



دائرة التعليم والمعرفة
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND KNOWLEDGE

Inspection Report of The Sheikh Zayed Academy for Girls

Overall Effectiveness: Very good

Academic Year 2017 – 2018



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School Information

General Information	Inspection date:	from	28 Shaban, 1439h	to	1 Ramadan, 1439h
		from	14-May-18	to	17-May-18
	School name	The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls			
	School ID	9118			
	School address	Mubarak Bin Mohammed St, Al Bateen, Abu Dhabi			
	School telephone	+971 (0) 2 619 5555			
	School official email	sheikhzayedacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae			
	School website	http://zayedacademy.ae/girls			
	School curriculum	American			
	School phases	KG – High School			
	Fee range and category	29,000 (KG1) – 66,900 – very high			
	Number of lessons observed	120			
Number of joint lessons observed	18				
Staff Information	Total number of teachers	112			
	Turnover rate	19%			
	Number of teaching assistants	41			
	Teacher- student ratio	1:14			
Student Information	Total number of students	1527			
	% of Emirati Students	89%			
	% of Largest nationality groups	1. Jordan 3%			
		2. USA 2%			
		3. Pakistan 1%			
	% of SEN students	2%			
	% of students per phase	KG: 20%	Middle: 25%		
Primary: 43%		High: 12%			
Gender	KG–G3: Boys and girls G4–G12: Girls				



The Performance of the School

Performance Standard 1 Students' Achievement	Performance Standard 2 Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills
Very Good	Very Good
Performance Standard 3 Teaching and Assessment	Performance Standard 4 Curriculum
Very Good	Very Good
Performance Standard 5 The protection, care, guidance and support of students	Performance Standard 6 Leadership and management
Outstanding	Outstanding

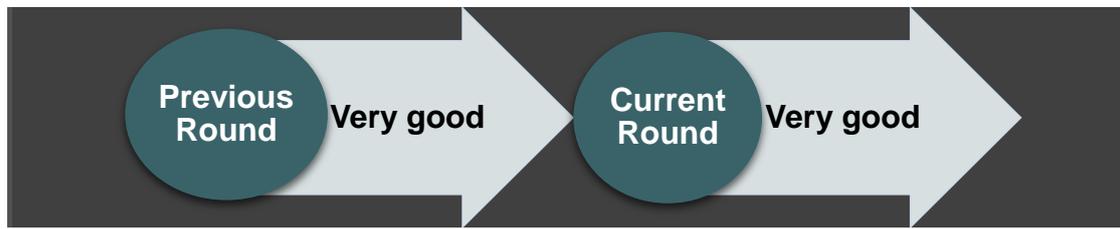


Evaluation of the school's overall performance

- The overall performance of the school is very good. It produces confident girls with a strong sense of duty and social responsibility. The principal has been in post since August 2017.
- Students' achievement is very good overall. Outstanding achievement in English and use of information and communications technology (ICT) underpins students' successful learning across most other subjects. Students' skills in Arabic are less well-developed because they use the language less frequently. Students are ambitious and independent learners who use technology confidently.
- Students' personal and social development and their innovation skills are very good overall. Students unfailingly demonstrate Islamic values through their very good behaviour and socially responsible attitudes. They are innovative and creative thinkers who demonstrate a secure understanding of UAE and global issues.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is very good overall. Teachers use highly effective enquiry-based learning approaches which engage students and support their very good achievement. They use assessment very effectively to ensure that students are consistently provided with appropriately challenging learning experiences.
- The curriculum is very good overall. Based on discovery and enquiry, the KG curriculum is giving students an outstanding start to their education. At other stages, the broad range of well-connected and enriching learning opportunities are enabling students to apply their learning for real purposes.
- The protection, care, guidance and support of students is outstanding. A culture of kindness and mutual respect characterises the school. Students receive high quality pastoral and academic care and support to develop independence and make positive choices.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The Principal and senior leadership team skilfully align the school's work with the Board of Trustees to honour the vision of Sheikh Zayed. They critically evaluate the school's effectiveness and ensure that all staff are engaged in continuous improvement.



Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve



- The school's data shows that students' achievement is improving in almost all external examinations. Students' achievement in MAP assessments is moving closer to USA averages. The school has developed rigorous use of assessment, and now compares students' achievement against international standards. The school's academic support team help to prepare students for external examinations. The curriculum and the school development plan are now strongly driven by thorough analysis of performance data.
- The school is successfully promoting a culture of academic excellence by increasing graduation requirements. All graduates now undertake SATs and an increasing number take advanced placement (AP) courses. A larger proportion of students now acquire the qualifications required to make competitive applications to international universities.
- Students' creative thinking and problem-solving skills are now developed very effectively in primary classes. This is built upon in the middle and high school phases, where students become adept analytical thinkers. Older students develop enterprise and leadership skills by organising events and running small businesses.
- The school has improved attendance from 90% to 93% by improving parents' and students' understanding of the importance of regular attendance. There is more to do to raise attendance further, particularly in the kindergarten (KG) and high school.
- The school has made considerable progress both on the recommendations of the previous inspection, and in responding to its own identified areas for improvement. Senior leaders engage all staff in innovating and improving the school and have demonstrated a very good capacity for continued improvement.



Key areas of strength and areas for improvement

Key areas of strength

1. High standards of students' achievement, supported by their confident use of English and ICT.
2. Students' collaboration, social responsibility and leadership skills.
3. The culture of high expectations and ambition that develop students' readiness for global opportunities.
4. The excellent quality of education provided in the KG.
5. The focus on the school's Governors and leaders on promoting the vision of Sheikh Zayed.

Key areas for improvement

1. Continue to raise achievement, particularly Arabic by:
 - I. increasing opportunities for students to speak and use Arabic for real purposes.
 - II. sharing highly effective teaching between the stages in the school to increase its consistency.
 - III. continuing to develop approaches to assessment, to personalise learning to students' needs in the middle and high school
 - IV. developing students' independence in primary, and supporting students when they join middle school, to improve their progress during the transition between these phases
 - V. developing further opportunities for independent learning and enterprising activity in primary.
2. Continue to improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - VI. continuing to engage all parents in supporting their children's learning and attendance.
 - VII. ensuring that older students arrive punctually to lessons and start work promptly.



Provision for Reading

- The school recognises reading as a foundation skill for successful learning. The school's two libraries provide well-designed spaces for students to read for pleasure and research. Each contains an extensive range of fiction and non-fiction texts in both English and Arabic, classified at age-appropriate levels. Students regularly use the library independently at break time to exchange books and read quietly.
- Almost all students read regularly for pleasure. Younger students read several stories each day and older students read quietly and aloud as part of English and Arabic lessons.
- The primary librarian inspires children's love of reading in weekly literacy lessons. She reads carefully-selected books across a range of genres and talks about the literary techniques used. She tracks carefully students' reading experiences and ensures that they are directed towards books at the right level. There is scope to develop this approach further to offer personalised recommendations and book discussion to older students, and to all students in Arabic.
- Students' reading skills are developed very effectively in English and Arabic lessons at all stages. By the upper stages students enjoy poetry and prose from a broad range of cultures. The school organises regular events and displays to celebrate special occasions and chosen authors.
- All teachers across most subjects in the school are trained and skilled in supporting students to read and understand challenging texts. Primary teachers, Arabic and English teachers develop students' skills in reading for information, for understanding and for enjoyment at all stages.
- Approaches to teaching writing require students to thoroughly analyse reading texts and identify how the author creates effects, in order to recreate these in their own writing. Students at all stages are therefore effective analytical readers, particularly in English.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	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 an Additional Language)	Attainment	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
	Progress	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
Social Studies	Attainment	N/A	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	N/A	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
English	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Very Good	Outstanding
Mathematics	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Outstanding	Very Good
Science	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	Attainment	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Learning Skills		Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good



Overall achievement

- The overall quality of students' achievement is very good across most subjects. Children in the KG make exceptional progress across all curriculum subjects. Students' well-developed English skills support their very good achievement in all English medium subjects. Students' achievement in Arabic, particularly that of second language learners, is limited by too few opportunities to speak and use Arabic.
- Students' achievement in the school's internal assessments is outstanding. They perform above Abu Dhabi averages in international assessments such as PISA. Grade 12 exam results in Islamic education and Arabic are outstanding. Their attainment in MAP assessments linked to the American curriculum is weak and below that of students in USA, but is improving. All students in the high school graduate with several SAT qualifications, and average SAT scores in reading, writing and mathematics have increased sharply over the last three years. An increasing number achieve AP certificates.
- Students make very good or better progress in lessons and over time in most subjects. The school has successfully sustained very high standards of achievement since the last inspection. Students with special educational needs (SEN) and those who are gifted and talented also make strong progress.

