and too many make unhealthy snack choices at break times. Although space is restricted, the majority of students are keen to participate actively in PE. Attendance is good at 95.6%. Almost all students are punctual to school and lessons.

Students appreciate and understand clearly the role of Islamic values in contemporary UAE society. They take part enthusiastically in celebrating Islamic festivals such as Arafah day, Eid Al Adha and pilgrimage simulation. There are 52 different nationalities represented in the school, and students are keen to celebrate each other's diversity. Students have a good understanding of the heritage and culture of UAE. During assemblies, students stand respectfully for the flag and most join willingly in singing the national anthem. Older students in particular are well aware of environmental issues which are frequent themes in lessons. They recycle and take part in activities such as Planters Eco Club. They are active at break and lunchtimes in keeping their school tidy. The school offers a few opportunities for students to be innovative and creative. As yet there are few opportunities for students to show enterprise or entrepreneurship, or to develop economic awareness, especially in the lower grades.



### Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

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

Teaching and assessment are acceptable overall. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, a good understanding of how students learn, and create attractive learning environments. Teachers plan lessons well although more able students are not always challenged enough. In the KG and Grades 1-6, teachers frequently share learning outcomes which describe the knowledge, understanding and skills students are expected to acquire. This is less common in the higher grades.

Relationships in lessons are very positive and students are keen to learn. Teachers and students relate well to each other and the quality of dialogue in lessons is often good. Teachers do not use high-level, probing questions often enough. Targeted questioning is uncommon and teachers usually respond only to those students who put their hands up. Teachers often prepare effective additional resources beyond the textbooks. Many of these are used to adapt learning to the needs of different groups, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and those who speak English as a second language (EAL). More-able students are not sufficiently stretched by more complex or demanding tasks. Students frequently work effectively in pairs or groups as a result of precise planning by teachers and clearly-expressed intended outcomes. Teachers are beginning to provide students with opportunities in lessons for investigation, critical thinking and collaborative learning.

Assessment is acceptable. The majority of teachers mark students' work regularly, although marking is often limited to ticks and very brief comments. It does not provide sufficient formative feedback to give students precise targets about how to improve. Individual students are not aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Some teachers use rubrics to overcome this problem but the practice is not sufficiently widespread. The new reading record has begun to allow teachers in the lower grades to monitor students' reading levels much more closely and intervene to raise standards.



## Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Curriculum design and implementation	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Curriculum adaptation	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum overall is acceptable and complies with the Nova Scotia curriculum. It does not comply with Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements. There is insufficient time allocated in Grades 7-9 for UAE social studies.

The curriculum is balanced and broad with a good range of options available to older students. Learning is built on sequenced blocks which span the course of the year in all areas. Progression within grades is clear but continuity across grades and phases needs to be improved. The curriculum focuses largely on the development of knowledge and understanding although the school is beginning to emphasise the importance of skills. The curriculum promotes links between different subjects to deepen the breadth of students' understanding and encourage personal development. The new curriculum in mathematics has led to improved results in Grades 1-6. Whilst the curriculum in KG is relatively rich and provides children with good starting points for learning, it still does not allow them enough choice. Too much teacher direction restricts children's ability to develop independence and innovation skills.

The school has not yet adapted the curriculum appropriately to meet the learning needs of all students. This is particularly the case with high-ability students who are rarely challenged enough. Students with SEN and EAL have better support, although more could be done. The curriculum provides many enrichment activities including football and combat clubs, playing musical instruments and singing, making bracelets, and practising yoga. Visits to the heritage village and work with the Red Crescent strongly develop students' appreciation of UAE culture and heritage across a variety of lessons and subjects.



## 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	Good	Good	Good	Good
Care and support	Good	Good	Good	Good

The protection, care, guidance and support of students are strengths of the school. Parents place particular value on these. The school's child protection procedures are implemented in a robust way. All staff are aware of the recording and reporting mechanisms and receive regular training on child protection issues. The school has taken steps to alert students, parents and staff to the potential risks of the internet and social media. More could be done to ensure that counsellors are aware of the many ways to deal with cyber-bullying. Most students feel safe and are confident to ask for support whenever needed. The school has frequent emergency drills. Medication is stored safely in the well-equipped clinic. Maintenance, incident and accident records are kept up to date and are instantly available to staff. Upper areas of the school are currently not accessible to students with mobility difficulties. Meals and snacks provided by the school are generally healthy. Students have ready access to fresh drinking water and good shading from the sun.

