

# Nova Scotia International Programs

## Annual Inspection Report

### 2017-2018

<b>NAME OF SCHOOL</b> Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)
<b>ADDRESS OF SCHOOL</b> Tourist Club Area, P.O. Box 27161 Abu Dhabi, UAE
<b>NAME OF OWNER</b> Fatima Assad
<b>DATE OF INSPECTION</b> February 25 – March 1, 2018



# **ANNUAL INSPECTION REPORT**

## **NOVA SCOTIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM**

at

NAME OF SCHOOL Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada)

DATE February 25 – March 1, 2018

On Feb 25 – Mar 1, the annual inspection was completed at Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada), Abu Dhabi, UAE, termed the School in this report. The purpose of this inspection was to determine whether the requirements for the Nova Scotia (NS) international program have been met, according to the agreement between the owner of the school and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department). The inspection team, appointed by the International Programs Division at the Department consisted of David Brennick and Dale Armstrong, who served as the team lead.

During the visit to the school, the inspection team reviewed the criteria of the annual inspection, and met with the NS principal, NS teachers, the owner of the school, support staff, students and parents.

The school's Nova Scotia program has an enrolment of 1128 students, including 916 students in grade primary to grade 9, and 212 students in grade 10 to grade 12. The school operates as a private institution and provides the Nova Scotia program to students from over 50 nationalities. Abu Dhabi Grammar School (AGS) began offering the NS curriculum in 1994 and is Nova Scotia's longest running international program. It offers a broad and comprehensive NS curriculum, with courses in English and French, in addition to approved locally developed courses in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies.

The Nova Scotia program at AGS continues to strengthen year after year with a demonstrated and sustained commitment to a learning environment focused on a high level of student achievement and engagement. Students are nurtured and empowered. The inspection team noted many examples of opportunities for students to develop confidence and leadership skills be it through supporting younger students or participation in morning announcements. The caring, inclusive learning environment is supported by effective communication within the school community fostering positive relationships among students, teachers and parents.

The inspection team would like to thank Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada) for its hospitality, cooperation and preparedness for the inspection visit.

## I: School Operations Management Structure and Program Management

### 1. A management structure exists with clear expectations and responsibilities understood by the principal and teachers.

The management structure at Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada) AGS) reflects a collaborative approach to leadership. AGS is led by an administrative team comprised of a principal and 2 vice principals, with strong support from a guidance counsellor and an admissions teacher leader.

Contributing to the management of the program include administrative assistants, school security, technology support staff and teacher assistants. The support staff contribute to an environment rich with opportunities for student learning. The rapport and working relationship between Nova Scotia program staff and other school support personnel is positive with a collective goal focused on the wellbeing of students.

A staff orientation event held early in the school year is intended to clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations. Teachers are guided through sessions on cultural competency provided by a lead teacher.

In addition, AGS has an active School Advisory Council that meets regularly to discuss school policies and procedures.

### 2. There is good evidence to demonstrate effective communication with students, staff, and parents.

There is evidence of effective and ongoing communication among students, staff and parents. Communication has been a focus for development and is an area that has been greatly enhanced.

A curriculum night is held at the beginning of the school year at which time teachers provide course outlines to parents. An orientation session is arranged for parents of students attending the school for the first time and information sessions regarding program and graduation requirements are organized for parents of students entering high school. Formal parent-teacher interviews to report on student progress are carried out over the course of the school year.

AGS provides parents with a handbook that outlines the school's education program and relevant school policies. Parents indicated they have ongoing communication with teachers through email, SMS, the school website, social media, and classroom messaging, and that they receive regular student progress updates.

Students indicated they communicate frequently with teachers through Google classroom on matters relating to academic work, class assignments, and the provision of extra help.

There is an active Student Council that plans and provides opportunities for students to participate in school-wide initiatives and events. The Student Council acts as a liaison between the student body and the administration, and takes a leadership role by representing AGS at school events and in the community.

Students are selected to participate in the morning announcements at the opening of the school day. Students commented on the respectful and inclusive daily opening which involves the recitation of short verses from the Qur'an, and the UAE national anthem with the raising of the flag.

**3. There are clear policies and procedures that are shared and understood by teachers, students and parents.**

Policies and procedures regarding responsibilities, attendance, code of conduct, and assessment and evaluation of student learning, are shared through information sessions with parents. The school website is also an effective means for communicating school policies and procedures. Parents indicated that they access the website and that they are appreciative of the transparency it provides regarding school policies and practices.

Each teacher has access to a comprehensive teacher handbook which clearly details school policies, procedures and practices. The handbook outlines roles and responsibilities, professional code of conduct, school planning and working committees.

