



LEARNING WELL, ENJOYING LIFE, EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

09 March 2010

Dear Parent,

Re: School Review – an update on progress

As part of our commitment to the highest possible standards of learning, Compass International School was reviewed in February 2009 by a review team from Fieldwork Education. The Review Team looked at:

- Students' learning
- Teaching for learning
- The conditions that support learning

A summary of the review findings can be accessed online at:

<http://www.cisdoha.com/AboutOurSchool/media/!Doha/Public%20Documents/parentsummary.pdf>

There were many positive findings in the report and we had a great deal to celebrate as a community. There were also some specific areas that were highlighted for improvement and the purpose of this letter is to inform you of the progress we have made in these areas.

1. Adopting effective strategies for regularly assessing key aspects of students' learning and their rate of progress

A range of new assessment processes have been introduced across the school. Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) is being used to find out what aspects of the curriculum students have learned. This type of assessment is done by teachers in class and teachers use this to inform their teaching strategies. If they know what students have learned, they know what students need to learn next. We have also recently introduced Learning Portfolios in the primary school. Students select pieces of work that represent their best learning and keep this in their portfolio. Over time, we then develop clear evidence of progress.

Using APP, teachers assess the level at which children are learning and can move the students learning onto the next stage by setting achievable targets or next steps for each individual. The APP process is ongoing and the targets set are reviewed regularly through different assessment measures.

We use some standardized tests and this is known as 'Assessment of Learning'. We also use teacher assessment and this is known as 'Assessment for Learning'. The teacher can then continue to review whether an individual's rate of progress is at the expected level. If it is below, special intervention may be needed, if above the level, more challenging tasks may be set.

Standardized tests in English and Mathematics are then used in May to assess student learning (Years 1 and above. Early Years continue to assess pupil progress via teacher assessments). These tests are repeated every year and give an external measure of progress. New students are tested soon after

Compass International School Doha

An international school located in the State of Qatar owned and managed by Education Overseas Qatar LLC (CR No. 33520)

PO Box 23479, Doha, State of Qatar

Phone: +974 4877445 (Gharaffa Campus)
+974 4114288 (Rayyan Campus)

Fax: +974 4877446

Email: info@cisdoha.org

Web: www.cisdoha.org



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admission. The tests give a result that compares an individual student to thousands of others across the world. We can then see whether that student is achieving at an age appropriate level and also how well this agrees with the ongoing teacher assessment we call this 'Assessment of Learning'.

A key appointment to ensure that this assessment strategy is implemented was that of Head of Learning – Miss Sarah Johnson – who focuses on the quality of learning across the schools.

School reports have also been changed to reflect the new assessment data that we collect. Reports now give individual targets based on the assessment data that teachers have collected through APP. At the end of the year, the reports will include information taken from standardized test and tell parents whether their child is above, at, or below the expected level for their age.

2. Ensuring that the sequence of lessons, in every subject, is consistently challenging for the highest attaining students

The first step in this area was to ensure that we knew where students were in their learning and we have done this using the assessment strategy outlined above. Teachers are then able to give students individual targets that are specific to their needs. If a student is learning at a level above the expected level, the targets set will be more challenging. Targets are communicated to students through verbal feedback during lessons, and through written feedback in their books or on their learning tasks. This feedback will focus on what has been done well but also on what the student needs to do to improve their learning. It is vital that students from the start of their time at school understand what it is they need to do to improve their learning. We call this 'Assessment for Learning'.

During lessons, teachers will expect students to learn at different levels: we call this differentiation. Teachers ensure that tasks allow students to be individually challenged. This may mean that the teacher has a number of different groups in the class doing different learning tasks that are appropriate to student needs and challenge them individually at every level in the class. It may also mean that the teacher sets a task for the whole class, or larger groups and individual students demonstrate their learning through the work that is produced. Not all students will produce work at the same level and quality.

It is also important to review the quality of learning and give teachers feedback on the learning that their students are undertaking. We use a protocol called Looking for Learning. Looking for Learning means senior teachers going into classrooms and asking children directly about their learning. We ask them questions like:

- Please tell me what you are learning about today
- Is this new learning?
- How will you know if you have succeeded in this lesson?
- What do you do if you need help?
- Do you know why you are learning about this?

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We then give feedback to the teachers and review with them the evidence collected from the students to ensure that lessons are properly focused and that students are engaged in new learning or in consolidating their learning.

3. Further improving provision for students who lack proficiency in speaking, reading or writing English

The number of teachers has been increased from 1.5 to 2.0 from September 2009 at Gharaffa. We also have a part time teacher focusing on students who have English as an Additional Language at Rayyan. The resources in terms of teaching and learning materials have also been improved and given greater priority in our ongoing budget allocations.

A new assessment test was introduced in September 2009 called the MAC II test. This gives teachers an indication of the level of learning of the student and how much additional help they will need. When the students reach an appropriate level, the teacher will retest before students are moved out of the EAL support programme. This means we have a specific measure of language proficiency that we can use to measure progress.

We are also conscious of the need to improve the skill set of our teachers. All staff did an in service training programme in Term 1 focussing on the needs of our English as an Additional Language programme. The trainer also worked with teachers in classrooms and spent some time with our EAL teachers helping them to rewrite the school policy.

In February 2010, two teachers attended a Train the Trainers workshop designed to help students in mainstream classes. The teachers will start to work from next term with groups of teachers on a 10 week Master's level course to give them additional skills in helping these students. Many of the techniques explored will help teachers to deliver more effective lessons to all students, not just those who need English language support. For example, **Everyone Reads In Class (ERIC)** has just been introduced in the primary school and will further support and challenge readers at all levels.

There are, of course, further issues that we have addressed above and beyond the issues I have summarized here and we continue to reflect on our learning journey as a school and ensure that we continue to improve in all areas.

Yours sincerely,

John Todd
Head of School

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