Students and staff respect each other and relationships are very positive. Good behaviour is reinforced by a positive behaviour programme including a rewards policy. Attendance and punctuality are well managed. The school has effective systems to identify students with SEN or who are gifted and talented. Support for more-able students in lessons is not sufficiently consistent. All students receive external social guidance from groups such as the police, civil defence and Emirates transportation. Older students are given appropriate advice about career choices and higher education pathways.



## Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

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

Leadership and management are acceptable. The principal, supported by other senior staff and a new tier of middle leaders, is providing vigorous and effective direction. This has led to recent improvements in the quality of education. Staff have a shared vision of the school's aims and priorities. The school's self-evaluation is realistic and based on evidence gathered from a range of sources. Appropriate committees ensure that all staff are involved in preparing the self-evaluation form (SEF). A thorough system for monitoring teaching and learning has begun to raise teacher expectations and to help share best practice. The school development plan (SDP) is based on the recommendations made in the previous inspection report and subsequent monitoring visit. The time frame in the SDP is not up to date. Success criteria are loosely defined.

Parents say that they are very happy with their involvement with the school and feel that their concerns are listened to. They particularly welcome the school's open-door policy and find the teachers very accessible. They frequently work with school staff on community and charitable events such as Spirit Day, raising funds for Africa, and breast cancer awareness. Parents have direct email contact with staff and access to a new online reading programme. They can see their children's homework on the school's website. Parents receive regular reports on academic progress and instant feedback on their children's work and behaviour. A very small number of parents and teachers sit on the school advisory council which has a limited consultative function. The owner is very supportive of the school and holds leaders to account.

Most aspects of the day-to-day management of the school are well organised. Procedures and routines are effective and efficient. Staff are well qualified and enthusiastic and most benefit from well-focused professional development. Arabic-speaking staff do not feel that they have sufficient access to training in modern teaching methods. The premises are pleasant, clean, well decorated and well



maintained. A two-year redevelopment plan is scheduled to begin in June. Specialist rooms are well resourced and stimulating, particularly in the areas of SEN and KG. The library has been expanded into two rooms under the management of a new librarian. Science laboratories are well equipped and of sufficient size. No specialist music room is available. Cramped outdoor shaded areas and no external grassed area limit the opportunities for students to access a range of physical activities in PE.



## What the school should do to improve further:

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1. Further raise students' achievement across all phases of the school by:
  - i. using accurate performance data to help teachers set clear targets for individual students
  - ii. ensuring that all students, including the most able, are stretched to achieve their maximum potential
  - iii. using learning objectives and rubrics to review and consolidate learning at the end of lessons
  - iv. sharing the good practice seen in the best lessons
  - v. facilitating greater collaboration between English and Arabic staff
  - vi. ensuring that MoE curriculum requirements are met for the provision of UAE social studies.
  
2. Improve learning and the development of innovation skills by:
  - i. using a wider range of strategies to engage and motivate students
  - ii. providing students with as many opportunities as possible to develop higher-order thinking skills, solve problems, carry out research, and learn independently
  - iii. building enterprise, entrepreneurship, and the development of economic awareness into the curriculum, especially in the lower grades.
  
3. Making more effective use of data by:
  - i. gathering strategic information about school performance in areas aligned to the UAE inspection framework
  - ii. paying particular attention to progress data, the achievement of groups, and trends over time compared with international and local benchmarks
  - iv. ensuring that this information is fed back in a usable form to middle leaders and class teachers to use in their planning.
  
4. Establishing a properly constituted Governing Board with representatives from parents, teachers and other community stakeholders which both supports and challenges school leaders.



## Possible breaches of regulations and health & safety concerns

### Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

Regulations	
1. The school fails to comply with the requirements for Social Studies in respect of the minimum number of instruction periods per week for Arab students in foreign schools. This applies in G7 – G9. The minimum required here is 2 periods per week (80 minutes). The school only provides 1 period per week (50 minutes).	
2.	
3.	
The UAE Flag is raised/ flown every day?	Yes
Is playing of the UAE National Anthem a daily feature at the morning assembly?	Yes

Health and Safety Concerns:
1.
2.
3.

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	Phil Taylor	<b>Date</b>	February 25, 2016
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