



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First **التعليم أولاً**



Summary Inspection Report

Emirates Falcon International School

Published in 2013

Iqraa

Emirates Falcon International School

Inspection Date	15 th – 18 th October, 2012
School ID#	153
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	American
Number of Students	620
Age Range	KG 1 – Grade 9
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Antwaneet Al Nasrallah
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of inspectors. They observed 79 lessons, held more than 35 discussions with staff and students, scrutinised test data and students' work, and considered parents' responses to a questionnaire about the school. The inspectors considered the school ethos, the quality of students' learning experiences, personal development, progress and the teaching they receive.

Description of the School

The school opened in 2007 in the Falaj Hazaa district of Al Ain. It serves students from a range of socio economic backgrounds, including middle income and professional families. The school's vision is 'to provide a safe and caring school where students gain self confidence and become positive learners'. Its mission includes the intention to develop 'academic excellence and life-long learning'. The school has grown since the last inspection, when the student roll was 147, and has added Grades 6 through to 9. The school applies tests in Arabic, English and mathematics and takes personal factors into account when admitting students.

There are 160 students in kindergarten (KG), 322 in primary grades 1 to 6 and 130 in middle grades 7 to 9. Sixty per cent of the students are boys. All the students are Muslim and of Arab heritage. Seventy seven per cent of students are from the UAE. Of the rest, 6% are Syrian, approximately 3% each are from Jordan and Oman and just over 2% from Egypt. A further small proportion are from Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, Canada, US, India, Lebanon, Yemen and Qatar. Most staff are Muslim, from outside the UAE.

Eight students have special educational needs. Of these, three have severe learning difficulties, two have language communication issues, one has a hearing impairment, one is autistic and one has emotional/behavioural difficulties. Ten primary students are identified as needing support for language difficulties.

A school board, made up of the owner, principal, senior staff and two parents, oversee the school. The fees are 12,600 AED in KG rising to 19,400 AED in Grade 9, including books and uniform. Teachers' monthly salaries range from 3,000 to 6,300 AED.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band B

Grade 5

Inspectors judged Emirates Falcon International School to be in Band B; that is a satisfactory school.

The last inspection in March 2010 found the school to be satisfactory but at risk. It recommended that the school should:

- i. make more use of assessment data to target teachers' planning of the students' learning needs
- ii. expand the leadership team and develop the role of subject leaders
- iii. provide an effective strategic plan and monitor its impact
- iv. develop a broad curriculum enriched with extra-curricular provision
- v. provide high quality internationally standardised tests.

The school has undergone significant change since the inspection. Student numbers have quadrupled. This year, as well as 73 new students in kindergarten (KG), 126 students joined the school in other grades. As a result, many new teachers were appointed in the last two years, including several who are new to the profession. The senior leadership team has also changed and the vice principal is now the principal. There is an academic supervisor, and a new vice principal has recently been appointed.

Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The senior team have acted quickly to implement the recommendations. Actions are beginning to make a difference to learning and progress but there is more to do to be fully effective. Some teachers are planning lessons to match different ability levels but with the many new staff, this is not consistent. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and an increasing range of extra-curricular activities is provided. A strategic plan is in place and is driving improvements although it needs further refinement. The role of middle leaders is developing to involve more responsibility for quality. The school is now accredited to administer internationally standardised tests based on its American common core curriculum but these have not yet started.

Students' standards are below international levels in the core subjects of Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Standards in Arabic are in line with Ministry of Education (MoE) expectations, those in social studies are below and in Islamic Studies standards are above. Students' progress is broadly satisfactory. Overall, boys' progress lags behind girls but boys in Grades 7 to 9 make better progress than those in younger grades. Differentiated work improves the progress for students of different abilities in some lessons but this is not consistent across the school. Occasionally, there is not enough challenge for the most able and lower

attainers struggle. Higher order thinking skills and independent learning are underdeveloped.

