



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



Inspection Report

Emirates Falcon International School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Emirates Falcon International school

Inspection Date	20 – 23 January 2014
School ID#	153
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	620
Age Range	3 to 16 years (KG1 to Grade 10)
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Antwaneet Al Nasrallah
School Address	Al Ain, Falaj Hazza, PO Box 68338
Telephone Number	+971 (0)3 780 6668
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Official Email (ADEC)	emiratesfalcon.pvt@adec.com
School Website	falcon_school.com
Date of last inspection	15 – 18 October 2012

The overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A High performing (overall effectiveness grade 1, 2 or 3)

Band B Satisfactory (overall effectiveness grade 4 or 5)

Band C In need of significant improvement (overall effectiveness grade 6, 7 or 8)

The School was judged to be:	BAND C;	GRADE 6
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The main strengths of the school are:

- that students feel safe, secure and well cared for
- the good relationships between adults
- that students respect the values of the UAE and have an understanding of the different cultures.

The main areas for improvement are to:

- raise standards across all key subjects, particularly in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies, and for those who are more able
 - use assessment results to plan lessons with clear objectives and activities that will appropriately challenge students of all abilities
 - create more opportunities for students to develop their skills in research, problem solving and critical thinking
 - introduce more enrichment activities to meet a wider range of students' interests
 - improve the rigour and impact of lesson observations by focusing on the effectiveness of students' learning.
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of 4 inspectors. They observed over 70 lessons, as well as school assemblies and break periods and held discussions with school leaders, board members, parents and students. They analysed data and school documentation and 170 responses from parents to a questionnaire.

Description of the School

The school opened in 2007 in the Falaj Hazaa district of Al Ain. It caters for students from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 10. Its vision is to provide high quality learning in an environment that equips students with a sense of responsibility and self-confidence. It also aims to develop a readiness for life-long learning, a loyalty to the students' own culture and religion, and a respect for those of others.

Emirates Falcon International follows the American Common Core Curriculum for English, mathematics and science and the Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum for Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. Students come from a range of social backgrounds. The school is similar in size to when it was last inspected in 2012, with 617 students on roll. Of these, there are around 150 in Kindergarten and a similar number in middle grades. The largest proportion, with over 300, is in the Primary grades and there are just nine students in Grade 10. Over 75 per cent of students are from the UAE, with around 5 % each from Syria and Jordan, and a few from Palestine, Tunisia, and Egypt. Almost all students are Muslim and over 60% are boys. 8 students are identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

The school has entry tests in Arabic, English and mathematics. It sets regular internal exams and is in the process of introducing standardised testing for older students. Annual fees are in the medium to high category, ranging from AED 20,000 in KG to AED 27,000 in Grade 10.

The school is overseen by a Board of Trustees. The leadership team comprises of the principal, vice principal, and an academic development director. The school has 69 teachers, with 16 teachers leaving at the end of the last academic year and 20 teachers joining the school in September. Major extension work is underway on a new building with the intention of extending education to Grade 12.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Students' attainment compares favourably with that of similar schools using the same curriculum internationally in the areas of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). It remains unsatisfactory in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. As a consequence attainment and progress overall is unsatisfactory.

This inconsistent picture around attainment and progress reflects the difficulty many students experience in accessing the full curriculum as second language learners. Progress in this context varies across the age-range and subject areas. For example, younger students take time to develop the skills they need to express their knowledge and understanding.

The rate of progress increases in older classes, where student attainment is more in line with international expectations. It is best in Grades 8 and 9; and overall girls' attainment and progress is better than that of boys. Students with SEN make satisfactory progress as a result of 'catch up' classes. In contrast the highest attaining students do not make satisfactory progress because lessons frequently do not offer enough challenge. Weaknesses in the rigour of the school's assessment practices, an over reliance on internal testing and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are the three key factors that limit attainment.

Students' personal development

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Most students are confident and courteous and report that they enjoy school for both friendship and learning. They feel safe and comfortable and believe that behaviour has improved significantly. The vast majority behave well, in particular the girls. There are small pockets of less attentive behaviour in lessons, notably among younger primary boys.

