



Road to Outstanding

A qualitative analysis of UAE
school inspection reports



مجموعة المعارف
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Introduction



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“Education is a fundamental element for the development of a nation and the best investment in its youth.”

UAE Vision 2021

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K-12 Education in the UAE

The education system of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as we see it now, is quite new and it is remarkable how much has been achieved in this relatively short time. Around the year 1950 there were a few schools in the country, reserved for male students. In the 1960s and 1970s a school building program was put in place to expand the education system. In 2006-2007, approximately 650,000 students were enrolled at 1,256 public and private schools. About 60% of all students attend public schools.

This percentage is changing in favor of the private schools in recent years.

The public schools are government-funded and are free for citizens of the UAE; admission for expatriate students is based on merit and fees apply. The curriculum is created to match the UAE’s development goals and values.

There are also many private schools which are internationally accredited. These follow international curricula.

Figure 1: Dubai K-12 private school enrolment by curriculum

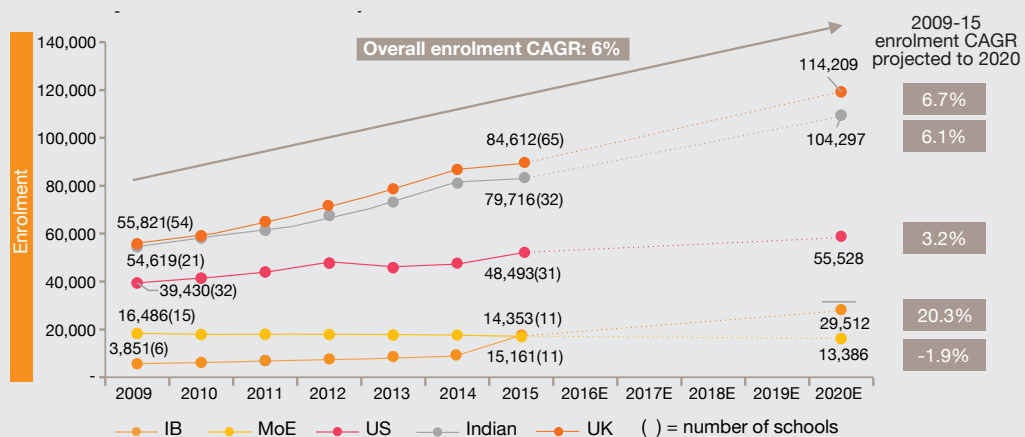
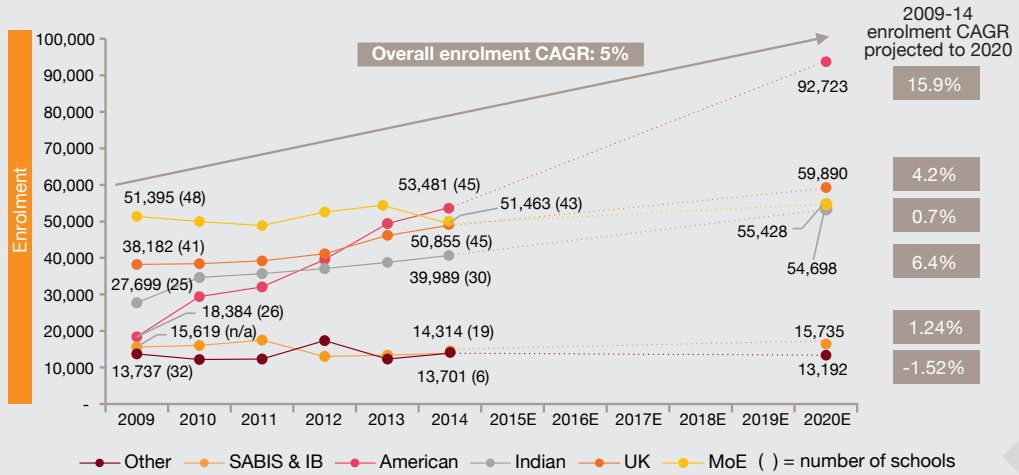


Figure 2: Abu Dhabi K-12 private school enrolment by curriculum

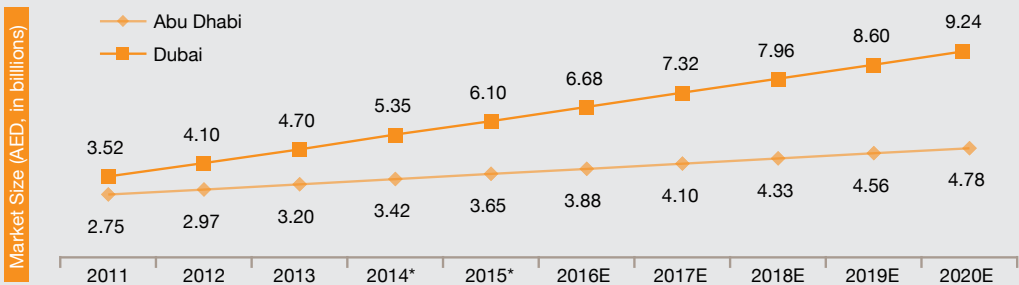


ADEC; KHDA; PwC analysis, Understanding the GCC Education Sector, August 2016

Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate that in Dubai, UK and Indian curriculum schools continue to dominate, but IB curriculum schools are becoming an increasingly popular option among parents.

In Abu Dhabi, Indian and American curriculum schools are driving growth, but British curriculum schools remain popular choices with parents considering admission to lower cost European higher education options.

Figure 3: Abu Dhabi and Dubai K-12 private school market size based on tuition fee (AED) and enrolment



ADEC; KHDA; PwC analysis, Understanding the GCC Education Sector, August 2016

Statistics in Figure 3 show that by the year 2020 there is a high growth rate expected in the education industry in UAE. This means the need for more school buildings, materials, equipment, more qualified teachers and at the same time an elaborated quality assurance system to regulate and monitor quality of education.

The industry has reached a critical point in the path towards meeting the UAE National Agenda goals, with less than five years left to achieve them.

Additional supply in private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi:

The approximate amount of investments for established new schools from 2011/ 2012 to 2015/2016 was AED 3.6bn.

In the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the private schools cater for more than **64% of the total student** population in the Emirate; in which **24% are National** students and the remaining **76% are expat** students.

In the last decade, the private education sector has witnessed significant growth, doubling enrolment figures and introducing additional supply, which increased the competitive edge within the market.

During the 2015–2016 school year, the number of private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi amounted to 186, where approximately 64.5% of the total number of students in the Emirate are enrolled. The growing demand for private schools in the Emirate has been met through adding more than 77,000 school seats across 55 new schools over the past five years.

