



Middle East

Education

Plenary and BESIX have delivered three new schools in Zayed City, Abu Dhabi, and are delivering a new campus in an expansion.

Zayed City Schools has a combined capacity of 5,360 students, comprised of one Kindergarten and Cycle One School for boys and girls (2,000 students), one Cycle Two and Three Girls' School (1,680 students), and one Cycle Two and Three Boys' School (1,680 students). In addition, the Zayed City Schools employs more than 220 teachers and 75 non-teaching staff.

The new campus will accommodate a further 3,380 students.

Project facts

Location

Zayed City, Abu Dhabi,
United Arab Emirates

Client

Abu Dhabi Department of
Education and Knowledge
(ADEK)

Our role

Project sponsor
Equity investor
Financial arranger
SPV management services

Builder

United Engineering Con-
struction Company (UNEC)

Services

BESIX Facilities Manage-
ment

Financial close

[July 2022](#)

Completion date

[August 2024](#)

Contract terms

Design, build, finance and
maintain for 22 years

Expansion builder

Alghanim International

Expansion architect and de- signer

MZ Architects

Expansion financial close

[January 2025](#)

Expansion completion

August 2026

Awards

- [Best Education and Higher Education Project, 2024 Partnerships Awards](#)
- [MENA Social Infrastructure Deal of the Year, 2023 IJGlobal Awards](#)

Led by the Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO), on behalf of Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), Zayed City Schools represents a step change in the way schools are procured and operated in the United Arab Emirates, enabling teachers and principals a single focus on the provision of quality education in an unparalleled learning environment.



Innovations

The school buildings will be designed and built with high sustainability objectives, complying with Abu Dhabi's Estidama Pearl 2 rating system.

Local economic impacts

Most building materials used on site will be locally produced, providing a boost to Abu Dhabi's local economy.

Expansion project

In January 2025, the Zayed City Schools – Stage 2 (Khalifa City School) project was procured using an augmentation procurement framework within the existing Zayed City Schools public-private partnership (PPP) project. Led by ADIO, the design and use of this framework to procure school infrastructure marks another first for the region.

In response to the growing population of Khalifa City located south of Abu Dhabi, as well as its expansion and increase in its residential and transportation infrastructure, ADEK, supported by ADIO, identified the need to create new schools across various locations in this area.

ADIO led the augmentation process in collaboration with the ADEK and the BESIX-Plenary Group consortium. BESIX-Plenary delivered a value-for-money solution, subsequently reaching commercial and financial close.



Through meticulous planning and implementation, ADIO developed a specific augmentation framework that enabled the school's infrastructure to be procured and awarded within a record timeframe of just 12 months, demonstrating ADIO's commitment to delivering critical infrastructure efficiently and on schedule. This approach aligns with ADIO's broader efforts to attract and enable investments that support the emirate's vision for world-class educational infrastructure.

The augmentation comprises the design, build, finance, and 18-year operation and maintenance of a new campus, which will accommodate 3,380 students in Khalifa City.

Equity financing is provided by Plenary (50%) and BESIX (50%), while debt is being provided by leading domestic and international banks Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, HSBC, Intesa Sanpaolo and Norinchukin.

The final design of the school will encourage and support a variety of individual, small group and large group learning models. The school will contain resources and spaces that will enhance the delivery of personalised educational programs and services to all students, encourage student to student, adult to student, and adult to adult collaboration.