In English, standards in speaking, reading and writing are below international expectations but girls' are improving at a faster rate. More varied teaching strategies and opportunities to practise skills make a difference in girls' lessons. Boys' progress is less satisfactory because they have fewer opportunities to practise all key skills. Both boys and girls are developing appropriate understanding of grammar, basic sentence structure and spelling. All students require more opportunities for extended speaking and writing. Students in KG and Grade 1 are acquiring better early reading and spelling skills through a focus on phonics and letter-sound relationships. In some lessons in younger grades, ineffective behaviour management restricts learning. Some older primary students lack skills for decoding unfamiliar words. In mathematics, KG children make satisfactory progress in recognising and counting sets of numbers. In primary grades, students' gain satisfactory understanding of number, calculations and orders of operation but their application skills are lacking. Progress increases for students in Grades 7 to 9 where standards in geometry are satisfactory and improving. In Grade 9, students apply theorems about perpendicular bisectors. In science, the pattern of better achievement in upper grades is also evident. By Grade 9, students can use a range of scientific methods to test ideas and explanations. Younger students are acquiring the appropriate knowledge but deeper understanding is restricted by limited investigative work. Practical skills are underdeveloped as a result. In Arabic, students show understanding of grammar and make satisfactory progress speaking and reading classical Arabic. Their progress in writing is weaker. In Islamic Studies, students achieve well, enjoying reciting the Holy Qu'ran. Progress in social studies is unsatisfactory because of low expectations and limited teaching strategies. In other subjects students' progress is broadly satisfactory.

The school sets internal tests based on the common core standards. The results are analysed to some extent but this does not go far enough. There is no whole school analysis to identify trends in the performance of student groups, grades or subjects. Analysis by inspectors, for example, showed the pattern seen in lessons of boys' standards lagging behind girls'. The school has started to identify individual students who are underachieving and to provide some extra support but this is not effective enough. The internationally standardised American IOWA tests are due to start next semester. Some teachers mark students' work but do not provide feedback, based on rubrics, on how to improve.

The students' personal development is satisfactory. Most students have positive attitudes and behave well. Boys in primary grades, particularly grades 1 to 3, are less well-behaved in class. Students say they feel safe, that bullying is rare and they enjoy school. Different nationalities co-operate well in lessons and around the school. In assemblies, most students sing the national anthem having learned it in KG and music lessons. Students make confident and well developed presentations with a moral message to the rest of the school. The school council does not have a sufficiently high profile. There are some Al Shaheen student leaders who show pride in their role in assemblies and public events. Students have appropriate knowledge of the UAE culture and heritage. A few have won national prizes, including the Sheikh Hamdan award for poetry, recitation of the Holy Qur'an and academic progress.

Teaching is satisfactory. Within this overall picture, there is much variation in quality. This is largely, but not only, due to the significant increase in new teachers. In the last year, the senior leaders provided professional development on how to differentiate teaching for ability groups and use a wider range of strategies to stimulate students' interest. Some teachers are trying these approaches with positive effects on learning. The interactive whiteboards (IWBs) are used well by some teachers to stimulate interest. Together with increased monitoring of teaching by senior leaders and development of subject leaders' responsibilities, these features are improving quality. But there is much more to do to get consistently effective teaching, especially of boys. Teachers new to the school this academic year, including several who are newly qualified, have had limited access to professional development in this first semester. Many need more support to improve their teaching. Overall, a wider range of teaching strategies is provided in girls' lessons and the school is not sufficiently aware of this. Weak class management strategies by some teachers result in poorly controlled behaviour of boys in primary grades, particularly Grades 1 to 3. Rewards and sanctions do not work well enough. Some, such as providing sweets as rewards and depriving students of music or physical education lessons as sanctions, are inappropriate and ineffective. The teaching in KG develops students' basic skills. Play-based learning, which promotes exploration, co-operative and independent learning, is lacking.