In lessons, most students demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and are keen to participate. Students show respect both for the culture of the UAE and for the different nationalities they encounter among peers and staff, and the school is a harmonious community. Students have a satisfactory understanding of how to live healthy lives. There are limited opportunities for students to assume responsibilities both in school and the community. Their experience of the way the curriculum is taught does not fully equip them with the levels of independence and adaptability needed to make optimum progress in their future

education. The development of personal and social skills outside lessons is limited by the current lack of extracurricular activity.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects and deliver accurate instruction and factual knowledge. Their insight into the teaching skills needed to optimise students' learning is varied. Most are making efforts to plan a variety of learning experiences, such as the use of video clips or interactive white boards. The use of these resources is not always well matched to the set objectives of the lessons. Extensive professional development has encouraged teachers to plan differing activities in an attempt to cater for the range of abilities they teach. These strategies vary in effectiveness and their impact on student learning. Some teachers offer different, as opposed to more challenging, tasks for the more able students. Less able students are well supported through special 'catch up' sessions. They are provided with limited modifications to help them achieve the objectives in their regular lessons. Insufficient use of assessment information is a key factor in preventing the best match of challenge to ability.

During lessons, most teachers check students' understanding as activities are underway. Their use of assessment information to adjust and modify their teaching to meet the identified needs of students is variable. . Most teachers have established good working relationships with their students and their management of classroom routines and behaviour reflects the recent drive for improvement in this area. Induction procedures and training have improved. A significant minority of teachers still have areas of their professional development to address and the leadership has identified this as a priority.

The school has begun to consider the importance of developing students' learning skills and many lessons feature group work as students combine to complete a task. This activity is not yet sufficiently fine-tuned to enable students to develop discussion, collaboration, research and reporting skills effectively. In KG, teachers use a warm and welcoming manner to help engage and build children's confidence. Most of the activities are whole class tasks, which constrains learning for the most and least able children. There is limited exposure to structured, imaginative activities, for example a class café or shop to help children to practice and extend their knowledge and understanding in real life situations.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum implementation is sufficiently broad to meet the learning needs of most students. In most subjects, students experience a logical progression of learning and in addition to core subjects, they learn French, taught by a native speaker, music, art and physical education. Robotics is also provided as an option.

There is a significant focus upon developing both a strong understanding and a respect for the values and culture of the UAE. Students play a large role in assemblies and celebrations as well as learning the story of their heritage. Cultures from other representative minorities also feature in celebrations at school, helping students to mix together with mutual respect and understanding.

There are examples of logical cross-curricular links between subjects, such as when Grade 4 boys integrate science and mathematical learning as they calculate density in relation to volume and mass. This is not a widespread practice across the school in curriculum planning and delivery. There are insufficient opportunities to undertake guided investigation and research. Science lessons feature increasing practical activity as students move through the grades though development of genuine prediction, hypothesis and investigation skills is not a regular feature of these learning activities. Students undertake research projects for homework; too many are ‘cut and paste’ internet activities as opposed to filtering information, assembling the work and presenting to an audience. Extracurricular activities had not begun for the semester at the time of the inspection; both students and parents commented on this lack of enrichment.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school gives good attention to the care of its students. Under the Principal’s leadership, the school has developed good awareness of all students’ welfare needs. Students feel secure within a safe environment and report that they are free from bullying or corporal punishment. They are confident that they can speak to teachers or the experienced social worker if they have concerns. Health and welfare provision is fully in place through the well-organised clinic, and students are taught adequately about healthy life options. Muslim students have both the opportunity and facilities for prayer. The school is diligent over checks on staff suitability. Emergency evacuation exercises are recorded and potentially hazardous materials are securely stored. Support for students’ academic progress is not as secure. Those needing specific help are identified, but individual learning targets are not in place for all students.

Preparation for future educational or career destinations is insufficient. The new Chair of Trustees has begun to address this using his own skills and experience. Attendance is very good but punctuality suffers from frequent local traffic difficulties.