Teachers develop classroom rules and expectations with students which are displayed in the classroom.

**4. There is an effective process for student admission to the Nova Scotia program.**

There is a staggered entry process for student admission to the NS program with registration for new students beginning in February and continuing until classes are full. Admissions procedures are posted on signage at the entrance to the school and on the school website. The admissions policy is clear and effective and is overseen by a designated teacher leader of the NS program. Students are assessed for placement in language, mathematics and Arabic by a team of teachers.

High school students transferring to AGS meet with the high school vice principal and guidance counsellor to consider credits for transfer and determine appropriate placement. The meetings provide an opportunity to share information on program course offerings and graduation requirements.

**5. Promotion of the Nova Scotia program is accurately presented.**

AGS promotes the Nova Scotia program through brochures and through the website but word of mouth is one of the most effective means of promotion. After considering other schools, parents indicated that they chose AGS because of the inclusive, safe and caring environment it provides for their children. Parents value and appreciate the openness at school and the approachable nature of the teachers.

**6. Individual student records are maintained and securely stored.**

There are 2 sets of student files that are securely stored and maintained. One file contains entry level registration information and personal data while the other file contains ongoing academic progress, credit checks, and report cards and is cumulative in nature. Files are comprehensive, complete and current. Teachers update cumulative record files on every student and information is shared with receiving teachers to facilitate a smooth transition for students and to support their academic success.

**7. There is plan in place to address any potential gaps in teaching assignments that may arise due to unforeseen circumstances.**

There is a plan to address temporary gaps in teaching assignments with substitutes available for short-term teacher absences. Absences may also be covered internally on an interim basis. Teachers prepare and leave lesson plans for substitutes to ensure continuity in student learning. Teachers in grade level groupings also provide added support to substitutes when they are at the school.

**II: MAXIMIZING STUDENT LEARNING**

**Curriculum Delivery and Student Assessment**

**8. The curriculum is being implemented effectively.**

Teachers have the required resources and curriculum documents to effectively implement the curriculum.

Through classroom visits it was evident that students are actively engaged in learning. Curriculum outcomes are made explicit and/or clearly posted in classrooms to help students understand what they are learning and the purpose of the lesson. Teachers check for understanding and are keenly aware of student needs. Students indicated teachers have frequent check-ins and know when and how to support student learning.

Teachers are engaged in common planning by grade level and, at the elementary level, they provide an integrated approach to learning. Teachers have a block of scheduled professional learning time that focuses attention on sharing by grade level and/or subject. During common planning time, teachers develop and share assessments and instructional strategies. The shared planning experiences help contribute to teachers' collective professional growth and expertise, and enable them to work together in implementing and delivering an integrated program for students.

Middle Leaders provide professional development in literacy, mathematics, science, IT, social studies, Arabic, and specialist areas. The Middle Leaders meet regularly with their subject team to share instructional and assessment strategies.

**9. There are sufficient and adequate resources and materials.**

AGS has a well-stocked book room with the required textbooks for each course. Textbooks are numbered for easy identification and organized to facilitate distribution and replacement when needed.

The school library features resources of various genres and levels and has recently been expanded with a large collection of books in Arabic. The library is digitizing its process for circulation and during this process there is a mobile library overseen by a parent volunteer who delivers books to students in their classrooms.

Classroom libraries are well-resourced with novels and appropriate age and language levelled books. Classrooms have multiple resources and materials to support program delivery and teachers regularly supplement their lessons by accessing online resources.

Classroom libraries generally are very good but more books could be acquired to further enrich what is already available to students. It is suggested that, in consultation with English teachers, a list of English reading materials be developed and purchased.

**10. Each course meets the minimum stated number of hours of class time, as stated in the PSP.**

High school courses meet the required 110 hours of instructional time for credit. Students in grades primary – 9 receive the required hours of instruction per year at each grade.

Schedule changes have been made at the high school level to better meet the needs of students and to minimize transition times between classes. The scheduling for grade 9 students now follows the same format as the grade 10 - 12 students, which has resulted in seamless transitioning and a reduced number of class changes.

Schedules are designed to provide common planning time. Teachers work in grade level groupings and share common lessons, assessment practices and instructional strategies.

**11. Student progress and achievement are assessed and recorded in relation to the curriculum outcomes.**

Teachers exercise fair assessment practices and provide flexible options for students to demonstrate their learning. They use a variety of assessments and provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Teachers collect assessment data from observations, tests, presentations, assignments, projects, group work, portfolios journals, reading records and exit tickets – as examples.

