

Progress Review Visit Report

Al Arqm Private School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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Basic information

Al Arqm Private School was inspected during the 2012-2013 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 two Progress Review Visits to Al Arqm Private School since the full inspection. This was the third visit which evaluated the progress of the school in meeting the recommendations.

Progress

The school had not met all of the recommendations to an acceptable level. Al Arqm Private School will continue to be inspected by DSIB at regular intervals in accordance with the Progress Review Visit cycle.

Overview

More than two years had passed since the full inspection. During this period, senior leaders had been successful in steadily improving the health and safety arrangements in the school. These were judged to be acceptable. However, students' attainment, progress and learning skills had not improved sufficiently. This was due to significant inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment across the school. Consequently, there was little evidence that the school's overall performance was improving in a sustained manner, despite the efforts of leaders and managers. Senior leaders had not focused sharply or quickly enough on the recommendations from the full inspection. Although, a variety of monitoring activities had taken place, including lesson observations, actions to ensure consistent improvements had not been rigorous enough. Serious challenges in recruiting and retaining effective staff in all phases of the school had a detrimental impact on the overall quality of provision and on students' outcomes.

The Board of Governors had recently appointed a well-qualified and experienced Principal who had been in post approximately five weeks at the time of this Progress Review Visit. The Principal demonstrated a clear determination to focus on improving teaching and students' progress. Staff morale appeared to be good and senior leaders were beginning to prioritise and focus on the key areas for improvement. More effective mentoring and partnership work between the boys' and girls' sections of the school was highlighting better teaching practices and strategies. This was supporting school leaders to be more accurate in their self-evaluation judgements. Work to strengthen and build the capacity of middle leaders, including subject leaders, was at an early stage.

Inspection recommendations

Improve teaching, learning and assessment across all phases to improve the attainment and progress made by the students;

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

Overall, the quality of teaching had not improved significantly. In the lessons observed, student and teacher interactions were generally positive. However, in almost all lessons teachers talked for too long; students remained passive learners, rarely asking questions. Lessons lacked lively debate or meaningful discussion. In lessons, students with special educational needs or specific gifts or talents were unsupported. Lessons lacked variety, stimulation and challenge. Teachers made limited use of learning technologies to vary teaching or to promote understanding. The development of students' learning skills remained unsatisfactory. For example, there was little cooperation or collaboration between groups of students during lessons. Poor management of behaviour in the kindergarten and in the primary phases impacted negatively on student learning.

In Kindergarten, teachers did not understand how young children learn, failed to provide a stimulating and attractive environment and expected children to remain sitting for far too long. Consequently, their development was too slow and attendance poor. A narrow programme design limited the range of learning experiences.

In other phases, students were not sufficiently punctual in arriving to school and to lessons.

Ensure the well-being of all students through more effective and rigorous health and safety provision;

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

The school had worked hard to bring this recommendation to an acceptable level. For example, the area outside the Kindergarten had been rubber-tiled, the cement corners were covered, the rugs in the classrooms replaced, and the toilets replaced with age-appropriate equipment. The entire kindergarten building had been painted and concrete posts covered with the appropriate safety materials. The schools' child protection policy had been updated and staff trained. Senior managers prepared a weekly supervision timetable for all staff to supervise students during breaks and in the early morning drop off and upon departure from school. Security guards were posted at each gate to control traffic and to receive and dispatch students.

Buses were now equipped with cameras and up-to-date registers. Daily absences were followed up by school administrators. The school building was cleaned regularly during the day. However, students were observed on numerous occasions dropping litter in classroom and the outdoor area, showing little concern for their surroundings.

Identify special needs students accurately and ensure that they are supported in lessons to make good progress;

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

The school was on a journey of improving the identification and the support for students with special educational needs. A coordinator for special educational needs had been appointed at the beginning of the year, and had started providing teachers with training to support students. Some identification was conducted by an external agency, but most of it was conducted internally. Far too few students had Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). These IEPs contained adequate specific targets, assessment tools, and timelines for achieving measurable steps in their progress and personal development. Teachers, in general, however, did not understand the learning needs of students with special educational needs. As a result, they were unable to provide students with sufficient support in the classroom. The measures the school had taken to respond to this key recommendation did not result in substantial improvement in the provision for students with special educational needs and their progress, as a result, remained unsatisfactory.

Involve the Board of Governors in making self-evaluation more accurate, so that improvement plans lead to better provision for students.

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

The chair of the Board of Governors had high aspirations for the school. Plans to refurbish and extend areas of the school were underway. Governors had recruited additional external expertise onto the board and approved external trainers to provide staff with much needed training. However, the impact of this initiative had not resulted in sufficient improvements in teaching. Action plans reflected the recommendations from the full inspection but did not specify how the impact of the actions would be specifically measured against outcomes for students. Additionally, the arrangements for evaluating and monitoring actions and processes were unclear. As a result self-evaluation remained generous and mostly inaccurate. The Board of Governors had not yet had sufficient influence on leaders' evaluation of the school.

What happens next?

The school has not met all of the recommendations to an acceptable level. Al Arqm Private School will continue to be inspected by DSIB at regular intervals in accordance with the Progress Review Visits' 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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