

First Follow-Through Inspection Report
on
New Academy School
Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report published May 2011

Basic Information

Located in Al Raffa, New Academy School was inspected 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 the full inspection, the overall performance of the school was judged to be unsatisfactory and inspectors identified a number of recommendations which the school was required to address.

As a result of the overall performance of the school being judged unsatisfactory, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) has conducted an initial Follow-Through inspection. The purpose of this first Follow-Through Inspection in April 2011 was to evaluate the progress made by the school in achieving improvements based on the recommendations set out in the full inspection report.

Progress

Inspectors judged that The New Academy School had not satisfactorily addressed the recommendations made by DSIB at the full inspection. Inspectors will continue to undertake Follow-Through Inspections at regular intervals until the recommendations made by inspectors have been satisfactorily addressed.

Overview

The New Academy School had not yet met the recommendations of the inspection report of November 2011 to an acceptable level. The school had submitted an action plan in which it had identified its priorities based on the recommendations including the need to improve teaching and learning; to improve assessment methods and analysis to track and support students' progress; to enhance the curriculum beyond the heavy reliance on textbook and to improve leadership's capacity to correctly identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. However action to address these priorities had not been taken yet and had not had sufficient impact.

Inspection Recommendations

Improve the quality of teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students, especially in Kindergarten, by ensuring that teachers:

- plan lessons focused on what students will know and understand;
- question students to develop critical thinking and enquiry skills;
- make connections to previous learning and real-life situations.

The school had not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

A few lesson plans were evident but were generally of an inconsistent format and quality. A majority of teachers used targeted closed questions for assessment and clarification of learning but rarely to develop critical thinking and enquiry skills. Most questions were closely connected to the text books. There were very few links with real life experiences and teachers made limited use of available resources. A majority of teachers' subject knowledge was secure, but most had a poor understanding of how students learn. This was most noticeable in Kindergarten. In a few lessons, teachers provided tasks that suited the range of needs of students, but this was inconsistent.

Establish consistent and effective assessments in order to have a clearer understanding of students' progress

The school had not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had acknowledged in its action plan the need to improve assessment methods and the quality of feedback given to students to improve progress. The school had also begun international benchmark testing by having students sit for TIMSS and PIRLS assessment tests. In the more effective lessons, teachers checked students' understanding and had designed tasks for students based on assessment information. The school did not have a whole school assessment policy. The data being collated from internal exams was not sufficiently and thoroughly analysed to inform leaders of students' progress and to inform all teachers for lesson planning that met the range of abilities and learning styles. Ongoing lesson-based assessment did not feature in kindergarten lessons as an integral part of teaching children.

Develop the curriculum in all phases, with a clear rationale to enable the school to move away from the over-reliance on textbooks

The school had not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had begun the process of improving the the curriculum. However, the curriculum rationale remained unclear in a number of key subject areas. The curriculum adopted in the Kindergarten did not equip children with the basic skills for learning as they moved through the grades. In most of the lessons across the school, curriculum was

still driven by textbooks. Lesson plans were largely determined by the content, topic and chapter of the textbook and not by curriculum expectations in students' knowledge, skills and understanding. A few teachers, especially in the upper grades, had begun to use the syllabus to plan for different ability groups but this remained of inconsistent. There were limited opportunities for students to develop creative skills. Students across the school had no choice of elective courses to enhance their learning experiences and to develop their creative skills.

Ensure that there are arrangements in place to track and support academic progress over time

The school had not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

A few heads of department had compared students' term one and term two results and had identified students with weaknesses. To start the process of support for these students, the school had communicated with their parents. In addition, an academic psychologist at the school had identified a few students with special education needs and had been supporting their learning in collaboration with their teachers. However, tracking of students' academic progress was not a comprehensive and co-ordinated process. There were no systems in place to track students' performance in all phases of the school and offer the support required to ensure that students were making the progress expected of them.

Improve the quality of leadership by:

- providing a clear sense of direction for the school, involving all staff;
- developing an effective system of self-evaluation that clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses;
- establishing a governing body to provide guidance and accountability for the school.

The school had not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

In the school's action plan, senior leaders had identified the need to review the school's long and short-term strategic plans and to establish systems for self-evaluation based on the exemplar provided by DSIB. The senior leadership team had not provided the school with a vision based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement remained a delegated task to heads of departments. This had resulted in continued inconsistency in the quality of teaching with a strong need for improvement in the kindergarten section, which remained without a qualified leader. The school had yet to form a governing body to provide guidance and accountability.

What happens next?

DSIB will continue to undertake Follow-Through Inspections of The New Academy School until the school has progressed to the stage where it is included in the regular inspection cycle for all Dubai schools. DSIB will continue to report to parents regarding the progress made by the school until all of the recommendations from the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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