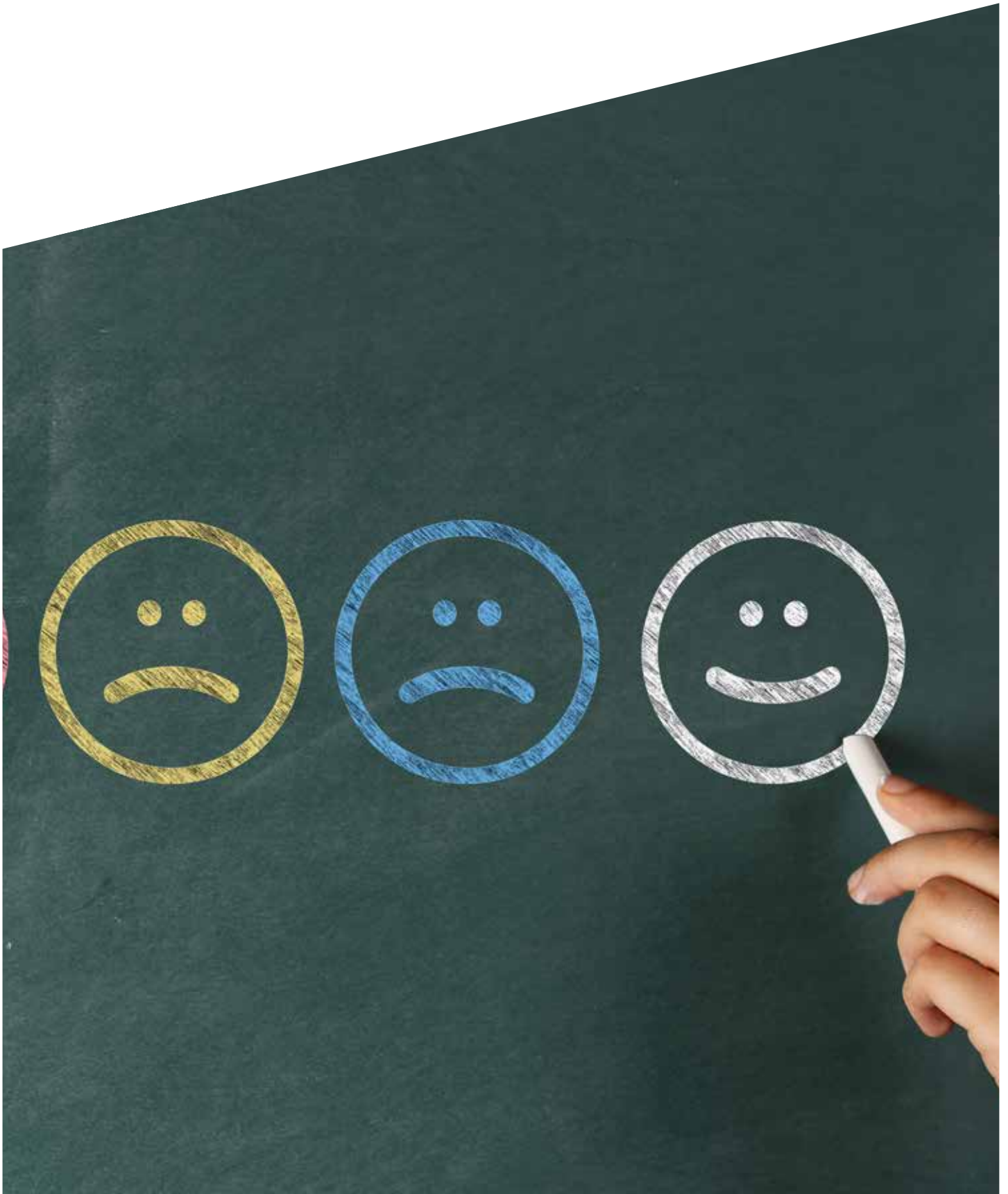
In UAE the growth of the population and the increased number of students has maintained a correlation with the economy. In times of economic growth the population has increased as companies draw people from different countries to meet their workforce requirements.

Dubai: During the period between 2016 and 2020, the private education market will require an addition of **52 educational facilities** across multiple curricula, which translates into an approximate annual demand of **13 new schools**.

In Dubai the student population has increased in relation to the overall population and economic growth. Since 2009/2010 the student population has increased with 82,800 students in 2009/2010 reaching over 243,700 students in 2013/2014, reflecting a CAGR of 7.5%.

The number of student seats in the private sector was recorded at over 269,700 in 2013, which is expected to increase to 315,500 in 2017, recording a CAGR of 5.5%, to reach a total of 360,000 seats by 2020, in accordance with the strategy set by KHDA.

Quality Assurance of Private Schools



To regulate and monitor the progress and assure the quality of the UAE educational system, regulatory bodies were created. President H.H. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan established the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), an independent Abu Dhabi-based corporate body, in 2005 to develop education throughout the UAE.

The Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was established by Decision 38 of The Executive Council of the Government of Dubai in 2007.



Local Regulators in the other Emirates are: Sharjah Education Council, Ajman Educational Zone, Ras Al Khaimah Educational Zone, Fujairah Educational Zone. Umm Al Quwain Educational Zone

During the 2015–2016 academic year, 149 private schools in Dubai were inspected. These schools were responsible for educating 253,319 students, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This is an increase of 40 schools and 119,888 students since private schools were first inspected by the DSIB in 2008–2009. During this period of rapid growth, there has been constant renewal of the populations of students, teachers and leaders.

In 2015 the new UAE-wide inspection framework has been implemented for the first time. The A-C bands and Grades of previous inspections used in Abu Dhabi have been replaced by the ranking of the schools from Outstanding through to Very Weak. Schools in Dubai are inspected yearly. However, as Abu



The UAE School Inspection Framework is based on comprehensive performance standards that define the essential aspects of a quality education.

Dhabi works on a 2 year inspection cycle, it will not be until mid of 2017, that the reports using the new framework will be published for the private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

These reports highlight the level of participation in this requirement and the extent of schools' readiness to work towards the UAE Vision 2021 targets.

They explore how improvements in governance, leadership and self-evaluation have had a significant impact on the overall quality of education. The improvement in the quality of education experienced by students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is also highlighted in this report.

The UAE-wide 6 point scale rating will assure that results are comparable throughout the UAE. The six levels of quality on the scale are defined as follows:

Figure 4: The six levels scale of quality rating

Outstanding	Quality of performance substantially exceeds the expectation of the UAE
Very Good	Quality of performance exceeds the expectation of the UAE
Good	Quality of performance meets the expectation of the UAE (This is the expected level for every school in the UAE)
Acceptable	Quality of performance meets the minimum level of quality required in the UAE (This is the minimum level for every school in the UAE)
Weak	Quality of performance below the expectation of the UAE
Very Weak	Quality of performance substantially below the expectation of the UAE

United Arab Emirates - School Inspection Framework 2015-2016

School inspections are structured around six performance standards and conclude with an overall performance judgment.

Performance standards:

1. **Students' achievement**
2. **Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills**
3. **Teaching and assessment**
4. **Curriculum**
5. **The protection, care, guidance and support of students**
6. **Leadership and management**

The **Private Schools and Quality Assurance (PSQA)**

Sector was established in 2010 to implement ADEC's Strategic Plan and achieve rapid improvement in the school system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The Sector's key functions are to regulate, license, inspect and support private schools.

