

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 one Follow-Through Inspection in Grammar School since the full inspection. This Second 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. Grammar School will continue to be inspected by DSIB at regular intervals in accordance with the Follow-Through Inspection cycle.

Overview

Grammar School had not met all of the recommendations of the previous inspection report to an acceptable level. Senior leaders showed an increased commitment to school improvement. A more focused approach to action planning had resulted in a restructured management team, improved displays of student work and a greater range of library resources. Staff training had focused on improving planning and students' learning. However, the quality of teaching and learning was variable. In a few lessons, the quality of teaching had improved. Teaching was weak in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, where too many lessons lacked pace and challenge, resulting in low attainment levels and insufficient progress for most students. Planning did not meet the needs of the students and a narrow range of resources limited learning opportunities. Revised systems for data gathering had been introduced to help teachers track students' progress. There was, however, little improvement in the use of this data to support lesson planning. High staff turnover, with 20 of the 45 staff being new to the school this year, had impacted on students' learning and progress.

Inspection recommendations

1- Improve attainment and progress in all subjects and phases

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

Staff measured students' attainment against the standards of the National Curriculum for England and Wales in only a few subjects. A few students achieved the expected levels in key subjects; a significant majority of students did not. IGSC examination data for Year 11 students for the previous three years confirmed these outcomes. Students' progress against their starting points and over time was poor. Most students could not apply their skills and knowledge to new or unfamiliar situations.

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

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

Limited progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning had been made in a few phases. A number of teachers had poor subject knowledge and a weak understanding of how children learn, particularly in Kindergarten. A majority of lessons lacked pace. Students spent too much time completing simple tasks and there was insufficient challenge for more able students. There was not enough support provided for students experiencing difficulty in their learning. This reduced attainment and progress levels in lessons. In too many lessons, tasks and activities were easily completed by the majority of students and teachers did not provide extension opportunities. A few teachers planned for greater challenge but did not provide this during the lesson. Overall, tasks were not well matched to the different learning needs of students. There were low expectations of students in most phases, except in Years 11 and 12 where there were specific and demanding examination requirements. Teachers' planning provided too few references to relevant standards within the National Curriculum of England, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

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

The school assessment policy did not make sufficient reference to National Curriculum levels as an integral part of the assessment arrangements. Assessment records were used in most lessons but teachers often failed to identify precisely the standards that students' achieved. There was inconsistent data entry leading to a confused understanding of how well students were performing. Leaders therefore did not have an accurate view of individual and year group attainment levels. This inhibited the early identification of students who required support.

- 4- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students

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

The curriculum had been reviewed. However, it remained deficient as it did not meet the needs of all students. With the exception of senior phases where the prescribed curriculum was more demanding, overall, teachers did not plan demanding and stimulating lessons. There were few links made to real life. Where links were made, teachers did not provide students with enough time to explore connections that might develop their understanding of concepts. Few cross-curricular links were evident. Teachers seldom asked questions to determine students' prior knowledge. There was too little evaluation of what students already knew to inform next steps in learning. A few senior students had restricted timetables. They did not have a lesson every period and were not provided with an appropriate curriculum during these non-teaching periods. The curriculum standards were not used extensively by teachers to support their understanding of students' attainment and progress.

- 5- 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 new school timetable had been successfully introduced in September 2012. Lessons throughout the school now started at a common time for all students. Kindergarten children were dismissed at 11.30 and all the other students at 13.45. The school had effectively

communicated the changes to parents. There was an opportunity for the school to extend its day to include an additional teaching session.

6- 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 ensured compliance with all Ministry of Education time allocation requirements for both Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language.

7- 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 not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The school had introduced a process by which teachers could identify students who required assistance in their learning. A referral process, based on an analysis of test data, had been adopted. However, the process did not always lead to a sufficiently detailed or accurate diagnosis of individual students' needs. Teachers did not monitor progress closely and were not sufficiently trained in modifying teaching approaches to meet the variety of needs. The school had recognised the need to appoint a dedicated special educational needs co-ordinator. However, this appointment had not yet been made. There was limited provision for students who made slow progress in their reading or who had English as an additional language.

8- 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 not met the requirements of this recommendation to an acceptable level.

The senior leadership team had clarified its vision for the school. It had attempted to employ more experienced qualified staff, but high staff turnover had had a negative effect. It had redefined the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, and improved communication. The

senior leaders had been successful in ensuring better quality of students' displays and improved library resources. It had been less successful in improving the quality of teaching to ensure improved student attainment, progress and learning consistently across the school. There continued to be too many lessons that did not meet the learning needs of most students. Most lessons did not have sufficient pace, or challenge to meet the needs of the more able while the less able were not sufficiently supported. Teachers' expectations of most students were too low. The capacity to improve the school further was limited.

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

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

In a few lessons, particularly in mathematics and science, a more practical investigative approach was used by teachers. Resources in support of this approach had been brought to the school. However, in most lessons, teachers did not make practical learning a key feature of their work. Overall, there were too few examples of the use of ICT by students or teachers in lessons.

What happens next?

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

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:
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