



Al Dhafra Private School

Al Ain



New Staff Information Booklet

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Welcome!

We are looking forward to having you join the teaching faculty of Al Dhafra School. To help you with preparation for your arrival in Al Ain we would like to provide you with some useful information, guidance and suggestions to ensure a smooth transition to your new place of work.

For further information, check the Al Dhafra website or contact one of the HR Team directly through the recruitment process and the contact you will have received.

Al Dhafra Private School, Al Ain

Al Dhafra Private Schools in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, is a private school that has been in successful operation since 1988 when it was established by its owner, Mr. Sultan Abdulla Ghannoum Al Hameli. Mrs. Antoinette Baxter was the founding Principal. As the school grew in size and prominence, it moved to new premises in Al Manaseer area of Al Ain in 2001 and has since grown to be one of the largest schools in Al Ain. It is under the leadership Principal of Margaret Beresford who took charge in September 2015.

Al Dhafra School is situated in the heart of the unique city of Al Ain. The school offers quality education to 2670 students of diverse backgrounds in Early Years to Year 12. The student body is formed from over 35 nationalities which makes the school distinct in nature, with a culturally rich and diverse environment. The majority of the students are Emirati (55.1%); other nationalities are Jordanians (11.4%), Egyptians (8.16%), Syrians (6.35%), Omanis (2.72%), Palestinians (2%), and others (14.27%).

There are 179 qualified educators, 42 teaching support staff, 3 care staff, and 36 administrative staff serving the students' daily needs. Teachers at Al Dhafra work collaboratively, collegially and diligently to meet the needs of the learners. Students are characterized by their readiness and enthusiasm for learning and for their pride in being a part of Al Dhafra.

The school's buildings are adjacent to each other, starting from the Kindergarten and Years 1-3 to the east side of the school. Grades 4-12 are in the middle part of the school, with separate accommodation for boys and girls. The high school building and the administration building are to the west of the school.

The school offers education in the British curriculum from Early Years to Year 12 and the American Curriculum for Grades 9-12. Al Dhafra values education as a key tool of individual development and transformation and aims at creating a community of empowered students in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. At Al Dhafra every student is inspired and challenged to learn, grow and accomplish academic, personal and social goals.

Additionally, the main focus of Al Dhafra Private Schools in Al Ain is to provide the opportunity for a comprehensive education for all students which focuses on cognitive, emotional, physical and social development. The educational program fosters students' reading, writing, calculating, problem solving, critical thinking, and creative expression. The school environment nurtures self-confidence, independence, cooperation, and the physical well-being of all students. The school works in affiliation with Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC).

The school is a centre for Cambridge University International Examinations and it is accredited by AdvancED. As a consequence, Al Dhafra Private School is a key part of the international community that strives to inspire and prepare learners for excellence.

The School Parents' Council was developed in 2011 and since then it continues to support our teachers, administrators and students. The Council meets three times per year, providing input to whole-school strategies and a variety of activities and social events. All Al Dhafra parents are encouraged to become involved in the school. The Parents' Council supports and helps with improved communication to all stakeholders.

The Student Council gives students an opportunity of leadership and closeness to teachers and administrative staff. The Student Council, as part of the extra-curricular activity program, helps instill values of leadership and democracy. It engages students in activities such as sharing ideas, concerns, and interests, and ensuring that the student "voice" is heard, valued and taken seriously.

The school also shares its facilities with the Al Ain community where various establishments use not only the sporting facilities but also administer the ADEC's standardized Arabic and Islamic examination. Additionally, the school acts as a host to various universities from around the world that use the school premises to showcase their respective universities for both students and parents.

Al Dhafra Private Schools encourage students to develop a sense of values and responsibilities which enables them to be contributing members of their community and of the multicultural, global society. In partnership with the families, the school guides students towards becoming lifelong learners with a positive outlook of the world.

Working Week

- Sunday to Thursday
- PD, co – curricular and meetings may occur after the end of the teaching schedule

School Day

- Students approximately 7.45am to 2.25pm, dependent on Grade
- Staff 7.30 to 2.30pm, can vary depending on weekly schedule

Teaching Load

- The maximum teaching load is 0.8 of teaching hours (currently 24 hours each week).

Holidays

Standard school holidays include the following. Please be aware that as religious holidays are based on phases of the moon, the exact dates may vary :

- UAE National Day
- Martyrs Day
- Eid Al Fitr
- Eid Al Adha
- Trimester 1 break – one week
- Trimester 2 break – one week

Calendar

There are three trimesters in an academic year: August/September to January, and January to April, May - July. Each trimester runs for between 10 - 16 weeks. At the conclusion of Trimester three the formal examinations for senior students occur.

Dates for 2016/2017

- Saturday 21st August Staff return
- Saturday 28th August Students return

- 10th – 13th September
- Sunday 2nd October
- Sunday 18th December

Eid Al Adha Holiday (unconfirmed)
Hijra Holiday (Islamic New Year)
Beginning of Trimester 1 Holiday

Dress Code

The UAE is a conservative country where respect for the Islamic tradition and local culture is expected.