These factors have been elaborated based on research into school effectiveness and are underpinned by 17 performance indicators. There is consensus that an effective school will seek to offer the best possible academic outcomes, and at the same time ensure students' personal, physical, social and emotional development. These two key outcomes form the measures of school effectiveness and are the basis for the first two standards. The next four standards focus on what are according to research the most powerful factors determining school effectiveness: quality of teaching, curriculum, care and leadership.

To achieve the desired outcome of high quality education, UAE education authorities and inspectors are committed to ensuring a quality process through the following core values:

Commitment to high-quality and continual improvement

Excellence in inspection delivery, with the highest standards of professional conduct and cultural sensitivity, together with secure, evidence-based judgments

Transparency in communications before, during and after inspections, relating to both the process and outcomes of inspection

Cooperation and partnership with schools and other stakeholders, with the aims of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the inspection process.

The purpose of inspections is to find out what a school is doing well and what might be improved. The reports are presented to school leaders, governors, owners and proprietors who are expected to take actions according to the recommendation. Inspections have been a significant catalyst in improving the quality of schools in the country.

During an inspection, the Inspectors judge the overall performance of the school by considering the match of the individual performance indicators using the 'best fit' with the above outlined performance standards.

Inspection Results: 2015 – 2016



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Looking at the inspection results for Dubai and Abu Dhabi (including Al Ain City and Western Region) in 2015/ 2016, and for some schools including the results from before 2016 and excluding new schools or schools that have not been evaluated yet, we have a remaining inspected 141 private schools in Dubai and 181 in Abu Dhabi.

The results are consistent throughout the UAE, only a handful of schools have been evaluated as being “Outstanding” – 11% in Dubai and 3% in Abu Dhabi. Most schools have been rated “Acceptable” (36%) and “Weak” (36%) in Abu Dhabi and “Good” (38%) and “Acceptable” (37%) in Dubai.

Figure 5: Dubai and Abu Dhabi Schools inspection reports 2015–2016 by rating

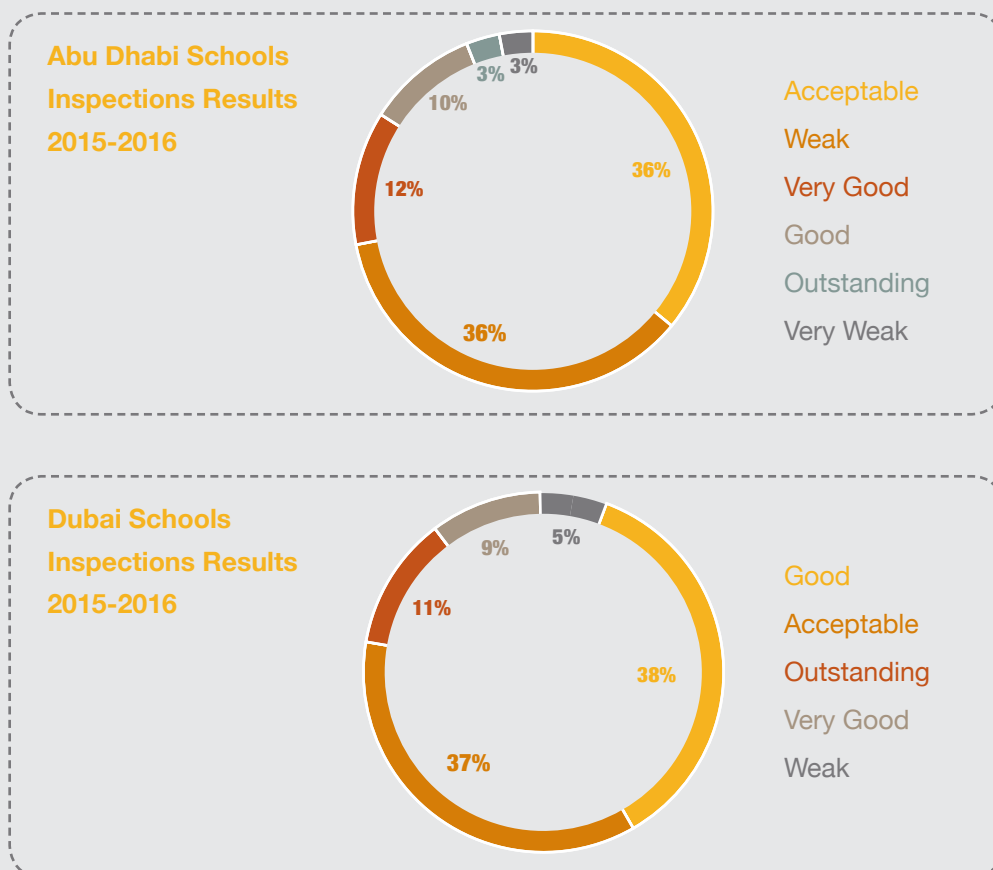


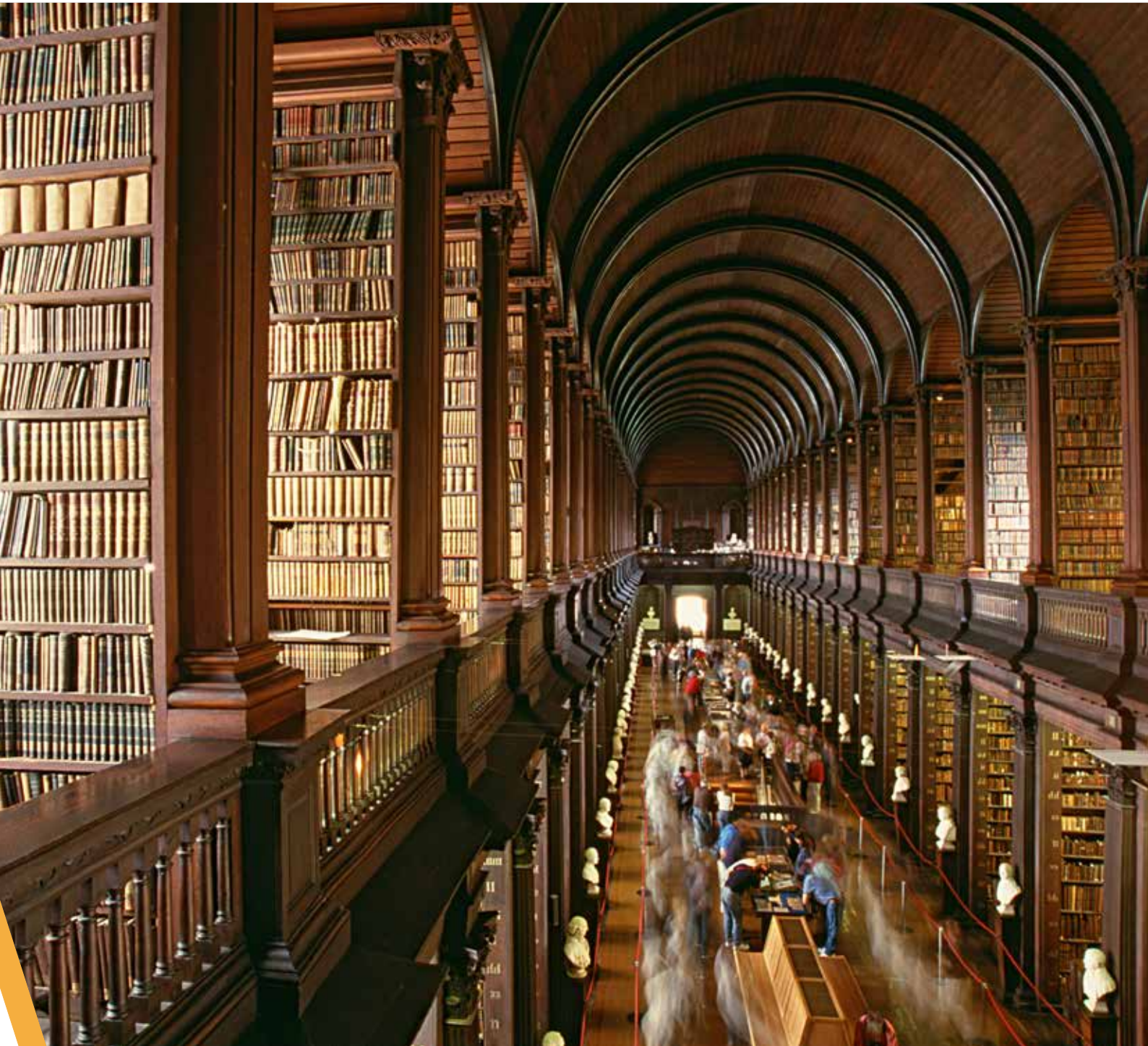
Table 2: **Abu Dhabi: Private Schools rated “Outstanding” in 2015/2016 or Grade A2 if not rated in 2016**