Subjects

- Students' achievement in **Islamic Education** is outstanding in KG and very good across other stages. In KG, almost all students demonstrate skills and understanding above curriculum expectations. Across the school, students have very good recitation and 'Tajweed' skills. They apply what they learn to their daily life, such as being respectful and compassionate, and caring for the environment.
- Students' achievement in **Arabic first language** is outstanding in KG and very good at other stages. The large majority of the students' achievement is better than grade-related expectations in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In KG students can write simple sentences. By Grade 11, the large majority of students can critically analyse age-appropriate texts.
- Students' achievement in **Arabic second language** is good. The majority of students achieve levels above curriculum expectations in listening, reading and writing. Students in primary decode words and write simple sentences. By Grade 9, they can read a story and write an alternative ending. Students' speaking skills are less well developed. No lessons were visited in high school because of scheduling difficulties including



examination preparations.

- Students' achievement in **English** is outstanding overall. Students in KG and primary are making outstanding progress in developing analytical reading and writing skills beyond curriculum expectations. By the middle school students speak with fluency and impressive vocabulary. High school students competently analyse techniques used in Shakespearean prose.
- Students' achievement in **mathematics** is outstanding in KG and very good at other stages. In the middle school students make outstanding progress. The large majority of students' skills in calculation and using data are above expectations. By the middle school they are adept at applying their mathematical skills and knowledge to solve challenging problems.
- Students' achievement in **science** is outstanding in KG and very good at other stages. In KG, students develop enquiring minds and scientific thinking through independent enquiry. This is effectively built upon, and by Grade 9 and beyond, the large majority of students demonstrate very good skills in interpreting the results of their investigations based on their sound understanding of scientific principles.
- Students' achievement in **other subjects** is very good overall with many outstanding features, particularly in elective subjects in the middle and high school. Students across the stages demonstrate considerable skill in a range of sports. They show confidence and self-expression in their skilled artwork and drama productions. Older students can explain the links between the language, art and history of different cultures. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of the historical events that shaped the Arab world.

Learning skills

- Learning skills are outstanding in KG and very good in other phases. Students' enthusiasm for learning is apparent in the vibrant and focused atmosphere in lessons. Children in KG are learning joyfully, sharing their ideas and finding answers to their own questions. Students routinely collaborate with others to gather information and find innovative ways of expressing their learning. They reflect carefully on everything they do and constantly try to improve their work, often making links across their learning experiences. Almost all students can explain their strengths, personal learning targets, and what they need to do to achieve these. Students are adept users of technologies and natural critical thinkers.



Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students' skills in English which are supporting their learning across the curriculum.
- Students' skills in using technology.
- Students' understanding of the links between their learning and the wider world.

Areas for Improvement:

- Students' skills in Arabic, particularly their speaking skills.

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
Personal development	Outstanding	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	Outstanding	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills are very good. Almost all students have a very strong sense of personal responsibility and consistently demonstrate maturity, initiative and independence. Students' behaviour is exemplary in KG and primary and very good in middle and high school.
- Most students show perseverance and strive for excellence. They are ambitious, independent learners who reflect on their own achievements, and have a strong sense of their role as models for others.
- Students respect their own health and understand the value of a healthy body and mind. Their attendance is acceptable at 93%, but not all students in middle and high school are punctual enough to lessons.
- Students' very good personal development is shaped by their Islamic values.



They have a very well-developed understanding of the development of the UAE and its role in the world.

- Students are respectful and compassionate to others, particularly those less fortunate. The school's considerable charitable work led by students, supported by their parents, demonstrates their strong sense of social responsibility.
- Students regularly show resourcefulness and innovative thinking in their learning. Older students' enterprising small businesses demonstrate their excellent business acumen and creative ideas, but primary students have less opportunity to do this.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students appreciation of Islamic values and UAE history.
- Students' social responsibility.
- Students' innovation.

Areas for Improvement:

- Students' attendance and few older students' punctuality to lessons.
- Enterprising activity in primary.



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	Outstanding	Outstanding	Very Good	Very Good

- Teaching and assessment are very good overall. Almost all teachers have a very good understanding of their subjects and how students learn effectively. They expertly plan lessons which link closely to curriculum requirements and develop students' learning skills. Most teachers have very high expectations. They provide imaginative resources and activities which stimulate students' interest.
- Teachers' interactions with students are of a consistently high quality. Those in the KG and primary use questioning most skillfully, both to make students think deeply and to assess their understanding. Those in middle and high school encourage students to ask and find answers to their own questions and problems.
- Almost all teachers challenge and inspire students to be innovative using enquiry-based learning. These approaches are effectively developing students' critical and analytical thinking skills and deepening their understanding. Teachers are particularly skilled in using a range of technologies for teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers have developed highly effective approaches to assessment which enable them to monitor closely each student's progress. Most teachers use what they learn from assessing students to adapt lessons to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to students. This is less well developed in the middle and high schools. Senior leaders use assessment to understand and influence how well students' performance compares to international standards.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Highly effective enquiry-based learning approaches.
- The use of technology and innovation in lessons
- Effective use of assessment to provide support and challenge.