It is evident from conversations with students and teachers, as well as through classroom observations, that formative assessment is a common and ongoing practice. Students are aware of their own learning, how they are assessed, and they receive frequent formative feedback on how to improve. Assessment rubrics are developed with student input and students indicated to the inspection team that they are very familiar with rubrics and understand how they are being assessed.

Students participate in the Nova Scotia provincial assessments in grades 3, 4, 6, 8 and provincial examinations in grade 10. The results for the Abu Dhabi Grammar School students continue to improve, with overall scores showing a steady improvement and with many exceeding the Nova Scotia average.

A school-wide mathematics assessment has been developed and is administered twice a year. The data collected is analyzed with a focus on specific strands of mathematics as part of the school's initiative to improve student achievement in mathematics. Each year, students at AGS participate in the Waterloo Math Challenge.

**12. Supports and strategies are in place to help students who are experiencing difficulty.**

There is an effective school planning team which provides strategies to support students who may be experiencing difficulty. Other supports in place for students include Resource at the elementary, as well as a fulltime English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher.

Teachers invest time in supportive interventions for students who may require extra help. Teachers provide 1:1 support to students, work in small groups, differentiate instruction, scaffold lessons, and accommodate where necessary to meet the needs of the learner. Students told the inspection team that their teachers know them as learners, know where they are in their learning, and what they may need to improve. Students commented that teachers regularly provide extra help after school

or at break time, and through email. Teachers also provide frequent communication with parents and ensure they understand how their child is progressing.

Students in grades 11 and 12 provide extra help to students in elementary and middle grades in mathematics, science and literacy. Buddy readers are paired with younger students to read aloud and provide support. The student leaders are trained by the teachers and they receive a certificate of recognition for their leadership.

### **13. Science labs are accessed and utilized to support science outcomes.**

The science labs are resourced with appropriate and adequate materials to support the science curriculum outcomes.

Students are regularly scheduled to participate in laboratory science classes. There is a pre-lab class held to review the lesson outcome, the process of recording of data and observations, and the lab protocols to be followed such as safety and the proper handling of equipment.

Students indicated that they enjoy the hands-on opportunity to engage in science experiments and acquire experience with commonly accepted laboratory practices and protocols.

### **14. PowerSchool is used for the management and storage of student information and data.**

Teachers use Gradebook to manage and record assessments. They demonstrate good understanding of its application and use it to link their assessments to learning outcomes. Teachers regularly input assessment data and provide feedback to students regarding their ongoing learning.

Teachers have a good understanding of how to use PowerSchool for the preparation of report cards. They complete Learner Profiles, record attendance and input student assessment data as part of their ongoing management of student records.

The guidance counsellor and vice principal use PowerSchool to generate credit checks which are then used to facilitate course selection and to ensure students are on target to meet graduation requirements. The guidance counsellor and vice principal meet with students individually to review their selected program pathway.



### **15. Technology is used to support program delivery.**

Technology is integrated into the curriculum at all levels with early elementary students having access to iPads, and students in grades 4 to 12 accessing Chromebooks. Students and teachers are knowledgeable of Google Classroom and incorporate technology seamlessly throughout the curriculum.

Information and communications technology (ICT) is firmly embedded in teaching practices and continues to enhance student learning. The school has invested in upgraded internet access and has acquired more computers for student use. Communication among teachers, parents and students has been enhanced through technology.

Teachers design lessons integrating technology in daily lesson plans, and students use available devices to work on projects and to do research. Use of technology is prevalent and accessed in daily lessons. Classrooms are equipped with electronic boards which are used as a teaching tool. Teachers use Google Forms for tests, quizzes and assignments, and students are provided with immediate feedback through the Google platform. Students apply technology to collaborate, communicate, and create, as well as for problem-solving.

An ICT teacher leader provides professional development to teachers and ensures students apply the technology with ease. The ongoing professional development has had a multiplier effect with respect to integrating technology across the curriculum, facilitating teachers' use of technology in their instructional delivery and enabling students to enhance their learning.

Students at AGS participate in the worldwide Hour of Code to advance problem-solving, logic and creativity in computer science. It is notable that a junior high student developed an app for smart phones that summarizes complex scientific journals into an easy-to-read format as part of a project which she subsequently sold to Apple.