	School Name	Curriculum	ADEC Overall 2015/2016 Rating	ADEC Last Rating if not rated in 2016
1	Al Bateen Secondary AlMushrif Private School	UK	Outstanding	
2	Al Muna Primary School	UK	Outstanding	
3	American Community Private School	US		A2
4	Brighton College	UK		A2
5	Brighton College Al Ain (Bloom Gardens)	UK	Outstanding	
6	Raha International Private School	IB	Outstanding	

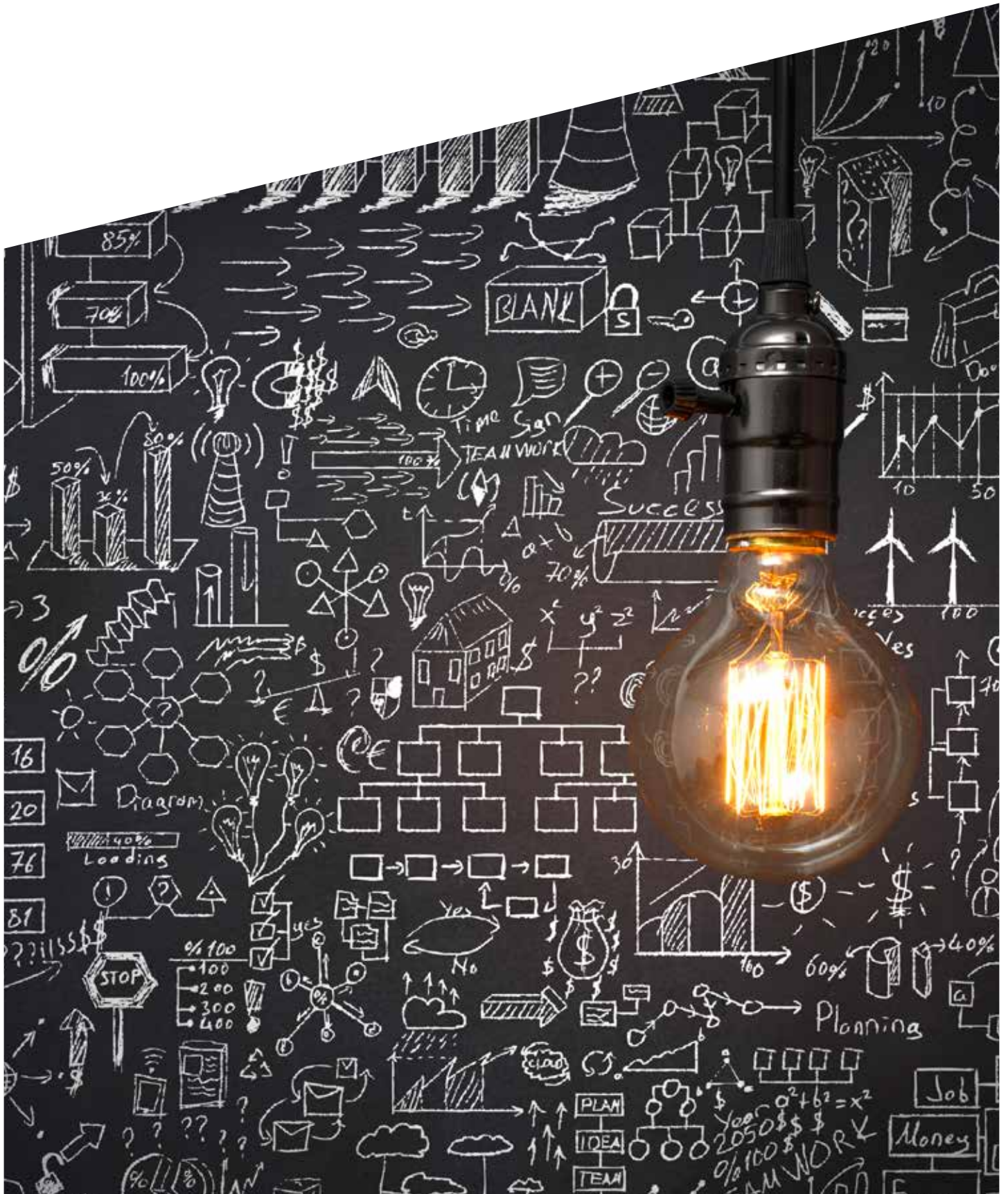
Table 3: **Dubai: Private Schools rated “Outstanding” in 2015/2016 or Grade A2 if not rated in 2016**

	School Name	Curriculum	KHDA Overall 2015/2016 Rating	KHDA Overall 2014/2015 Rating
1	Dubai College	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
2	Dubai English Speaking Private College	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
3	Dubai International Academy	IB	Outstanding	Good
4	GEMS Dubai American Academy	US/IB	Outstanding	Outstanding
5	GEMS Jumeirah Primary School	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
6	GEMS Modern Academy	Indian	Outstanding	Outstanding
7	GEMS Royal Dubai School	UK	Outstanding	Good
8	GEMS Wellington International School	UK/IB	Outstanding	Outstanding
9	Jumeirah College	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
10	Jumeirah English Speaking School	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
11	Jumeirah English Speaking School (Br)	UK/IB	Outstanding	Outstanding
12	Kings School Dubai	UK	Outstanding	Outstanding
13	Lycee francais International Georges Pompidou Primary Oud Metha	French	Outstanding	Outstanding
14	Lycee francais International Georges Pompidou School (Dubai Branch)	French	Outstanding	Good
15	Repton School FZ-LLC	UK/IB	Outstanding	Outstanding
16	The Indian High School	Indian	Outstanding	Outstanding





What Does “Outstanding” Represent?