Areas for Improvement:

- Continue to share the considerable amount of highly effective practice to further increase its consistency.
- Continue to develop approaches to assessment to personalise learning to students' needs in the middle and high school.



Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

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

- The overall quality of the curriculum is very good. The curriculum has been carefully aligned with the school's mission. It follows the American curriculum using the Massachusetts State core standards from KG2 to Grade 12.
- The curriculum provides continuous and progressive learning experiences across and within a broad range of subjects. In KG, it promotes deep understanding through discovery and enquiry. At all stages it develops students' skills in using English and information and communications technology (ICT) for real purposes.
- The school regularly reviews the curriculum based on thorough analysis of students' progress and development. A few students take time to adjust to differences in approaches between primary and middle schools.
- Staff have developed meaningful links between subjects which enable students to apply their learning for real purposes. This is exceptionally strong in KG and primary. The curriculum and its delivery are modified to meet the needs of all students.
- The primary curriculum is enriched to develop students' imagination, creativity and their understanding of their own learning. In the middle and high school, additional subjects provide options in line with students' interests and aspirations. The curriculum is further enriched by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enterprise, innovation and creative expression.
- Links which develop students' understanding of the history of the UAE in a global context are a unique and highly successful feature of the curriculum. Students' values are promoted across all their experiences in school and this is augmented with lessons in moral education.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- A play-based curriculum in the KG appropriate to children's development.
- The broad range of subjects and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Integration of English and ICT skills across the curriculum.

Areas for Improvement:

- Support students' progress through the transition between primary and middle school.



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

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

- The protection, care, guidance and support of students is outstanding. The school's procedures for safeguarding students are rigorous. All staff and parents are aware of the school's child protection policy. The school's robust safety and security arrangements are reviewed regularly.
- The school provides a safe and hygienic environment. Meticulous risk assessment and record keeping enable staff to identify and address issues immediately. Students are carefully supervised at all times, and their health is monitored closely by the school's caring nurses.
- The school provides wholesome meals and supports parents to provide healthy snacks. Students engage in regular active play and physical education. Arrangements for teaching children about physical and mental health are thorough, and sometimes innovative.
- The school's stimulating learning spaces are all accessible to students with special needs. All staff promote a culture of kindness and respect through their interactions with one another and with children. The school has improved students' attendance and this work is ongoing.
- The school promptly identifies students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Specialist staff, working closely with class teachers and parents, are enabling these students to make very strong progress. The school's Mawhibatna (Our Talent) programme is effectively extending the skills of students who are gifted and talented.
- The student advisory team provide high quality, personalised support for students' personal development, achievement and post-school destinations.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- The safe, secure, inclusive learning environment
- a culture of kindness and mutual respect
- the identification of and provision for students with SEN

Areas for Improvement:

- Attendance systems and procedures.



Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Very Good
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The school's vision is used by senior leaders to set a clear strategic direction for the school. Distributed leadership across the school is engaging all staff in innovation and improvement in line with the school's mission.• Senior leaders use their considerable expertise in international education to provide excellent leadership, sensitive to the school's context. Teachers are research-based practitioners who collaborate to implement best practice. They set themselves challenging targets, and senior leaders hold them accountable for achieving high standards.• Senior leaders systematically evaluate the school's work. They know what needs to be improved and provide strong direction to staff. The school development plan provides a very clear, concise framework and drives improvement well.• The school very effectively engages parents in supporting their children's learning and celebrating their achievement. Senior leaders take account of parents' views, and parents have begun to respond to the school's ongoing drive to improve attendance. School leaders are developing further approaches to sharing students' learning and achievements with their parents on an ongoing basis.• The Board of Trustees has high expectations which are focused on producing young women of ambition. The board maintains strong links with stakeholders and holds the school accountable for achieving its mission.• Staff are appointed strategically to promote inclusion and achievement. The school's exceptionally high-quality premises and resources are supporting students' innovation and technological competence particularly well.• The school's detailed plans for raising achievement are effectively focused on improving further students' performance in PISA and TIMSS examinations.	



Areas of Relative Strength:

- The very skilful leadership of the Principal and senior leadership team.
- Rigorous and analytical approaches to self-evaluation.
- Engagement of all staff in improving the school
- Strong vision and sense of direction provided by the Board of Trustees.

Areas for Improvement:

- Continue to engage all parents in supporting their children's learning and attendance.