The quality of the school’s buildings and premises

The buildings and premises are clean and well maintained and classrooms, though relatively small, are sufficient for the number on roll. Facilities such as the science and ICT laboratories, and a large library in addition to art, music and robotics

rooms provide appropriate support to curriculum planning and delivery. Outside areas, although safe and fit for purpose are tired, and there is limited facility for physical education. Plans for the new combined site include significant enhancement to the current one. Site security is efficient.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are satisfactory. Teachers are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to support the curriculum on offer. Classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and basic learning resources are available. The ICT programme is supported by an adequate central room, though students have limited access to computers in lessons. Science facilities and resources are adequate, although specialist items are mostly accessible only to older students. The library currently holds the stock for both the current school and the new extension. Consequently books are not displayed in a way that makes the library attractive to students, and the low borrowing figures reflect this. Transport is well maintained and food storage and consumption are hygienic. Some of the audiovisual resources to support the curriculum rely too heavily upon cartoon or animated content that is too childish and insufficiently reflective of the real world to match students' needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal has a good view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses and has set out appropriate priorities for action. Members of the Board of Trustees have a good understanding of the school and support managers well. School development planning (SDP) is well thought out with costings, responsibilities and time scales; success criteria are not detailed enough and do not set out clear expectations.

Actions have focused upon addressing prior inspection recommendations, although impact of these has been variable. Much effort has been put into improving behaviour and students report that it has been to good effect. School's self- evaluation has improved with the emerging use of comparative data, for example comparison of the school's results with two schools offering similar curriculum. A commitment has now been made to use standardised tests as a more reliable measure of performance after a long held reliance upon internal testing. Increased tracking of students' performance has identified those needing to access the daily support programme.

The effectiveness of other senior staff roles varies. In the case of the new acting Vice Principal, it is underdeveloped. Middle managers, including subject coordinators, demonstrate a range of leadership qualities. Some develop their colleagues' practice and influence standards; a few lack confidence in judging

performance. Teaching is regularly monitored by senior staff and coordinators, but with insufficient rigour. For some, there is too much emphasis upon ticking competence boxes and too little focus upon the effectiveness of students' learning. Professional development and peer support are well established. These are not always closely targeted or tailored to individual needs of the teacher. As a result, the impact of these professional development opportunities on the quality of teaching and learning is varied, and requires rigorous monitoring to ensure improvements are maintained.

Parents interviewed expressed confidence in the Principal but would like informative feedback as well as performance grades on their children's progress reports on a regular basis. They would also like to see more varied activities on offer. The newly formed Board of Trustees meets regularly and provides support, drawing upon their educational experience they offer.

Progress since the last inspection

Leadership has taken action on many of the recommendations from the previous report. There is an increased focus on tracking of individual students' progress and support provided for those falling behind. Rubrics have been developed to help students compare their work against curriculum requirements. The school is beginning to use comparative performance data drawn from other schools in the region and has signed contracts for involvement in standardised testing, scheduled to commence in February 2014. Impact upon standards remains modest since the previous inspection.

Teachers have been trained in behaviour management, rewards and sanctions are now more effective, and these measures have brought about significant improvement. New teachers are given more induction support and some middle managers have been trained in leadership skills. The newest recruits had attended differentiation workshops only so far, by the time of inspection. The impact of this training has varied across the staff. There is now a transparent salary scale, staff are aware of the content of the child protection policy, and health and safety checks are more stringent. More guidance on career choice is still required, but a start has been made.

The school has demonstrated some capacity to improve; raising standards and improving overall teaching quality remain its key challenges and it may benefit from external support in these areas.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise standards in all key subject areas, particularly in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies, and for the more able by:
 - i. ensuring lesson planning features very clear learning objectives and activities that will help students of all abilities to achieve them
 - ii. creating more opportunities for students to develop their research, problem solving, collaborative and critical thinking skills in lessons
 - iii. making effective use of the outcomes of assessment activities to plan appropriate levels of challenge for all students.
2. Ensure provision of a broader curriculum by introducing more enrichment activities to meet a wider range of students' interests.
3. Improve the quality of professional lead across all levels of the leadership team by:
 - i. ensuring rigorous monitoring of the quality of lessons and the impact these have on students' learning
 - ii. providing more targeted professional development to match teachers' individual needs as identified through observations.

Inspection Grades

	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
Performance Standard	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory & Improving	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Poor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Standard 1: Students' attainment and progress								
Standard 2: Students' personal development								
Standard 3: The quality of teaching and learning								
Standard 4: The meeting of students' needs through the curriculum								
Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students								
Standard 6: The quality of the school's buildings and premises								
Standard 7: The school's resources to support its aims								
Standard 8: The effectiveness of leadership and management								
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall effectiveness								