For females at work, a below the knee skirt or dress – preferably full-length, shirts, blouses, trousers (not tight), sandals or closed shoes, (not flip flops), with little make up. Arms covered to below elbow. Shoulders and tops of arms must be covered and no cleavage or midriff shown. Denim clothing – e.g. jeans, jackets are not acceptable.

Men are expected to wear a collared shirt, tie, dress trousers and closed shoes. In general, whilst the UAE is an open and welcoming society, more conservative dress is expected in the UAE than most other countries. Denim clothing – e.g. jeans, jackets are not acceptable. Al Ain perhaps even more so than Dubai or Abu Dhabi

Accommodation

The school arranges accommodation for staff members. At their request staff may either be provided with accommodation or paid an accommodation supplement. Please liaise with HR for further detail

No Smoking Policy

The school has a strict no-smoking policy. It is understood that apartments are individuals' homes while they are working here at the school but they are also school premises and other 'non-smoking' teaching staff may in the future be using the apartments, hence smoker occupiers should ensure they smoke outside. They are also expected to wash curtains and wash/deodorize soft furnishings before vacating the apartment at the end of the contract. Failure to do so may result in a cleaning charge.

Medical Insurance

Upon arrival, the school will arrange for your medical insurance. Once enrolled, you will receive a medical card that you will need to present in order to be covered for any medical treatment.

It is advisable when first travelling to arrange medical cover for that trip until you have arrived and been covered by the school's medical cover.

Visa readiness requirements

Please refer to the website of the UAE department of naturalization and residency (<http://www.adnrd.ae/home.action?lang=2>) for details of the visa application process.

In order to get your visa you will need to have the following to include with your application:

- A police clearance that is less than 3 months old
- Required documentation to be **notarized and attested**
 - birth certificate
 - if married, your marriage certificate and birth certificates of children

- university degrees
- teacher training certificates.
- Experience certificates (reference letters from previous employers)

Please note: Your university qualifications require authentication by the awarding university.

Travelling to the UAE

A number of major airlines have flights into the UAE. These include Emirates, Etihad, Gulf Air, Qatar, British Airways, Lufthansa, United, Continental, Turkish and Saudi Arabian Airways.

The school HR department will book the incoming flight for you as per your contract, and will send you details of the flight as soon as possible.

Recommended items to bring

- Personal laptop and memory stick
- Favourite foods (e.g. Marmite)
- Specialist toiletries
- Appropriate clothing and shoes - it can get cold in the winter
- Power supply is 220 Volts and many sockets are 2 pin - so you may need adapters for your electrical equipment that you choose to bring – although they can be purchased locally.
- Bring some extra cash for the first month living – a small advance can be arranged from the school.
- A set of towels
- An alarm clock
- Music CDs and DVDs (culturally sensitive) – these can be purchased here but quality cannot always be guaranteed.
- All documents, police clearance forms and banking details: these include bank IBAN numbers, bank codes and addresses in order for money to be transferred successfully.
- Some personal resources for your classroom.
- A good pair of walking shoes.

Things to leave behind

- Travellers' cheques
- Alcohol - Whilst you can purchase alcohol at the airport or in stores once you have a license, please be aware that un-authorised consumption of alcohol in the UAE is illegal.
- Pork products
- Pornography

Documentation: Iqama and Multi Entry/Exit Visa

On arrival at the school you will begin the residency process. This is a simple but time consuming process which involves trips to have a medical check, finger prints and complete the application forms. The school HR department will guide and support you through the process.

You will need to take with you:

1. Your passport
2. 2 passport sized photos
3. Attested copies of your documentation

When you receive your residency, you will be able to open a bank account. Your monthly salary will be paid into this bank account. You can also proceed with things such as obtaining a mobile phone SIM card, getting satellite TV etc.

Your Emirates ID is the ID that you will be required to use for all ID purposes when in the UAE.

Cost of Living

In general, prices for food items are similar to Western Europe and the USA. Imported goods tend to be higher priced than the reasonably priced local goods such as meat, fish, vegetables and fruit. Utilities are relatively cheap as they are part subsidized and petrol, of course, is much cheaper than in your home country. Due to lower import duties, cars and electric/electronic goods are cheaper also.

The UAE has excellent shopping malls, comparable to most places in the world, there are cinemas, theatres, bars and other entertainment facilities.

Please use a comparison such as 'expatistan' (<https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living>) for comparisons of cost of living.

Healthcare

Al Dhafra School provides staff with excellent medical cover and there are many high standard medical centers and hospitals in the city. Many of these clinics and hospitals are staffed by a number of expat doctors and nurses.

There are no major health risks living in Al Ain although it is always best when working abroad to ensure your vaccinations against TB, polio and tetanus are up to date.

Most medicines are freely available over the counter in pharmacies but do check if you are on a specific medicine in case you need to bring a supply with you.

