



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



Summary Inspection Report

Sunflower School

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Iqraa

Sunflower School

Inspection Date	13 th – 15 th May, 2013
School ID#	204
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	British (International Primary Curriculum)
Number of Students	117
Age Range	Foundation Stage 1 (FS1) to Year 2 (Y2)
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Emma McGrath
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Introduction

Three inspectors inspected the school. The inspectors observed 27 lessons and had discussions with the principal, students, the proprietor, teachers, other staff members, with parent volunteers and with parents in general. The lead inspector undertook a joint lesson observation with the principal. Inspectors held discussions with a volunteer psychologist, a teacher/counsellor and the nurse. The inspectors met the special needs coordinator during the pre-inspection visit as she was on leave during the inspection. The inspectors also analysed data supplied by the school. They scrutinised documents such as the results of assessments, the self-evaluation form, children's work, the school improvement plan and the information from 61 parent questionnaires. They checked policies, procedures and records for health and safety purposes.

Description of the School

This school was founded in September 2010. This is its third year of operation. It operates with a provisional license. The school aims to provide students with an integrated child centred age-appropriate education with high academic and social expectations for all students. Parents had a key role in the foundation of the school. Approximately 45% of the parents are licensed teachers themselves. The school does not have a governing body. There are 117 students from 27 countries in the school, 60 girls and 57 boys. 9% of the students are UAE nationals and the other main nationalities of the students are: United States of America (21%), United Kingdom (UK) (15%), South Africa (7%), New Zealand (7%) and Canada (5%). There were 63 children enrolled during the last inspection in February 2011. During the school year 2011-2012, there was a 17.8% student turnover. Some of the students enrolled in the current academic year did not have any prior schooling, 7 in FS2, and 4 in Y1. 4 students in Y1, and 4 in Y2, attended other schools at kindergarten level and one student in Y2 was previously educated at home. The teaching staff come from 6 different countries. Three teachers are not native English speakers. The school welcomes students with special education needs (SEN) and there are 8 SEN students enrolled, 4 of whom have moderate to severe learning needs. The fees range from AED 14,000 at FS1 to AED 20,500 in Y2. The average salary for teachers is AED 6,000 per month.

The school now comprises of 8 classes, using the UK classifications. There are two classes each at Foundation Stages 1 and 2 (FS 1, FS 2) and Years 1 and 2 (Y1, Y2) year groups. The school day starts at 8.30 a.m. and ends at 12.30 for children in the foundation stage and at 1.30 for students in Years 1 and 2. ADEC has recently instructed the school to extend the instruction hours of FS 1 to 3.5 hours and of Y2 to 6 hours. Because the school is growing and is expected to include two Year 3

classes in the 2013 -2014 academic year, it has recently been sanctioned to extend its buildings by two classrooms.

Since its foundation, the school has been following the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) that adopts a thematic approach. This curriculum is not now approved by ADEC and the school is planning to follow the Cambridge Primary Curriculum from September 2013.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged Sunflower School to be in Band C, that is a school in need of significant improvement.

Sunflower School is in need of significant improvement. This judgement reflects the school's position against international best standards. To make the progress towards world-class provision which the Emirate of Abu Dhabi requires for all its schools, Sunflower School must do more to develop the 21st Century skills the nation needs. While recognising the positive aspects of the school, this report also gives a clear recommendation of what more needs to be done to take the school forward.

The last inspection took place when the school was in its sixth month of operation. Recommendations of that report that have been implemented include action taken on documenting medical and behavioural issues. The systems for formally recording students' standards and progress are still not robust. Too few actions have been taken on recommendations about expanding the range of resources available to students, to ensuring that all staff have access to well-targeted professional development opportunities and to reviewing the curriculum, teaching and learning in Islamic studies and Arabic. Actions taken have not impacted directly on learning. Overall, the school has not improved since the last inspection.

Standards and progress are unsatisfactory and below international age related expectations overall. Attainment and progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technologies (ICT) are unsatisfactory. In Arabic, Islamic Studies and science, attainment and progress are very unsatisfactory. Students repeat orally what the teacher says in Arabic. They can only speak a few words independently. In Islamic Studies, few students can order the steps of 'Wudhu' (ablution) before praying with the help of the teacher. Arabic and non-Arabic speaking students are taught together. This is a breach of regulations and reduces students' progress.

In literacy and numeracy by Year 2, some students can read, write and undertake mental and written mathematical computation to international standards. Some can write paragraphs. In the best lessons at foundation level, children make steady progress in letter, sound and number recognition. However, students receive insufficient opportunities to converse in pairs and groups and to respond to challenging questions. The oral answers of the more able English speakers lack depth. Children frequently read aloud to adults but in many cases their decoding skills and phonic knowledge, comprehension and handwriting are inadequately developed. In Mathematics, many are not enabled to apply their computation skills to real-life practical situations. Students have acquired basic skills in using ICT, for example in using androids to calculate. Overall, they have too few opportunities to use ICT to develop their learning. In science, most students can observe but the ability of many to experiment, analyse and classify is limited by the absence of challenge in lessons. In general, students are not developing independent learning and thinking skills. Students have developed creative skills. For example in an Art lesson, lively discussion of a comic strip resulted in development of thinking skills, problem solving and imaginative solutions. In Music, students sing tunefully and are proficient in playing the recorder. The school does not use high quality standardised tests and so it cannot compare student performance with that of other schools internationally. This is one of the reasons why challenging targets are not set for individuals or groups of students.

