

As part of its four-yearly inspection of the governing body 'Stichting Openbaar Onderwijs aan de Amstel' (OOodA), the Ministry of Education visited four OOodA schools, including the Kindercampus, Zuidas, Amsterdam.

This is an English translation of the section of the report which specifically relates to the Kindercampus school.

Kindercampus, Zuidas

On 9 January 2018, we conducted an extensive inspection of the Kindercampus, Zuidas, because this is a new school which we have not previously visited. The results of this inspection also enabled us to verify the effectiveness of the policy being followed by the governing body, OOodA. Our focus was on the following areas:

Curriculum
Vision for further development
Teaching standards
(Additional) learning support
Collaboration
Safety
Educational climate
Results
Quality Assurance
Quality and accountability culture
Dialogue

This section of the report sets out the conclusions drawn by the inspectors regarding the above areas and offers a brief explanation of our findings.

Conclusion

We found the school to be satisfactory in all eleven areas. This means that basic standards are being achieved at the Kindercampus. The school must now build on these foundations, some of which were stronger than others (for example its Vision for further development). The school aims to evolve into an 'Integrated Child Centre' (IKC). In the four years that it has been open, the school has experienced a serious degree of misfortune. The new director is giving it clear direction and focus again. A start has been made in implementing the new vision of the school. This vision now needs to assume a more concrete form. The school is planning to tackle this further in the course of this school year with the help of focussed research.

Kindercampus, Zuidas: Strong teachers, A developing learning environment

The school's curriculum is broadly in keeping with the developmental needs of its pupils

The staff at the Kindercampus have a good understanding of the developmental needs of their pupils and adjust their teaching accordingly. This has led to English being offered to pupils from year one onwards because many of the children speak English at home. The school is currently

investigating various options for further integration of English in its curriculum. For example, our inspectors observed a gym class being taught in English.

Furthermore, our inspectors noted that the school analyses results both at a year-group and whole-school level. Where these are found to be disappointing action is taken for example as a result of such analysis more attention is currently being given to teaching vocabulary.

For the most able pupils the school offers extra challenges in its “Leerlab” (*learning laboratory*). Pupils who attend the Leerlab are given more work and take part in challenging learning games. Gifted pupils can also participate in the ‘Day a week school’. Whilst we observed that provision is made for the most able pupils the school as a whole lacks a consistent programme for more challenging education. The Kindercampus does however make provision for pupils who need a little more learning support. For these children there is “De Kleine Klas” (*the Little Class*) where pupils work under supervision with different materials aimed at strengthening their learning skills.

The school wishes to evolve into a IKC. To do so it aims to pursue a programme of smooth continuous development lines - from the moment the child starts at the creche through to when he/she leaves the school at the end of year 8. A special team has been put together to manage this development (see below: ‘quality assurance’).

In addition to this, the staff want to introduce a method of thematic work within the school whereby individual school subjects become part of the theme. This thematic method will be introduced for certain classes after the spring half-term break in 2018 and after the May school holiday the entire Kindercampus IKC will start working thematically. In this way the school will meet its core objectives for each subject which are currently not always being addressed satisfactorily, as the school appears still to be in the process of creating a suitable curriculum. The school also needs to improve the way in which it addresses future-oriented education. It is planning to do this within its new thematic approach, thereby offering skills training appropriate for the 21st century .

Educational plan determines vision for further development

The school’s ‘Vision for further development’ stems from its ambition to cater for the child from the start of nursery through to year 8. ‘Continuous lines of development and portfolios’ play a central role.

The teachers follow the progress of their pupils with the help of a ‘leerlingvolgsysteem’ (*a system for monitoring & recording pupil progress*). In addition, the school has recently developed an educational plan to assist teachers when working with mixed ability groups. The school has a strong and experienced internal manager who is promoting this professional development and supervising teachers in tailoring their teaching to the educational needs of the pupils. A comprehensive system of internal evaluation resulting in corrective action being taken would be welcome. This in turn should be evaluated in order to assess whether or not it has resulted in the desired improvement. During our conversations with the staff it was clear that this is something which is already being addressed by the manager together with the teachers. For pupils who need extra support the Kindercampus has a clear learning support structure in place. The school closely involves parents in this system.

Teaching techniques need to become more uniform

We have assessed the teaching standards as adequate. The teachers themselves are highly competent. We observed a number of excellent lessons where teachers displayed strong individual skills. However, from our various conversations it became clear that there is a lack of a consistent agreed approach or method of teaching throughout the school. For the most part each class works in a way determined by the individual teachers. In order to establish a more uniform method the teachers are going to collaborate more; for example in year groups 1 & 2, preparation for each new theme will be done together, as will evaluation at the end of each theme. Development is therefore primarily going to stem from teachers learning with and from each other, making use of each other's individual talents for the benefit of the entire school and not simply focussing on their own individual class.