### **III: TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

#### **16. The principal has previous administrative experience working as a principal or vice-principal, and a minimum of 3 years teaching experience. The principal demonstrates a broad understanding of Nova Scotia Public School Programs (PSP).**

The principal has 35+ years experience in education both in Nova Scotia and internationally, and her comprehensive and extensive knowledge of education is evident in her leadership at Abu Dhabi Grammar School. The principal has a deep understanding of cultural diversity, and her cultural proficiency permeates her leadership at the school. She works with an effective administrative team in a collaborative and collegial environment. Through her 7 years at AGS, the principal has

established trusting relationships with the school community as evidenced by parents commenting on her inviting and inclusive approach and her knowledge of student learning.

**17. The principal has the authority and the responsibility for the delivery of the NS program.**

The principal oversees the delivery of the Nova Scotia program for the entire school with the support of 2 vice principals. The principal has the authority to ensure the program is delivered to all students in a safe and inclusive learning environment. She collaborates and works closely with the vice principals and the guidance counsellor to support students. The principal is respected by the parents and it is evident she has a well-established relationship with students and teachers.

**18. Teachers in the Nova Scotia program have Nova Scotia certification.**

There are 60+ teachers in the Nova Scotia program at AGS and all but 4 have Nova Scotia certification. The teachers awaiting NS certification have submitted documentation to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for processing.

**19. There is an effective teacher appraisal process in place.**

There is an effective teacher appraisal process in place at Abu Dhabi Grammar School that engages staff in professional goal-setting each year. The process is clearly communicated to staff and focuses on professional growth. Teachers have opportunity to engage in professional discussions as part of the appraisal process, and they receive a final copy of their appraisal report.

In addition to the formal appraisal process there are opportunities for formative feedback through classroom observations and walkthroughs.

#### IV: BUILDING FACILITIES to support learning

##### 20. The school is well maintained and the facility supports effective program delivery.

The school is very well maintained and has a team of staff responsible for the effective operation of the facility. The facility supports effective program delivery in the space provided. While there is little extra space as every available space is taken for programming, there are renovation plans underway that will increase and maximize space. The renovations will address the limited space for recreation and play during break times.

The school has organized the students in various locations by grade levels. Classrooms for the younger students are on the first level of the school, while the older students are on the second floor. There are multiple classes at each grade level, each teacher has their own classroom space, and students transition from class to class with ease. The classroom spaces provide opportunity for students to work in groups, pairs or other classroom configurations. Classrooms are set up with the required technology to support program delivery. The school has a recently expanded library, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a cafeteria, a staff room, resource room, and many other spaces that support program delivery such as a music room, a science lab, an art room, a guidance office, administrative offices, and a dance/yoga studio.

##### 21. The school is licensed to operate the NS program and has appropriate permits from the local education authority.

The school has the required licenses, permits and documents from the local education authority clearly posted in the main entrance of the school.

#### V: COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EDUCATION

The owner, Fatima Assad, is responsible to the Department for ensuring the Nova Scotia program is operating within the requirements outlined in the agreement between the Department and the owner. The owner is responsible to adhere to the program requirements and expectations identified in the Nova Scotia *Public School Programs*.

#### CONCLUSION

The inspection team recognizes the principal and staff of Abu Dhabi Grammar School (Canada) for the following:

- Building a culturally responsive environment at AGS
- Working with grade level colleagues in professional learning groups

- Creating a student-centered approach and providing student-focused activities
- Creating a learning environment where students feel welcome and a sense of ownership
- Recognizing and celebrating the cultural diversity at AGS
- Being progressive in the implementation of technology to support learning
- Ensuring student work is displayed in classrooms and in the hallways
- Acknowledging and promoting the positive accomplishments of students
- Sustaining a commitment to technology integration
- Supporting teacher professional development opportunities through collaborative planning
- Providing many extra curricular activities and events for students, including the opportunity to participate in the Waterloo Math Challenge. Teachers volunteer to offer activities after school including rugby, dance, singing, crafts, STEM, tech, student council, yearbook, drumming, games, chess, art, cooking, and photography – to name a few

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

- Continue to invest in Chromebooks or iPads to advance the integration of technology in the curriculum
- Continue to provide common planning time for teachers to share, collaborate and plan
- Continue to build a culturally relevant school environment
- Continue to support best practice in assessment and evaluation
- Continue to explore strategies to meet the needs of higher achieving students
- Continue to enhance the seamless integration of technology to support student learning

#### **INSPECTION TEAM**

Dale Armstrong  
**Name of Inspector**

March 2018  
**Date**

David Brennick  
**Name of Inspector**

March 2018  
**Date**

# *Why Should Recess Be Extended By 30 Minutes*

*January 29, 2018  
Abu Dhabi grammar school*



**Student work – persuasive writing**



**Student art work**



**Front entrance AGS**



Laptop carts for Chromebooks



Moral Education



Student work