The personal development of students is satisfactory. They are happy and confident and enjoy school life. They are willing to express their opinions and they treat adults and peers with respect and sensitivity. The wide range of cultural backgrounds they represent and their experience of a “mindfulness” programme run by a volunteer psychologist help students to be tolerant and reflective. The development of these personal qualities will support them in the next stages of their education. They are aware of UAE culture and heritage. They enjoy singing the National Anthem and other songs that are selected to motivate them during the morning assembly. There is a slight lack of order during the singing of the National Anthem and during transitions to various classrooms. There are not enough opportunities for students to take leadership roles.

Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. In the best lessons, learning outcomes are identified and broadly differentiated activities cater for the learning needs of most students. There is inconsistency in teachers’ planning. Some lessons involve cross-class grouping across year groups. There is little moderation of student’s work. Integration between subjects occurs, such as between Arabic and Physical Education. Topics such as “clothes” are taught with the support of parents. Teachers use a programme called “kidwatching” to track children’s progress but

overall continuous assessment of children's progress is not rigorous enough. Lessons are not clearly based on what students already know and can do. At foundation level, interaction between all adults and children is not precisely targeted at supporting children's language development and thinking skills. Questioning fails to elicit age-appropriate explanations. While teachers mark students work regularly, they do not make clear what students need to do to improve.

In general, teachers' expectations are too low. Some teachers actively assist those who find learning difficult but more able students are not appropriately challenged. The learning needs of special needs (SEN) students are not adequately met. The individual education plans (IEPs) for these students are not specific enough and class teachers do not address the IEP targets adequately. There is insufficient professional development of teachers to enable them to cater for the learning needs of SEN students.

The curriculum delivery in the school is unsatisfactory. On the positive note, the thematic approach of the IPC promotes integration between curriculum areas. Art, Music, French, Physical Education and extra-curricular activities add breadth and balance. Field trips reinforce class learning. For example, a visit to 'Oasis Living' magazine resulted in written work being published. The after school club for science enhances students thinking and problem solving skills. Curriculum planning is ineffective though. At foundation stage level, topic planning is not clear enough about what children will learn. Across the school, the curriculum fails to provide sufficient challenge to the more able students or to support those who find learning difficult. Thinking and problem solving skills are not sufficiently developed. Reading sessions organised in the library are not focused enough on outcomes.

The school recognises the deficiencies of the curriculum. It is preparing for the introduction from September 2013 of the Cambridge Primary curriculum and to set out clear learning objectives in core skills for each year of primary education. It is involving parents in prior planning during the transition period. A Mathematics committee is revising the scope and sequence aspect of the programme.

Protection care, guidance and support for the students are satisfactory. The school has a particularly strong ethos towards the care of the children. Adults have very warm welcoming attitudes that ensure students feel safe and cared for. The involvement and keen interest of parents adds a family atmosphere. Almost all SEN students are supported in school by a carer employed by the child's parents and by the SEN specialist. The school has a child protection policy and

anti-bullying policy that are understood by all teachers and followed up by the Nurse. Rare incidents occurring are dealt with in a timely manner.

The school building is small but is broadly fit for its purpose. The staff makes effective use of all available space to organise classes and to celebrate student's work. One of the classrooms is designated for multipurpose activities. Not all of the rooms are of sufficient size. There is no scope to extend the foundation stage classrooms so that learning activities can occur out of doors. The library, which is also used to deliver Arabic lessons, is particularly small and some books are stored in boxes on the floor. The school does not have an internal play area to use in hot weather. It lacks a proper-grassed sports facility. The separate room that is used for physical education can barely cater for the present small number of students. The two external play areas are shaded and equipped for games for older students and for play involving the younger children. There is no license for the clinic or nurse but these are being processed.

Toys, games and role-play resources are appropriate and adequate for the age groups. The teachers are suitably qualified. Teaching assistants support students' learning adequately. The library is cramped and does not contain sufficient resources such as computers. It contains only a few Arabic books. The school receptionist acts as part-time librarian. The school does not have a separate ICT room. There is no science laboratory and there is a lack of small scientific apparatus to support discovery learning. Overall, the resources unsatisfactorily support students' learning.

The school's leadership has successfully created a caring inclusive atmosphere in the school that runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Parents are frequently surveyed and consulted on policy issues. Volunteers are deployed appropriately. The underpinning atmosphere of partnership and of mutual support between parents and teachers is a strong feature. The leadership understands the point of development the school is at and the school improvement plan identifies the school's priorities accurately. The self-evaluation form is less accurate. The leadership has led the school to date without a supporting middle management structure. The school is awaiting sanction of a designated vice-principal. The leadership has not ensured rigorous tracking of student progress and it has not set high targets for their learning. Sharp comparisons with the progress of similar students in other countries have not been made. Monitoring of teachers' performance is not regular or systematic. No performance targets have been agreed with teachers. Professional development is not specifically focused on improving identified weaknesses in teaching.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Monitor and increase standards and progress by:
 - i. developing a systematic process for analysing test and assessment data;
 - ii. comparing progress with international standards in literacy and numeracy;
 - iii. using the data analysis to identify and address weaknesses in the learning of individuals, groups and subjects; and
 - iv. Providing regular moderation sessions to enable teachers to standardise their marking of assessments and tests.
2. Improve leadership and management by:
 - i. developing the role of middle leaders so that they contribute to consistency and quality in subjects;
 - ii. increasing the frequency and rigour in monitoring of lessons; and
 - iii. implementing a systematic and targeted professional development programme to address identified weaknesses in teaching and learning.
3. Improve teaching and learning by:
 - i. increasing the quality and consistency in teachers' planning so that learning objectives are clear and activities are adapted to meet the needs of different abilities, including those who find learning difficult and SEN students;
 - ii. improving the quality of marking and feedback to students on how to improve; and
 - iii. increasing the challenge for more able students, including questioning and other activities which promote higher order thinking and problem solving.