According to the UAE School Inspection Framework 2015 – 2016 the “Outstanding” judgments should include: students’ progress, teaching for effective learning, effectiveness of leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Across all performance indicators, judgments are at least “Good” and a large majority are “Outstanding”.

The school cannot be “Outstanding” if: there are any “Weak” judgments or if the school is not compliant with statutory requirements.

The average increase at the 51 schools is about 6%. At the same time, 39 schools were denied permission to raise their fees. (Gulf News EDUCATION, January 10, 2017)

For schools that are not rated to be “Outstanding” or “Very Good” or “Good” this can have major implications, especially financially. The percentage by which schools are allowed to increase their fees depends on these ratings. With higher fees they will have more funds available to improve their facilities, invest in teaching materials, attract better teachers and so on. These are all factors that will then contribute to increased student engagement and attainment and secure a higher rating in the following years.

Private schools in Dubai can increase their fees for the 2016-17 academic year by a minimum of 3.21% and up to a maximum of 6.42%, depending on their ratings following annual school inspections.

ADEC freezes admissions for 24 ‘low performing’ private schools (The National UAE, June 21, 2016)


Abu Dhabi: Fee increases have been approved for 51 private schools in the emirate of Abu Dhabi for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Schools with a low rating are at risk of being denied permission to raise their fees.

The worst case scenario is that underperforming schools can be denied admission of new students until they improve their rating. This happened in Abu Dhabi for the first time in 2016 where 24 schools have been given multiple warnings over the time of 3 inspections.

What Do Outstanding Schools Do Right?





The following section is an analysis of the 16 schools in Dubai and 4 in Abu Dhabi that have been rated “Outstanding” in 2016. Analyzing best practices in outstanding schools serve as a window into what works. Schools achieve outstanding for a variety of reasons but these include a combination of common features such as strong leadership and unique initiatives such as extra-curricular programs.

We acknowledge that school inspection reports only provide a snapshot of all that happens in a school. Reports are also an external perspective based on a very limited time spent in the schools. However, at a high level these reports still provide high-level insights on common trends, gaps, and similarities between outstanding schools that can provide some semblance of guidance to those schools aspiring for similar achievements.

The section below is structured around key areas of the national inspection framework. Each section describes common best practices across outstanding schools and then highlights a few concrete examples from select schools.

1. Students' Achievement

In outstanding schools the rating for most students' work, as measured against the school's curriculum standards, is consistently above the age-related levels. Most students' results are also above international standards.

Al Bateen - Al Mushrif School, Abu Dhabi:

Students demonstrate excellent communication skills. They use these very effectively to share ideas and explain their thinking. They confidently ask questions and challenge each other as, for example, when Year 8 use role play very creatively and make presentations.

The level of knowledge and understanding is measured for most students above international standards.

For their age, the students of an "Outstanding" rated school have excellent skills in literacy, numeracy and technology.

Over the previous three years, the school has maintained consistently high standards of attainment for most students.

The subjects that are evaluated by the inspectors in Dubai are, as applicable in each school from these listed below:

In Abu Dhabi additional subjects are evaluated, as applicable:

- Social Studies
- Language of Instruction (if other than English & Arabic as first language)
- Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)

Subjects	
1	Islamic Education
2	Arabic as a first language
3	Arabic as an additional Language
4	English
5	Mathematics
6	Science

Dubai English Speaking Private College: In Islamic education, the majority of students demonstrated levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that were above national curriculum expectations. **For example,** students in Year 11 identified the scientific miracles in the Holy Qur'an and explained their effect on modern life and its practical applications.

Attainment as well as progress are rated for these subjects. **In addition there is an evaluation of the Learning Skills** (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)

Students of these "Outstanding" rated schools are described by the inspectors in the reports as being self-motivated, challenged by the curriculum with love and passion for learning.

Looking at a few other examples for other subjects, we are identifying what makes these "Outstanding" schools "Outstanding" and what is missing in the lower rated schools.

Arabic as a first language depends on the number of Arab students. The level is not always according to the national level for the age group, but here the inspectors will value the progress over the attainment. Also the factor that is valued is the tailored teaching approach, making sure that an overall progress is achieved.

Dubai College: recent improvements in the provision for the subject (Arabic as first language), including tailoring plans to address the specific needs of students, had resulted in steady progress in basic skills for most, particularly in reading, writing and listening. Beyond the MoE standards.

Whilst Arabic as first language is not a mandatory subject and depends on the nationality of the enrolled students and the curriculum of the school, Arabic as additional language is mandatory to be taught at all schools in the UAE. This is also a major point of weakness even for the overall "Outstanding" rated schools. However, again the inspectors are valuing progress higher than attainment and looking in detail at all aspects of teaching and methodology and assessing the school is assuring constant progress for all its students, according to their individual level.

Jumeirah English Speaking

School: Arabic as first language: In Year 1 students could form correct sentences about their preferences when discussing 'likes and dislikes'. Older students could reflect on their ideas adequately. Students' reading and comprehension were in line with national curriculum expectations.

Jumeirah College: Critical thinking, as outlined in the National Agenda, was inherent in most English, mathematics and science lessons. Teachers had understood the definition of critical thinking and it was integral to the school's skill set. As a result, teachers nurtured students' independence; they allowed time for thinking and encouraged discussion.

When looking at the subject Arabic language (as first or second language) we find that for all 16 "Outstanding" rated schools in Dubai the reports suggest this as a point that schools need to improve further. In Abu Dhabi this is also the case for the "Outstanding" rated schools with recently conducted inspections and published reports.

The assessments in English, Mathematics, Science (and other subjects where applicable) shows not only a high attainment and progress for the students of "Outstanding" rated schools but also a high level of critical thinking, innovation and collaboration between students which increases the learning effect. It is observed that students exhibit a love for learning, and see learning as a challenge to be mastered and not as a tiresome task. This is a result of the teaching methodology and teachers understanding for the nature of the students, which will be outlined in more depth in the section on Teaching and Assessment.

2. Students' Personal and Social Development, and Their Innovation Skills

**Lycee Francais International
Georges Pompidou Primary**

Oud Metha: The children had responsible caring attitudes. They were able to make decisions for themselves. They learned self-respect and listened to and appreciated suggestions about their learning from their friends and teachers. Behavior was outstanding. Children showed respect and tolerance to one another and to all adults. Rules were clearly understood and followed by almost all children.

This is a point that should not be neglected in any school. It is evident from inspection reports that inspectors are not only interested in student progress but also in their personal attitude and behavior. Students of "Outstanding" rated schools are expected to have a very positive and responsible attitude; to demonstrate strong self-reliance and thrive on critical feedback. These students are expected to be seen as being self-disciplined and respond very well in interactions with their peers. Conflicts are solved in a mature way and bullying is extremely rare. Students are sensitive and show empathy to the needs and differences of others. They always help each other. As a result, relationships amongst students and with staff are very respectful and considerate.

Students demonstrate excellent understanding of safe and healthy living.

They consistently make wise choices about their own health and safety.

They frequently initiate and participate in activities that promote safe and healthy lifestyles.

At the "Outstanding" rated schools there is a very low rate of absenteeism, of max. 2%

3. Teaching and Assessment

The Indian High School:

The development of critical thinking, to complement high-level problem-solving activities, was a school priority.

Many teachers used effective questioning techniques that developed the students' critical thinking, independent learning and problem-solving abilities. Teachers asked open questions and offered opportunities to justify opinions.

In the "Outstanding" rated schools teaching is personalized, considering the potential, abilities and special needs or disabilities or special requirements for gifted and talented students. The needs of all the students have to be accommodated by the school.

Schools should focus on the development of knowledge and learning skills but as well on the personal development, soft skills and attitude building.

Students thrive in a safe and supportive environment. Extra-curricular activities like sports clubs or learning groups increase collaboration, team work, and social and soft skills abilities and ultimately contribute to increased learning progress.

When looking at teaching this should be rich, challenging and a balanced curriculum. Highly qualified teachers with solid knowledge and understanding for the development of the students are key to the success of a school.

Al Muna Primary is an outstanding school. Personal development is a key strength and extremely well fostered by the outstanding quality of protection, care, support and guidance for all groups of students. Teaching and assessment are generally outstanding and significantly impact on the high rates of progress made by students.

At the "Outstanding" rated schools teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of their subjects and to expertly apply their knowledge and how students learn them. Teachers plan imaginative lessons, provide inspiring learning environments and use time and resources in a creative way to enable all students to learn successfully. Teachers know how to interact with students to keep them active and focused. Teaching is not seen as "providing information" but rather as a facilitation for the students to discover knowledge. Through a process of questioning the teachers are challenging the students' thinking and promoting insightful responses.

Teaching is not a teacher's monologue; it is a dialogue that engages students in insightful discussions and reflection. Teachers adjust the teaching strategies to meet the individual needs of each student, as they recognize that students have to be seen as individuals and all have different needs.

Gems Wellington

International School:

Teaching was engaging, motivating and challenging, and led to rapid progress in almost all subjects. Sophisticated, well-designed assessment systems were used to set work at an appropriately challenging level during lessons and to track students' progress over time.

Teachers formulate high expectations for all groups of students and communicate these expectations to keep students alert and challenged. At the same time teachers provide excellent support to make sure that students will be able to master challenges and do not get discouraged by goals that seem impossible to achieve. Teachers skillfully develop students' critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and independent learning skills.

There is a process of regular assessments of the students' knowledge level in place, self-assessments are helping schools to discover and amend deficits before these are marked by the inspectors and can cost them a higher rating.

4. Curriculum

Al Muna Primary School: The design, implementation and adaptation of the curriculum are outstanding. The highly effective planning creates modifications to successfully engage and meet the learning needs of students of all abilities.

Jumeirah English Speaking School: The curriculum was innovative in design and interpretation through enquiry and student investigations, research and STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) projects. Cross-curricular links and a project-based approach allowed for more organic links across subjects promoting creativity. Student-driven initiatives and extra-curricular activities promoted diverse leadership opportunities for students.

The Indian High School: There was a wide range of extra-curricular activities both within and outside the school that promoted students' personal and social development. Internships for students in the commerce stream provided rich work experience.

Most schools in the UAE are following an international curriculum like British or American. However, these have to be aligned to the school, Emirate and national vision. It has to be relevant, comprehensive, and promote innovation and challenge. It is highly effective in developing a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding. It fulfils all the requirements of the school's authorized/ licensed curriculum and the national statutory requirements.

The curriculum is very well planned to ensure structured progression in all subjects.

It meets the needs of all students, considering their different levels of development and knowledge, as well as special needs, disabilities or gifted and talented students. Continuity of learning is seamless and students are fully prepared for the next phase of education, within school and beyond. The excellent range of curricular options provides older students with extensive choices and opportunities to benefit from learning experiences that nurture their talents, interests and aspirations.

Cross-curricular links are meaningful and planned purposefully and innovatively. They are managed well and significantly enhance students' transfer of learning between different subjects. The school conducts regular and rigorous reviews of its curriculum in relation to students' achievements, aspirations and national priorities. The curriculum is continuously developed to ensure excellent provision in all subjects and to meet, in full, the academic and personal development needs of all students.

In an effort to adapt the curriculum, most of the "Outstanding" rated schools are promoting a number of extra-curricular activities that allow students to develop their skills, apply their knowledge and prepare them for the next steps in their education and in life.

5. Protection, Care, Guidance and Support of Students

Kings School Dubai: The school and staff gave very careful attention to promoting healthy lifestyles. Students were encouraged to bring healthy food in their lunch boxes. The school nurses supported this by making spot checks and rewarding students who had made healthy choices. In lessons, students learned about keeping fit and how exercise affected their heart rate. They understood about buying ethically produced food.

This is an important point to be considered, because to be able to thrive, students need a safe and clean environment. The “Outstanding” rated schools have rigorous procedures in place for the safeguarding of students including child protection. All staff, students and parents are fully aware of these policies and procedures.

The schools are highly effective in protecting students from abuse, including bullying and via the internet and social media.

The schools provide a fully safe, hygienic and secure environment not only for their students, but also for the staff.

Safety checks are frequent and rigorous. Supervision of students is exceptionally effective at all times.

The schools’ buildings and equipment are maintained in excellent condition. The schools maintain detailed and security records, including records of incidents and actions taken to rectify the hazard.

The schools’ premises and facilities provide an excellent physical environment, which meets the learning needs of all students.

The schools promote a safe and healthy lifestyle keeping their students, staff and parents informed about aspects like nutrition, physical activities, and the importance of resting. These rules and guidelines when promoted and followed rigorously by all involved will have an influence on all aspects of school life.

6. Leadership and Management

When looking at the leadership and management, a strong leadership is always beneficial. This can be a new or senior principal with a clear vision, thriving for excellence. In all “Outstanding” rated schools the reports mention collaboration on all leadership levels and with the teachers and administrative staff. There is a clear vision that is followed by everybody and there is unity. The students are offered role models for integrity, loyalty, ethical behavior.

Raha International Private School: The school recruits teachers and administrators who are well qualified and experienced in their field. The Principal and senior leaders go out of their way to demonstrate that teachers and staff at all levels are valued. This has led to a strong loyalty to the school and a relatively low staff turnover. The professional competence of middle managers is a strength of the school. They provide their staff with high quality support as well as maintaining a strong presence in classrooms.

Leaders at all levels, including the principal, demonstrate comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the curriculum and best practices in teaching, learning and assessment. They are focused on optimizing students’ achievement.

Only by working together all employees of the school are highly effective in establishing an inclusive school with a purposeful learning culture and in achieving very high standards of students’ learning and personal development.

Relationships and communication with all stakeholders are consistently professional and highly effective. The schools’ leadership builds capacity, empowers individuals and teams, and creates a work ethic of collective responsibility.

The morale of all employees throughout the school is highly positive.

Leaders at all levels demonstrate very clear and accurate understanding of what needs to be done to innovate and improve the school. They are highly effective in anticipating and addressing potential barriers to sustained improvement. Leaders have been innovative and highly successful in developing the school.

Involvement with the community and especially the parents is also a major point. It helps to get the students involvement through the involvement of their parents. Including the parents, in events, extra-curricular activities, decision making for school related issues will ultimately increase the participation of the students in all school related activities, curricular or extra-curricular, and increase their involvement and engagement.



How Can Low Performing Schools Become Outstanding Schools?



This is a long and continuous process depending on the current rating of the school. It is realistic to assume that for each inspection the school can improve by one level, for example from “Good” to “Very Good”. Rarely are schools raised up by 2 levels in a single inspection and never from a low level like “Weak” to “Very Good”. So clearly here the message is that the lower the level, the more effort a school has to put into strategic and consistent improvement.

In Dubai for the 2016-17 academic year, all schools must complete the **DSIB SEF** as found in the schools’ KHDA electronic document. In addition schools must complete the National Agenda, social studies, innovation and SEND supplement information, and submit all information to DSIB at least 14 calendar days before the school’s inspection visit.

The good news is that progress is valued higher than attainment. So if the inspectors see a genuine effort to improve and can clearly identify progress compared to a previous inspection, they will value this higher than the actual knowledge level of the students, on the premise that continuous progress will eventually lead to higher student attainment.

There are a number of tools, procedures and options that schools can use to improve their rating.

One important tool is the **School self-evaluation for improvement planning**, a resource for schools they can use internally at any time to discover the gaps and start improving the missing points. The diagrams outline the continuous process of school self-evaluation and school improvement planning.

It is expected that school leaders will involve staff and stakeholders in these processes. Inspection will include an analysis of the school’s response to its self-evaluation process in its school improvement planning (SIP) document.

Figure 6: Self-evaluation Cycle and Improvement Planning



Self-Evaluation and Improvement Planning, Government of Dubai, June 2016

Now when the gaps are identified and there have to be defined steps of action to improvement, which is where the “specialists” come in, companies with many years of experience in the education sector and the knowledge of strategic planning help the schools develop a long term strategy on their way to improvement and success.

An accurate and continuous self-evaluation is critical for school improvement. Strengths and weaknesses cannot be clearly identified without this process and school leaders, governors, owners and proprietors will not have a realistic view of their school's issues that need improvement.

Repton School: Very accurate self-evaluation gave the school a firm platform on which to base its improvement plans. Departments had detailed plans for taking their areas forward and these contributed to and were guided by the whole school improvement plan. Amongst the detail of these plans there were several examples of innovation, which included linking Arabic as a first language with the English department; Arabic as an additional language with the Modern Foreign Languages department and, in the SEND department, the appointment of learning support liaison personnel (children's champions).

Self-evaluation is forward looking. It is a sign of visionary leadership and a tool to anticipate future changes and be prepared. It involves taking considered decisions about actions which result in clear benefits for students.

Self-evaluation is not expected to be done for the sole reason of the school's inspection; it is a process that all schools need to engage in regularly throughout the year in order to assist everyone involved to achieve continuous improvement.

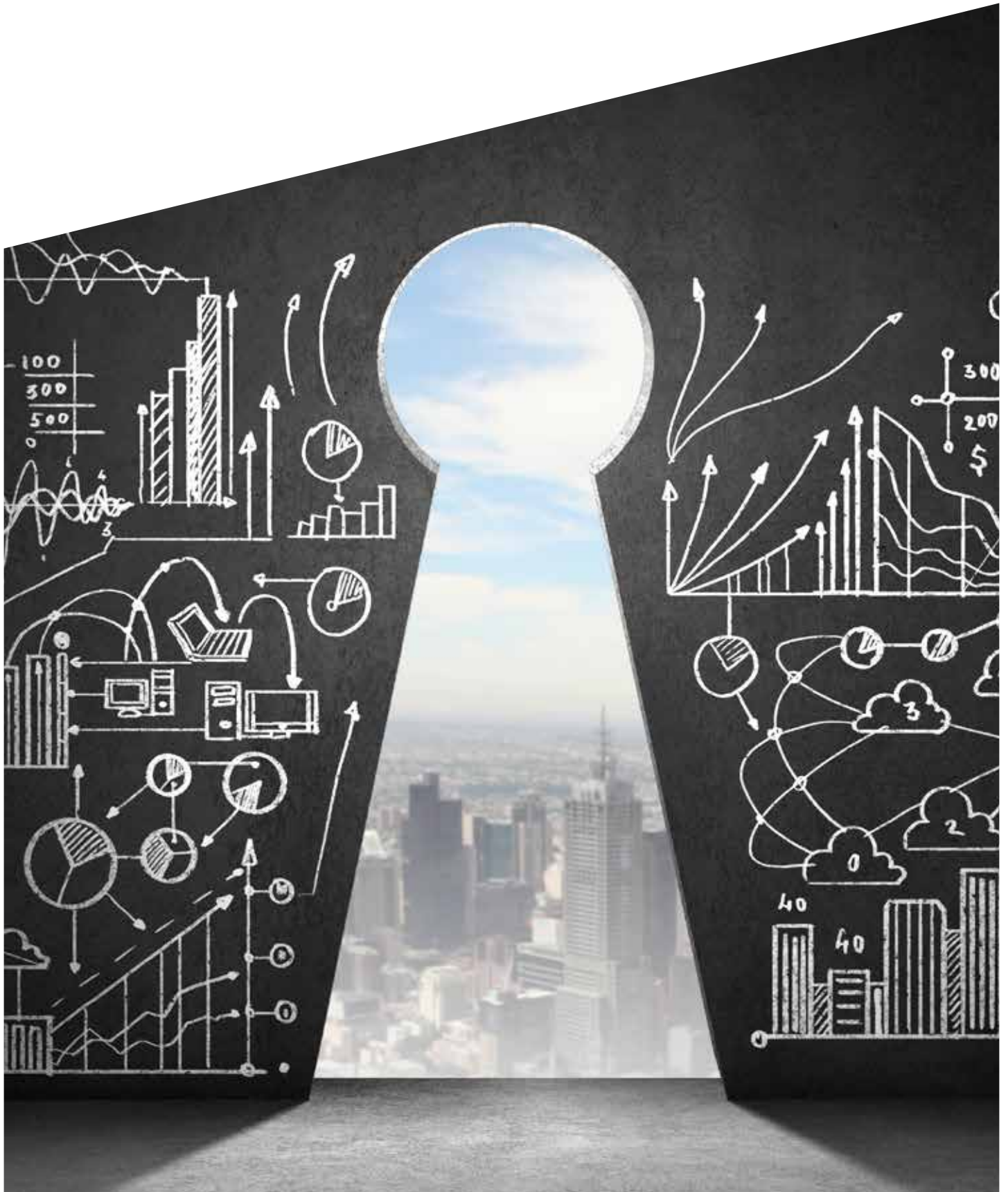
The base of school self-evaluation are three questions:

- 1. How are we doing?**
- 2. How well should we be doing?**
- 3. What will we do to improve?**

The "Outstanding" rated schools apply these questions on learning. Learning is their core business and leaders, teachers and students are always learning. In line with international best practice, school inspections place a firm emphasis on the need for schools in the UAE to become more familiar and confident with the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The published **United Arab Emirates - School Inspection Framework 2015-2016** should be an important tool for schools to use as part of their own self-evaluation procedures. All schools are required to submit self-evaluation information prior to the inspection teams' visits. This should be aligned to the performance standards and elements in this framework. Inspectors will use the self-evaluation information provided by each school as a starting point for their work so schools are encouraged to undertake carefully considered, reflective self-evaluation.

Conclusion



There are a number of factors that contribute to the schools rating. Some of these can be improved with a small effort, others take a long time. However, the schools and all people involved, governance, leadership, stakeholders, students, have to be aware that it is a long term process and even when reaching the “Outstanding” rating level there is continuous effort required to keep this rating.

The following are three concluding recommendations to schools aspiring for outstanding:

1. Innovation

Innovation is present in every aspects of a schools life. There are innovations in the way schools are owned, organized and managed; in curriculum design models; in teaching and learning approaches, such as the ways in which learning technologies are used; classroom design including virtual spaces; assessment; timetabling; partnerships to promote effective learning and engagement in the economy; and the ways in which teachers and leaders are recruited, trained, developed and rewarded.

Innovations can be small or large, recognizable or entirely new and different, however they all make a difference and an impact on the schools organization. Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for ‘**innovation**’ and ‘**innovative leadership**’ as the primary tools for delivering a program of economic development and progress, stimulating creativity, and growing a distinct set of skills and capabilities across the nation in order to achieve the **UAE Vision 2021**.

Innovation also means taking risks, experiment with new strategies, constantly search for better solutions and test assumptions.

Innovation is based on questioning and challenging the status quo. It is also based on recognizing opportunity and taking advantage of it.

Being innovative is about thinking outside the box, looking beyond what is currently done well, having a vision of what needs to be done in the future and putting the new ideas in practice.

School inspections are also looking at the aspect of innovation when evaluating a school. Inspection teams will explore the schools' vision and interpretation of innovation as found in selected indicators and elements of the inspection framework. Inspectors will seek to understand how it is defined, designed and expressed in the school and what the purposes are it is implemented for.

There is a lot schools can do to implement and improve innovation from adjusting the curriculum, planning extra-curricular activities, training teachers, implementing new teaching methods...etc... Each activity is a small step in the right direction and can make a huge difference in all aspects of the school and their overall rating for the next inspection.

2. Leadership

In schools like in every other company, leadership is of crucial importance.

Leading by example, stating and following a clear vision and mission, being an inspiration for others, etc, -- these are qualities that leaders have to search and foster in themselves and these qualities can be improved through Leadership Development. Training courses, workshops, seminars can help to improve and create understanding.

Research suggests that the school leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. Moreover, principals strongly shape the conditions for high-quality teaching and are the prime factor in determining the turnover of teachers. High-quality principals are vital to the effectiveness of schools to ensure that students will have the best possible conditions for their start in the adult life.

Dubai English Speaking Private College: School leaders had a well-developed understanding of the importance of the national innovation agenda and could showcase many examples of how the school was promoting a culture of innovation. Key leaders and teachers were identified for taking responsibility to grow a culture of innovation in learning, teaching and in school leadership.

3. Inclusive Education

Inclusive education describes the process through which schools develop systems, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students are able to learn, develop and participate together. In an inclusive school, the curriculum, physical surroundings and school community should reflect the views and characteristics of its students.

An inclusive school honors diversity and respects all individuals.

Gems Royal Dubai School:

The SEND team had organized a parent support group to help parents become more involved in their child's education. All parents interviewed were very happy with the support received from the school and the inclusive, caring, positive ethos.

The UAE is determined to become an inclusive, barrier-free, rights-based society that promotes, protects, and ensures the success of all groups of students.

The impact of inclusion should be seen through the learning experiences of all children within UAE schools.

Governors and senior leaders have a responsibility to facilitate and develop inclusive attitudes and practice within their schools.

In the "Outstanding" rated schools, a highly- inclusive ethos will be reflected in the values and culture of the entire school community so that learners feel welcome, accepted, safe and valued.

Inclusion does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. It means proactively identifying barriers which restrict students' achievement, participation and learning and taking action to remove obstacles which lead to educational exclusion. Particular groups of students who require access to specialist provision within the schools are at the highest risk of experiencing educational exclusion. These include students with special educational needs, students with disabilities, students with special talents and students with special gifts.



Al Muna Primary School:

The school community is harmonious and inclusive; relationships at all levels are exceptionally good. Students work and play together with sensitive consideration for the many different nationalities, cultures and abilities of others.

There are steps and actions that can be learned and taken to create and increase inclusive education at a school. These are:

- **Effectiveness** of identification procedures
- **Appropriateness** of curriculum modification systems
- **Impact** of specific intervention or personal support mechanisms
- **Use** of feedback from monitoring and assessment processes.
- **Developing** inclusion will involve students, professionals, parents, carers and the wider community.

Inspectors are trained to evaluate the quality of provision made by the schools for these students in the process of considering selected performance standards and indicators.



About Us

The Knowledge Group (KG) has been created to be the united face of a new and growing collection of knowledge orientated institutes and entities. These organisations are dedicated to offering wide-ranging training and development solutions across the UAE and the region.

We look to provide a single point of call for all of the specific training and development needs of businesses, schools, universities, government institutions and individuals.

We provide a wide selection of innovative courses designed to develop the potential of people – and, by extension – the organisations they work for now and in the future.

On a broader level, through a combination of research, learning & development excellence, responsive course structuring and key sector focus, ADUKG makes sure that organisations throughout the region are competitive, sustainable and equipped with highly qualified and enlightened people to lead them.

Annual Report 2015 – 2016, Private Schools & Quality Assurance Sector, Abu Dhabi Education Council)

Dubai Education Overview, Growth Potential in a Competitive Environment, Colliers International MENA, 2014)

Annual Report 2015 – 2016, Private Schools & Quality Assurance Sector, Abu Dhabi Education Council

United Arab Emirates - School Inspection Framework 2015-2016

For Brighton College, Al Ain the report is not published yet at the time of writing this White Paper and for the American Community School, Abu Dhabi the latest published report is from 2013. For these 2 schools it is to be seen when the reports will be published if the teaching of the Arabic language also needs to be improved. It is expected to be so.

The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, The Wallace Foundation, 2013



