

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 two Guidance Visits and four Follow-Through Inspections in New Academy School since the full inspection. This fourth 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's stated mission is "providing a child-centred environment which promotes creativity and excellence and encourages lifelong learning in a changing world." The school was only partly successful in realising this mission. There was evident progress, after the most recent full inspection, towards meeting some of the recommendations. Specifically, a few examples of good teaching were observed, improvements in assessment and the curriculum were noticed and there was some tracking of students' progress. At the same time, the proportion of good teaching was small and a significant number of lessons featured unsatisfactory teaching and learning. The school's leaders did not articulate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the ways in which it needed to improve. The school did not benefit from effective governance. There was an insufficient degree of improvement for the New Academy School to achieve an acceptable overall performance judgement.

Inspection recommendations

Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in the Kindergarten, by focussing on what students know and understand, questioning them to develop critical thinking and enquiry skills, and making connections to previous learning and real-life situations

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

Although some teachers demonstrated the ability to meet this recommendation, about half of the lessons observed featured unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Some teachers used questions skilfully to help children develop thinking skills, but they were a minority. In the Kindergarten, children were able to follow instructions but frequently did not understand what was being taught. In a significant number of lessons across the school, teachers talked for too long, leaving students to listen passively and disengage. Students rarely worked independently, conducted research or experimented. There were a few examples of students applying their learning to real-life situations. In most lessons, all students were asked to complete identical tasks regardless of their previous learning.

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 'Basic Skills Assessment' had been introduced at the beginning of academic year for students in the five key subjects. The data collected were then compared with the Term One and Two results; students' rates of progress were identified and the curriculum was modified for some of them. Comparisons of each students' strengths and weaknesses in these subjects were not made. Trends in strengths and weaknesses were not identified to compare, for example, the progress of the boys with that of the girls. The US curriculum standards were not used as benchmarks for assessing students' attainment. Internal assessments were used, but the analysis of data was inconsistent across the key subjects.

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 curriculum still lacked a clear rationale, as the standards for learning were drawn from several sources in different jurisdictions. Lesson planning templates included the use of other resources; for example, computers were used frequently in English lessons to good effect. Mathematics lessons featured warm-up activities to engage students' interest and review previous learning. Overall, the curriculum remained narrow in scope and offered

little choice to students. Too often, the level of challenge was mismatched to what students had already learned. A review had been done and some modifications had been made to develop the variety of tasks for students in English, mathematics and science. The school had added classes for the Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) for an additional fee.

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.

The assessment and recording of students' attainment in all subjects was an established practice throughout the school. However, teachers' skills in accurately assessing students' work against the appropriate curriculum standards was still developing. It was insufficiently rigorous and did not establish whether or not students' understanding and skill development were secure. While some aspects of students' progress were tracked in detail, other aspects, such as their scientific skills, were not. The overall progress of individual students could not be tracked because there was no system to coordinate or analyse their marks. English and mathematics teachers used online assessments to help senior students improve, but this practice was not evident in the other subjects and grades. Only a very few students in Grade 12 were externally tested and could evaluate their performance against international standards. There were no systems in place to identify and support students with special educational needs.

Improve the quality of leadership by providing direction for the school involving all staff, clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses, and 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.

School leaders had made improvements in the systems for internal communication, but the staff lacked a shared vision that included common improvement goals. There was a method for the appraisal of teachers' performance but it was not systematic or linked to the learning outcomes of students. A self-evaluation process that involved various stakeholders had begun but was incomplete at the time of inspection. School leaders were unable to articulate the school's strengths and weaknesses clearly. Links with the parent community did not have an evident effect upon the experience of students. There had been no improvement to the quality of governance of the school since the previous Follow-Through Inspection in 2012. Overall, the leadership of the school remained unsatisfactory.

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

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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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