The curriculum is sufficiently broad. As well as the core subjects, French, information communication technology (ICT), art, music and physical education are provided. Robotics is also provided for boys in some grades and will be available to girls' next semester. Appropriate extra-curricular and enrichment activities are provided, including Saturday sport and swimming and visits to subject focused events such as a science fair. The curriculum is based on the

Harcourt text and workbooks which reflect the American common core standards. The school has provided associated materials, including CDs with guidance and student materials, as well as training, to support teachers' use of them. Grade and subject teams are also encouraged to extend the text activities with materials adapted for students' different abilities. Health and associated topics are integrated into the curriculum, for example, Grade 2 students learn about healthy living in English and older students learn about diet and disease in science.

Students are appropriately cared for and supported. They are confident they can speak to and receive help from the social worker and teachers if they are troubled. The social worker also provides regular talks to students in class about personal and health topics. She keeps a satisfactory overview of individuals' personal and academic progress and makes links with parents. Appropriate checks of qualifications and moral character are undertaken for all staff and the process is currently underway for new staff. Some information about subject choices from Grade 10 onwards and about local universities is planned for Grade 9 students this academic year. This is not sufficient. Students require opportunities to self reflect, research career paths and consider the subjects they may wish to study in later grades. The school lacks a child protection policy.

The school's buildings and resources are satisfactory. The accommodation is clean and well cared for. Good specialist accommodation is available in two new science laboratories and an IT lab. The library is sufficient for the size of the school but too many books overcrowd the shelves. Good music facilities are available. The outside areas are less well maintained. Part of the KG play area lacks shading and the soft flooring is damaged in parts. The playgrounds are not wholly suitable for games and parts which should be fenced off are not. Some safety issues were brought to the school's attention and addressed during the inspection. Health and safety checks are carried out but are not comprehensive enough. A new security guard is in place but arrangements for checking visitors could be tighter. A contractor is used to maintain the buses but a proper record of maintenance is not kept as required. Resources for learning, including material resources, have improved. There is considerable financial investment in the IWBs installed in all classrooms, the laboratories and other specialist equipment, including the robotics kits.

The new principal and academic supervisor, supported by the owner, have the vision and drive to improve the school. This is largely a case of extending and refining actions already being taken rather than changing course. Detailed lesson observations, which identify teachers' strengths and development points, are

carried out. Their impact can be strengthened by evaluating the impact of teaching on students' progress. The leadership aspects of subject co-ordinators' roles are increased although still at early stage of development. Assessment rubrics which enable teachers to specify how students can improve their work are lacking. Further ongoing professional development in teaching strategies is required, together with regular monitoring of its impact, to improve consistency in quality. Newly qualified teachers receive some induction but this is not sufficient to meet their needs. The school board is supportive but does not provide an independent and objective 'critical friend' role. An extensive new building is planned on adjacent land and awaiting final approval by ADEC. A mothers' council contributes appropriately to school development and a local parent liaises with the community. Most parents responding to the inspection questionnaire feel the teaching and the leadership of the school are good. Some also feel they would like more information about their children's progress. The school lacks a clear and transparent salary structure for teachers. The fees are below the maximum approved by ADEC and given its outcomes, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve standards and progress by:
 - i. ensuring the internationally standardised tests are implemented as planned and used to set targets aimed at raising standards;
 - ii. increasing the tracking of students' progress and providing effective support to those falling behind; and
 - iii. providing rubrics based on the core standards and using them to give students feedback on how to improve their work.
2. Improve teaching and learning by providing:
 - i. training and support for teachers in behaviour management, and monitoring the impact in lessons;
 - ii. a more effective range of rewards and sanctions to motivate students; and
 - iii. consistency in quality of differentiation across the school and more variety in teaching strategies used in boys' lessons.
3. Improve leadership and management by:

- i. developing skills of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluation of quality and tracking students progress;
 - ii. increasing induction and support for newly qualified teachers; and
 - iii. providing a published salary scale which is transparent, fair and motivates teachers.
4. Improve protection, guidance and support by providing:
 - i. a child protection policy and ensuring all staff are aware of its implications;
 - ii. guidance for students from Grade 9 regarding subject choices, career options and post school opportunities; and
 - iii. training for the health and safety officer to increase the stringency of H&S checks.