The school's primary focus at the moment is on the formation of an IKC and this is closely linked to collaboration with the school's partners. In her day to day work, the Director is continuously seeking shorter lines of communication with all the organisations involved in the formation of the IKC. That the collaboration has already started is reflected in the development teams which include both teaching assistants and teachers. In this way the entire organisation is working together towards a more continuous development strategy. During our visit it became apparent that the achievement of a truly coherent fusion is, however, still some way off.

A development team has also been established to focus on the learning environment. Thus in the nursery this is already more specifically attuned to the development of the children. The team wishes to extend this meaningful and challenging learning environment to the entire school. This is necessary if the school is to achieve a learning environment which is attuned to the educational needs of all its pupils and the ambitions of the school as an organic entity.

Adequate safety and a good atmosphere in the school

During our visit it was clear that the school satisfies all relevant legal requirements regarding safety. It remains a challenge for the school to ensure that all parties making use of the building abide by all rules and regulations regarding safety.

During our conversations with pupils it was abundantly clear that they feel safe at school and within their classroom environment. Our own observations within the school confirm this although attention does need to be given to how breaktimes are managed. The school and Governors are both fully aware of this problem and are working to improve it. In addition, the school also enforces a social safety plan.

Kindercampus is housed in a beautiful building which gives off positive vibes.

During our visits to various classes we observed teachers demonstrating good teaching techniques and high standards. The Kindercampus has a diverse pupil population, which is exemplified by the large world map on the wall in the atrium. In order to be truly inclusive each class draws up its own rules and in addition there are clear schoolwide codes of behaviour. Careful attention is also given to the various different celebrations of all the cultures represented at the school.

Results: hit and miss

The educational results of the Kindercampus were above the legally required minimum for 2017, in the two previous years they were below this level. The school now needs to ensure that it addresses the overall educational needs of all the pupils in order to adjust its curriculum accordingly. In order to do this, it needs to set itself ambitious targets. During our visit we discussed this with the staff and observed that they have already put in place a programme to achieve a more constructive analysis of results. The school should therefore already be in a position to alter its curriculum and set itself higher goals.

Quality assurance: a short line between school and governors

As previously stated, the basic standards for quality assurance are in place. We noted that the guidelines set by the governing body for quality assurance are being followed at the Kindercampus. The governing body is closely involved with all developments at the school and is fully aware of what is happening there. The governors have regular contact with the Director.

The school is currently concentrating on two key issues: its organisation (the formation of an IKC) and the content of the education it offers. These two matters are obviously closely linked. The school now needs to ensure that pupils' learning is not negatively affected by organisational developments. It will be a challenge to establish closer working relationships between the nursery, before and after school care, and the school itself: How exactly do the various organisations want to work together? How do they intend to create a positive constructive relationship? How will they ensure it works?

The culture of the governing body: 'developing yourself and your talents' can be seen at work at the Kindercampus. The current team has a great deal of expertise, teachers are actively working on their own personal professional development and put this into practice in their individual groups. The next obvious step of learning with and from each other is not yet clearly evident at the Kindercampus. A clear objective would help here. What does the Kindercampus and its pupils want? And what form should the discussion about its ambitions take? These are both questions which will help with the formulation of the necessary clear objective. Ideally the staff would enter into this discussion together and all agree on a clear commitment.

The MOVE-programme launched by the governing body has an ambassador based at the Kindercampus and everyone is familiar with it. Almost all the teachers we spoke to follow it online and know what is on offer. They acknowledged, however, that there are many challenges remaining which need to be resolved at school level and they prefer to focus at this stage on professional development internally rather than externally. What struck us during our conversations with the teachers was how positively they spoke about the governors. They were appreciative of the opportunities offered by the governing body for further professional development. The 'personnel festival' was also something which they were proud of and which indeed provides an excellent example of learning with and from each other.

Another example of professionalism and cooperation is exemplified in the development teams which have been introduced by the school in the last year. The nursery and the school participate jointly in two out of the three development teams, and work together to achieve continuity for the educational and social development of the children and the learning environment. In addition, each team has an expert member.

The governing body has put in place clear agreements with all its schools concerning accountability including with the Kindercampus. This means among other things that the school plan, the year plan, annual report and the support profile are all discussed by the management team and the governors. The governors visit classes and hold various meetings to ensure they have a comprehensive oversight of the school and the education it provides.

The school also maintains simple lines of communication with parents. Parents receive a fortnightly newsletter in which they are informed of everyday school affairs. During our meetings with parents they indicated that they are satisfied with the school, both with the impressive school building and the prevailing atmosphere in the school itself, as well as with the education it provides. Parents, however, indicate that they are still looking for a more distinctive identity, ethos and vision for the school. They acknowledge the school is actively seeking to achieve this and the start that the school has made, given its recent history, has fostered patience and understanding. It is, however, now time to tackle these issues and formulate positive, time limited proposals.

An IKC board in which both the school parent-teacher governors and the parent-governors of the nursery come together is a further development which the Director believes will take up to two years to establish.

In addition, the school maintains good contact with the external providers of lunch and after-school care in order to ensure a good programme of after-school activities which matches the ambitions of the Kindercampus.