

Follow-Through Inspection Report
on
Buds Public School
Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report Published June 2010

Basic information

Buds Public School was inspected during in December 2009 as part of the regular inspections of 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) conducted a Follow-Through Inspection in May 2010. The purpose of this Follow-Through Inspection was to evaluate the progress made by the school in achieving improvements based on the recommendations set out in the first inspection report.

Progress

Inspectors judged that Buds Public School had not yet satisfactorily addressed the recommendations from the initial school inspection. DSIB will continue to undertake Follow-Through Inspections at regular intervals until the recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed.

Overview

Senior leaders had undertaken a considerable amount of planning and professional development to improve the school but this was yet to have a significant impact upon the quality of teaching and learning. There was an inconsistency in teachers' expectations. Teaching styles and strategies, especially for the youngest children, were not well matched to the learning needs of many students and several teachers relied too heavily on textbooks for the content and style of lessons. Despite the introduction of a lesson planning form, teachers were not providing activities at different levels of challenge for students of different abilities. A range of extra-curricular activities had been started and these were creating new opportunities to challenge students. However, in regular lessons, teachers did not help students to develop their higher-order thinking skills. Teachers had introduced a range of assessment strategies and tests in the key subjects but the information resulting from this was not being used to help students to understand what they needed to do to improve their work. The performance management system which the school had introduced was not yet providing the means for promoting professional growth. Lesson observations were undertaken by senior leaders but the feedback to teachers did not help teachers to adapt their method to raise standards. The advisory group continued to have a supportive role in the life of the school but it was not holding the school sufficiently to account. The lack of accountability was, in part, due to the absence of a detailed school development plan with clear objectives, and measurable outcomes to be achieved in a specified timeframe.

Initial Inspection Recommendations

Develop a culture of high expectations and challenge that celebrates student success rather than accepting their limitations.

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

Overall, teachers' expectations remained too low. In several classes, particularly in the lower grades, students were required to undertake tasks which lacked challenge and did not extend their thinking. There remained, for example, too much mechanical copying of text and too many low-level colouring activities in these lower grades. Nonetheless, there were a few examples of students being challenged to think, be creative and achieve well. In an English class in the senior grades students were conducting a class debate in a mature and orderly fashion. Students formulated arguments and defended their well informed positions with clarity and self-discipline. In the main, though there was too little challenge for most of the students for most of the time.

Extend the curriculum to include more challenge and higher order thinking.

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

A curriculum development team had been formed. The school had introduced after-school clubs in key subjects. Students were assigned independent study projects and, in certain departments, teachers used a wider range of work sheets in lessons. Despite these steps in regular lessons, higher-achieving students were rarely challenged and there were insufficient examples of teachers using questioning effectively to promote higher order skills. Overall, most students' daily experience of the curriculum was at the same level of challenge and opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills were very limited.

Address the needs of different students and identify clear learning outcomes in lesson planning.

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

The school had designed and implemented a standard lesson planning document, which included learning objectives and three levels of attainment to be considered by teachers. This innovation was partially successful in making learning objectives clear. Most teachers shared these objectives with students and a few reviewed them at the conclusion of lessons. However, several teachers confused the learning objectives with the topics and activities to be covered during lessons. The needs of different students were still not met across the school. Most teachers delivered the same content at the same pace to all students, disregarding the planning document. Consequently, the learning needs of the students were unevenly addressed.

Improve the quality of teaching by using a broader range of teaching strategies.

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

During the Follow-Through Inspection, inspectors observed lessons in all the key subjects and in all grades. Of the lessons observed, more than one in three was unsatisfactory. The teaching was better in the higher grades, notably from Grades 9 to 12. In almost all lessons, the teaching was restricted to the contents of designated textbooks with teachers talking extensively and students frequently required giving single word responses to teachers. A shortage of resources for learning compounded the restrictive teaching strategies. On only a few occasions were students required to think and find things out for themselves. More often, facts and instructions were stated by the teacher and students were asked to recall knowledge without fully understanding the content or concepts.

Develop assessment processes so that teachers are aware of students' understanding as well as their factual knowledge.

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

Teachers had developed a range of tests to check students' knowledge and skills in Arabic, English, mathematics and science. The information gathered gave a broad indication of students' strengths and weaknesses. However, the assessments were not comprehensive in content and important aspects of learning were not reviewed with sufficient regularity. Teachers did not use the assessment information effectively to plan appropriate learning activities for students. Teachers marked the students' exercise books regularly but did not provide enough information to students about what they needed to do to improve their work.

Introduce performance management techniques that support and ensure teachers' professional growth.

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

The school had introduced a performance management system and a programme of professional training for staff. Teachers had attended training courses which had helped them to improve their skills in planning lessons. The Principal and other senior staff monitored teachers' lesson plans and observed their lessons regularly to provide feedback and support improvement. Despite these steps, the quality of teaching remained unsatisfactory in too many lessons. The criteria used to evaluate lessons by senior staff were too imprecise and teachers did not receive clear and more specific guidance about effective teaching strategies. There was insufficient feedback about the quality of their own teaching and too few opportunities to observe good teaching in their own and in other schools.

Formalise and broaden the role of the advisory group to ensure that it has stakeholder representation, provides regular guidance and holds the leadership of the school to account.

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

The advisory group was supportive of the school's work but the school was not fully accountable to this body. In the absence of a detailed development plan their supervisory role was hard to fulfil. The advisory group met regularly, but it did not include wide representation from all stakeholders. For example, the parents met as a body quite independent of the advisory group. Detailed notes of the regular bi-monthly meetings of the advisory group were completed but these notes did not include action points to be followed up at subsequent meetings. Consequently, the advisory group did not have the means to ensure that actions were carried through.

Develop a school development plan which sets out measurable goals and time-frames to ensure that the school makes significant progress.

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

There was no clear development plan with measurable goals, timeframes, and milestones. The school had a series of aspirations, which were contained in the post-inspection action plan but the financing and measuring of these remained unclear. Elements of the plan had not been delegated to named individuals and, as a result, it was not a plan which was understood by members of the school community, all of whom had a stake in its successful realisation. In the absence of a widely-shared development plan it was not clear how the school would be able to demonstrate success and progress over time.

What happens next?

DSIB will continue to undertake Follow-Through Inspections of Buds Public 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 the school has satisfactorily addressed all of the recommendations from the last inspection.

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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