

Follow-Through Inspection Report

New Academy School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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Basic information

New Academy School was inspected during the 2010-2011 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 2 Guidance Visit/s and 5 Follow-Through Inspection/s in New Academy School since the full inspection. This Fifth Follow-Through Inspection evaluated the progress of the school in meeting the recommendations.

Progress

The school had not met all of the recommendations to an acceptable level. New Academy School will continue to be inspected by DSIB at regular intervals in accordance with the Follow-Through Inspection cycle.

Overview

The New Academy School began a new programme for improvement in December 2013 by appointing a new Vice-Principal and other senior managers to bring significant changes to the school. In the short time that they had been in post they had, through a thorough review gained an accurate and detailed view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, they had created a very ambitious school improvement plan which, if successfully implemented, had the potential to address all of the issues necessary to bring about school improvement. Many actions had already begun but after only a few weeks it would have been unrealistic to expect to identify significant outcomes for students. At the time of the inspection there was too much unsatisfactory teaching. However it is clear is that the school has embarked upon a journey of rapid improvement. Although the governors of the school have committed resources to these changes, there is still limited evidence of effective governance.

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.

In the seven weeks leading up to this inspection, structures had been put in place to help to improve the quality of teaching. There was some evidence in the classes that teaching had a clearer focus than had previously been the case. The use of 'I can' statements in teachers' planning brought clarity to the purpose of lessons. However, sometimes these were not shared with students and often were not set at a sufficiently challenging level. There was some evidence of students receiving feedback on their work in the upper school but on too many occasions next steps in learning were not explained. Some improvements were seen on teachers recapping during or at the end of lessons to remind students of the purpose of the lesson. Match of the lessons to students' abilities was beginning to be evident in planning but was not always delivered in practice. Teaching in Kindergarten was unsatisfactory. In the remainder of the school the majority of teaching was acceptable but very rarely better than this. The recent actions to improve teaching have not yet had time to improve the quality overall.

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.

A detailed strategic plan to improve assessment had been created. This plan was at a very early stage of implementation but some small improvements had recently begun. Heads of Departments had begun an analysis of assessment data to give them targets for improvement but had not yet fully addressed the issue of data accuracy or of moderation to establish standards securely. Students had recently taken some externally marked tests but there had not been time for the results to be analysed. There was some evidence that internal examinations lacked appropriate challenge. The school had developed plans to establish grade point average scores but these plans were in an early stage of implementation. The quality of marking of student work across the school was poor. Too often marking was inaccurate and rarely was it helpful to students by telling them how to improve. Peer assessment was only just developing.

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.

A detailed and potentially effective plan to improve the curriculum was now in place. However, this was at an early stage of implementation and only two of the action points had been completed. The senior staff had undertaken a mid-year review and made some changes to the curriculum, for example by improving provision for physical education and art. The school was in the process of planning for elective courses for the older students and shortcomings in the time available for Islamic Education had been addressed. The curriculum was being thoroughly revised to meet US Common Core State Standards in English Language and math. Next Generation standards were in place for science. In the lessons seen there were limited opportunities to explore cross-curricular links and similarly few chances for students to exercise critical thinking. Although a good range of extra-curricular activities was available, only 8% of students attended.

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

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

The systems put into place in recent weeks had established acceptable arrangements for the tracking of academic progress. Teachers' skills in using these systems were still developing but there was clear evidence that assessments were being made for each student. There was evidence that the school was tracking student attainment in skills as well as knowledge. More students had undertaken external tests. The school had developed a system to identify students with special educational needs.

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.

Leadership was not yet acceptable because some of the key leaders were not yet in post or had not yet been officially appointed. The leadership team was consequently weakened by their absence. In addition, the considerable changes which the new leadership team was making had not yet had time to achieve significant, observable outcomes, especially in teaching and learning. The very recent appointment of a Vice-Principal had brought both insight and

clear, accurate judgement to the school and had energised many of the staff. The vice-principal had very rapidly gained an accurate oversight of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and had involved many key staff in doing this. The embryonic new leadership team had formulated a detailed school improvement plan to address the issues faced by the school. This was based on good international practice and feedback from within the school. It was, therefore, entirely relevant. The new leaders had identified the quality of teaching as the key issue to be addressed and had set targets for the teaching staff as well as providing a programme of support for them. Some of the school leaders could articulate strengths and weaknesses within their departments. There was no evidence that the governing body shared this overview; although there has clearly been a commitment to providing the necessary resources to begin a programme of school improvement.

What happens next?

The school has not met all of the recommendations to an acceptable level. New Academy School will continue to be inspected by DSIB at regular intervals in accordance with the Follow-Through Inspection schedule

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: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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