

Follow-Through Inspection Report

Grammar School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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Basic information

Grammar School was inspected during the 2011-2012 academic year as part of the full inspection cycle across all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning and the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. During this inspection, the overall performance of the school was judged to be unsatisfactory and school inspectors identified a number of recommendations which the school was required to address.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) has conducted one Guidance Visit and two Follow-Through Inspections in Grammar School since the full inspection. This third Follow-Through Inspection evaluated the progress of the school in meeting the recommendations.

Progress

The school had met all the recommendations to an acceptable level. Grammar School will be scheduled as part of the regular inspection cycle for a full inspection during the next academic year.

Overview

The Grammar School had been in the Follow-Through Inspection cycle for a long time. However, the spirit of its leaders and the commitment of its staff meant that it continued to sustain a shared desire to improve, despite setbacks. Leaders had striven to access expert advice in order to upgrade and update teaching and learning techniques. The school had ensured that there were specific leaders for key areas in order to introduce change, influence teachers and monitor their effectiveness. Lessons had become more purposeful. The curriculum was more interesting and teachers planned lessons carefully with the different needs of students in mind, including those with special educational needs. Students were more active and involved in lessons, and were being encouraged to think more for themselves. In this way, they were still gaining knowledge but they were now acquiring valuable learning skills as well. Students' progress and attainment in most subjects were improving, although there were still a few weaknesses, especially in Arabic. The school had invested sensibly in new technology resources. Overall, teaching resources were adequate but not enough had been done to make the school an exciting and stimulating learning environment. Nevertheless, the school was clearly moving in the right direction and showing sufficient capacity to improve further.

Inspection recommendations

Improve attainment and progress in all subjects and phases

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had invested a lot of effort to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, progress in lessons was showing clear signs of improvement. This was particularly true in English throughout the school in all aspects of the language, including writing. Achievement in mathematics was also stronger, especially in Kindergarten and secondary; it remained a concern in primary. Progress in primary science was improving because students were more involved in practical activities. The least improvement was in Arabic as an additional language. Progress by primary students remained weak but there was some improvement in secondary. As a result of this better progress, the levels of unsatisfactory attainment in most subjects had significantly reduced.

Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that tasks are sufficiently challenging for students of all abilities

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The quality of teaching and learning had improved in Kindergarten 2, primary and secondary phases. Teachers' planning was beginning to meet the needs of all groups of students including those with special educational needs. Lesson objectives were more precise and were shared with students. Improved classroom management allowed students to discuss their learning through group and partner work. This was less effective in the youngest classes where teachers spoke too much. This limited the opportunities for children to make choices and to become independent and confident learners. Teachers' questioning skills had improved and produced higher expectations of what students could learn. Activities were better planned and aligned to English National Curriculum standards and Early Years learning outcomes. This allowed the majority of students to become more interested and engaged learners.

Develop a whole-school assessment system that accurately measures learning outcomes and informs teaching objectives

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

A range of assessments was used throughout the school to gather important information about students' progress toward meeting English National Curriculum targets. Across the school, most teachers were better at tracking and recording students' progress and so were more aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. In all subjects, teachers were providing feedback regularly to students showing them how to improve. Students better understood what steps they needed to take to reach their targets. Using assessment data, teachers planned lessons with differentiated work that addressed the learning needs of all groups of students. However, this use of data analysis to plan lessons and adapt the curriculum was inconsistent.

Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The curriculum had been reviewed effectively. The planning format was now much more consistent across the school and positively influenced teachers' thinking. Almost all teachers were adapting the curriculum in consideration of students' different needs. Challenging work in most subjects was more evident. For example, teachers provided more able students with additional work or extension. Teachers tended to give more support to students with special educational needs but did not routinely plan well enough for them in lessons. Across the school, more enrichment activities resulted in more secure learning.

Revise the timings of the school day so that all students arrive before registration, begin lessons simultaneously and depart from school together

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had maintained its school timings, in keeping with the previous report. The well-organised timetable meant that all students arrived and left at the same times.

Ensure compliance with Ministry of Education time allocation requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The revised timetable across all phases continued to ensure compliance with all Ministry of Education time allocation requirements for both Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language.

Identify students with special educational needs accurately, modify their curricula, monitor their progress and ensure that appropriate support is provided in lessons

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had appointed a co-ordinator for special educational needs. As a result, the system for identifying students with special educational needs was more robust. Students were now screened on entry to the school according to the KHDA categories. The co-ordinator worked together with teachers who taught students with special educational needs. Their curriculum was reviewed regularly and individual learning plans were used in lessons to support learning. The school analysed test and assessment data appropriately to track students' progress and provide parents with regular updates on their children's progress.

Improve leadership at all levels by ensuring that leaders clearly understand best educational practice and are equipped with the skills to implement and manage change

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The senior leaders and teachers shared a common desire for the school to be better. Senior leaders had learned from previous inspections and external advice, and were eager to bring about positive change. A stronger management structure meant that there were leaders specifically responsible for key aspects, such as teaching, assessment and the curriculum. The school had also appointed a leader for special educational needs, who had already improved the provision and support for relevant students. Regular training, guidance and monitoring by senior staff and external experts had resulted in more effective teaching which, in turn, had boosted attainment and progress. The school had wisely invested in new computer resources so that more students could strengthen their skills in information technology. However, there was still considerable scope for the school to provide a wider range of rich and stimulating resources. As a result of the changes made, senior leaders showed sufficient capacity to improve the school further.

Provide more practical resources in lessons, especially information and communication technology (ICT), to facilitate better learning

The school had met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had done well to introduce more resources, especially in information and communication technology. A new computer room and some new projectors in classrooms improved students' learning experiences. In some lessons, particularly in mathematics and science and English, teachers were making better use of resources to carry out practical and investigative approaches to learning. Overall, resources were sufficient to support learning. However, the school had yet to invest in a rich and inspiring range of resources that would motivate students and strengthen their learning.

What happens next?

The school has met all the recommendations to an acceptable level. Grammar School will be scheduled as part of the regular inspection cycle for a full inspection during the next academic year

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
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How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
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