Postal Service

The postal service in the UAE is reliable. Letters, parcels and packages can be sent to the school's postal address, although it is recommended that parcels be sent in or out of the UAE via courier. DHL, TNT and ARAMEX operate locally.

Safety and Security

For safety advice you should visit your country's embassy website within the UAE. Go to www.goabroad.com

Crime is quite rare, and tends to be fairly minor.

Some Tips on Middle Eastern Etiquette

- When entering a shop or public building, acknowledge the person serving you before starting a transaction.
- Do not turn your back on someone with whom you are conversing.
- Give way to the person on your right when entering a doorway or lift.
- Avoid refusing hospitality unless you have a very good reason.

During your time in the UAE, you may well be invited into a colleague's home. Here are a few tips on the Arab culture that may avoid embarrassment for you.

- Flowers for the hostess are a very acceptable gift.
- Take your shoes off at the door of the house. Do not put your feet up on the table, or show the sole of your foot.
- When eating food with your fingers, use the right hand.

Holy Month of Ramadan

The Gregorian calendar dates for the month of Ramadan vary slightly from year to year. Literally translated, Ramadan means "drying up". It is believed that for 11 months of the year people look after their bodies, and this is the one month where the soul is looked after over the body. It is forbidden to eat, drink or smoke during daylight hours, and this is marked from the early morning call to prayer to the sunset one. The concept is that when you don't eat or drink your sins dissolve and God forgives you. At this time a person resembles an angel because the body is not taken care of. This month is seen as exercise for the soul.

During Ramadan, eating and drinking begin after the sunset prayer. The call to prayer is called the athan, occurring 5 times a day (the exact time varying according to the season). The "call to prayer" is performed by a man called moathin.

"The experience of fasting during Ramadan, which comes during the different seasons over the years since it is calculated by the moon, is of genuine advantage to the believer. It is a practical exercise of will, self-control and civil conduct. After a few days of fasting, one develops the power of restraint and rejoices in his ability to master his own desires and eccentricities. Fasting has a spiritual as well as physical aspect."

{Concept of Islam, Mahmoud Abu-Saud. p111}

Muslims also believe Ramadan can help them empathize with the poor who often go hungry.

The current timing of Ramadan means that you will most likely arrive after Ramadan or during the Eid break; however, it is advisable to be aware of what Ramadan entails, so that no offence is caused and respect is shown to the local people and their customs.

- During the Holy Month of Ramadan where Muslims do not eat, drink or smoke from sunrise to sunset, it is illegal to eat, drink or smoke in public during the hours of daylight, from sunrise to sunset. **This applies to all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.**
- Working hours are reduced.
- Shopping times change, mainly opening after iftar (breaking of the fast after sunset prayers) and all public entertainment is reduced during this time.

Note: Please be sensitive to the fasting of the Muslim staff during this time. Not all Muslims are Arabs.

Al Dhafra Schools Teaching Staff Induction Checklist

| Staff name: | | Mentor name: | |
|--|--|--------------|---------|
| A copy of this checklist can also be found in the Al Dhafra School's New Staff Information Booklet | | | |
| | Item | Check | Comment |
| Pre-Arrival | Visa procurement explained | | |
| | Information about Family visa received | | |
| | Soft copy of teacher handbook received | | |
| | Soft copy of curriculum docs received | | |
| | Accommodation confirmed | | |
| | Flights and Visa confirmed | | |
| | Pick up information received | | |
| Arrival | Pick-up | | |
| | Cash Advance received | | |
| | Apartment keys received | | |
| Administration | Principal | | |
| | Job description | | |
| | Probation Process | | |
| | Vice Principal | | |
| | Timetables | | |
| | Yard Duty/Extra Duties | | |
| | Social Worker | | |
| | Discipline procedures | | |
| | HoD/CL | | |
| | Curriculum Docs Hard copy | | |
| | Assessment schedule | | |
| | School Calendar/Dates | | |
| | Prayer times | | |
| | Teaching resources | | |
| | Teaching texts | | |
| | Class lists | | |
| | Student background | | |
| | Mentor Appointed | | |
| | Canteen Arrangements | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| HR | Physical contract | | |
| | Medical Insurance | | |
| | Medical card | | |
| | List of Doctors Hospitals | | |
| | Residency | | |
| Finance | Open bank account/ IBAN No. | | |
| | Advise Accounts Dept of banking details for payroll | | |
| IT | Al Dhafra Schools Email Account and passwords | | |
| Communications | Mobile telephone | | |
| | Key phone numbers | | |
| | Internet | | |
| | Accommodation ID | | |
| | Orientation | | |
| | Inventory | | |
| | Welcome pack | | |
| Transport | First days | | |
| | Transport options | | |
| | Drivers' License | | |
| General | Provide and receive Emergency contacts | | |
| | Handbook (hard copy) | | |
| | City orientation & map | | |
| | Cultural orientation | | |
| | Shopping supplies/Carrefour | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Staff Signature once checklist is complete:

Date:

Mentor Signature once checklist is complete:

Date: