

The Indian High School - Branch Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Primary

Report issued February 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

The Indian High School - Branch was inspected in November 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Al Garhoud, The Indian High School - Branch is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to lower primary, aged three to nine years. The school follows a CBSE curriculum and provides the junior years of the Indian High School, with one Chief Executive Officer and Board of Trustees for the whole school. At the time of the inspection there were 4184 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Many parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Almost all responses were positive and highly supportive of the life and work of the school. Parents were particularly pleased with their children's progress in English, mathematics and science, the safe and healthy school environment and the effective communication that the school achieved with parents. They approved of the way the school dealt with any incidents of bullying and they felt that reports sent to parents were helpful. They stated that the leadership of the school was good, although a significant number were unclear how the school had improved since the previous inspection. Parents were less positive about the range and quantity of after-school clubs and activities, and about teaching and learning in Arabic. A few parents made additional comments and most of these were very supportive. However, a small number expressed concerns about academic pressure on the

youngest children and the excessively heavy school bags that children had to carry to and around the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Branch of the Indian High School provided a good quality of education for its students; it had many significant strengths and a number of outstanding features. The school had responded quickly to the recommendations of the previous inspection and had made significant progress. Many of the planned initiatives and strategies put in place had understandably not been fully achieved in the short time since the last inspection. However, resources for the Kindergarten had improved, new assessment systems were being used and attainment and progress in Arabic had shown some improvement. The school's strategies for improving teaching and the students' learning experience were not fully implemented. The school had a good capacity for further improvement.

Attainment and progress in all key subjects were at least acceptable across the school and, in some subjects, good. Most students performed in tests and assessments at least at the levels expected for their ages. Their behaviour, attitudes and social development were outstanding and they showed strong knowledge of life in Dubai and its culture, as well as their own. The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten and at least acceptable in the primary phase, displaying many good features, although planning to meet the needs of the brightest students was sometimes not effective enough. Students' strong desire to seek knowledge and do well helped them to exhibit good learning. Teachers' use of assessment and the effectiveness of the curriculum were acceptable with a number of good features and several new initiatives in these areas had the potential to enhance students' learning experience further. Provisions to ensure students' health and safety and to provide care and support for them were key strengths of the school. The good quality of leadership in the school and strategies for improvement showed that the school had identified necessary areas for development. Links and partnerships with parents, and the quality of governance were outstanding. The quality and provision of electronic resources were excellent, although teachers did not consistently make full use of them. Dedicated teaching and non-teaching staff were effectively deployed, and the well-maintained school premises were efficiently used.

Key features of the school

- Children's attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in the Kindergarten;
- Students' confidence and ability in spoken English in the primary phase;
- Students' good behaviour and outstanding personal and social development;
- The high quality of care and support for students and outstanding arrangements to ensure their health, safety and welfare;
- Outstanding governance and partnerships with parents;
- A significant amount of curriculum planning and teaching did not always meet the learning needs of the brightest students;
- Planning of lessons focused too strongly on what teachers were to teach, rather than on what students were to learn;
- Provision to develop problem-solving and investigative skills in mathematics and science was weak and opportunities to relate these subjects to practical every-day situations were limited.

Recommendations

- Improve teachers' planning to place greater emphasis on planning for what students are to learn;
- Develop and expand the curriculum and the use of assessment to identify and meet students' learning needs more precisely across the full ability range;
- Provide better opportunities to develop problem-solving and investigative skills.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good across the school. Almost all students made excellent progress in their understanding of the five Pillars of Islam including Hajj and Prayer. They also had detailed knowledge about obligatory and voluntary prayers. Across the school most students could recite and memorise the short chapters which they were learning from The Holy Qur'an with few errors and could understand the general meaning of the verses. However, many students could not apply the recitation rules correctly. The majority of students could give examples of how to apply the Islamic values which they learnt to their everyday lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable across the school. Listening skills were the strongest of all the disciplines. The majority of students understood most of the spoken words, followed instructions accurately and had a suitable range of vocabulary so that they could express themselves using simple sentences. Across the

school the reading skills of most students were not developed fully. Their writing was strictly limited to copying from the board, usually either one-word answers or simple sentences. Their ability to use the range of words they learnt to make new sentences in new contexts was limited.

Attainment and progress in English were good. In school-based tests and assessments the majority of students attained levels that were in line with or above age-appropriate expectations. In the Kindergarten, children could understand and follow the teachers' instructions with ease. Phonic awareness enabled them to read two-letter words correctly. Children wrote upper and lower case letters appropriately. In the primary phase, progress was good and students spoke with fluency and confidence. Their listening and reading skills were well developed and most read with understanding. The majority of students in Grade 4 were familiar with the rules of grammar and knew how to apply them. By this stage most students could interpret texts and produce descriptive pieces of writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good in Kindergarten. Attainment was good and progress acceptable in the primary phase. Kindergarten children displayed good levels of understanding in activities featuring numeracy. They counted in sequence and added single digits. They knew that addition meant 'more' and related subtraction to taking away. In Grade 2, students understood that multiplication is repeated addition and understood the concept of zero. By Grade 4, students measured length with accuracy and estimated the number of students in a group of one thousand that would have a birthday on any given day. Students' investigative and problem-solving skills were under-developed.

Attainment and progress in science were good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the primary phase. Kindergarten children made good use of their senses to learn new things about their environment. They could talk in simple sentences about the features of animals and classify fruits and vegetables. In the primary grades students were familiar with scientific terminology, although less so with observing and recording data. They could recall scientific facts and concepts such as the uses of water. However, analytical thinking skills were not evident among many students. Their understanding of scientific theory was appropriate for their ages, but they were less secure in applying their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts or using problem-solving techniques. Knowledge derived from practical experiences was under-developed.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour in both the Kindergarten and primary phase were outstanding. The students exercised strong self-discipline in the corridors, at assemblies and between lessons. They positively supported campaigns to promote healthy living, seen in wall displays and in the curriculum that also included physical exercise. Students excelled in inter-school competitions, winning prizes for painting, music, sport and public speaking. They were extremely punctual in reaching school and returned promptly to classrooms after breaks.

Students' civic understanding, their knowledge of Islam and their appreciation of local culture and traditions were good in the Kindergarten and outstanding in the primary phase. Students took on important roles as class monitors or members of the student council and carried out the related responsibilities. Students showed respect towards Islam and its teachings, but only a few children in the Kindergarten had good knowledge of Islam. Students were proud to belong to the multi-cultural society in Dubai and had good knowledge about its traditions and diverse cultures.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding in both phases. They spoke with pride about the famous architectural wonders in Dubai and were aware of the importance of Dubai as a centre of trade and commerce. They knew that the recent recession had affected its economy. Almost all students wished to stay on in Dubai to become professionals and work towards its prosperity. Students were deeply committed to environmental causes. In school the Green Patrol ensured conservation of water, electricity and recycled paper and prevented littering. Students also participated in projects organised by the Emirates Environment Group and Dubai Cares.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The overall quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten. It varied significantly in quality throughout the primary phase, but was acceptable overall. Some good and outstanding lessons were seen in every grade but a few were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, the teaching was built on good subject knowledge, generated enthusiasm and employed effective questions that allowed students to respond at length and show what they knew. Such lessons used a varied range of stimulating activities which encouraged students of different abilities to make progress. Teachers prepared their lessons thoroughly using a common lesson format, although they concentrated on what was to be taught, rather than identifying what students were to learn, and how they would achieve the lesson objectives. As a result, not all students were fully challenged, especially the most able.

Learning was good throughout the school. Students enjoyed learning and displayed highly positive attitudes towards their studies and a thirst for knowledge. The environment in most classrooms contained a range of stimulating displays and examples of students' work which enhanced their learning. In Grades 1 to 4 students listened attentively in most lessons and completed tasks on time, although the more able students sometimes finished early; as a result, their progress was slowed. In only a few lessons were opportunities seen for students to develop independent learning skills. In Grades 3 and 4, use of on-line resources had resulted in high levels of initiative and independent learning by students. In some subjects students applied their knowledge and understanding well to the real world and could connect what they were learning to what they already knew. Students' work was neatly presented, accurate and written in correct English. Students' learning through investigation and the solving of practical problems was not developed strongly enough.

Assessment in both the Kindergarten and the primary phase was acceptable. The school had improved its arrangements for record-keeping in the primary grades and had undertaken better analysis of its test and examination results since the last inspection. However, there was wide variation in the implementation and use of assessment information across the grades. It was not always directly linked to improved planning of lessons, nor did it identify accurately or consistently the needs of individual learners. The quality and frequency of marking of students' work and the provision of feedback to them were variable in lessons and did not always enable students to know how they could actually improve their work. Most teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses well, but did not always use assessment data to identify specific targets for improvement. Teachers' questioning skills to check understanding were generally effective.

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum in the Kindergarten and the primary phase was of acceptable quality, with some good features. The Kindergarten curriculum was designed and implemented effectively to prepare children for the transition to Grade 1. Play activities reinforced children's formal learning. Opportunities for free and unstructured play that enabled children to explore and discover things for themselves did not always fully meet their developmental and learning needs. In the primary phase, the curriculum followed CBSE guidelines. This enabled students to learn additional foreign languages, as well as creative and technological subjects, thus adding breadth and balance to their learning experiences. The international CBSE-I curriculum, which had been piloted in two Grade 1 classes, provided a skills-based and interactive experience which had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Integration of computer technology in lessons benefited students, although the selection of software did not always meet the needs of all learners. The reading programme, thematic assemblies and recess radio activities further enhanced students' confidence, social skills and language development. Curriculum enrichment opportunities were available for students, some developing the talents of the more able, and

raising awareness and understanding of local and global issues. The occasional use of resource-based learning, collaborative tasks and science activities enlivened the traditional teacher-directed curriculum. The curriculum was reviewed annually, but lesson planning sometimes failed to identify appropriate activities to provide sufficient challenge for the brightest students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety and the quality of care and support for students were outstanding in both the Kindergarten and primary phase. Arrangements for ensuring their well-being, health and security were also outstanding. Transport of children by bus to and from distant parts of Dubai was very well managed. The safety and maintenance of the school premises, equipment and resources were excellent and most appropriate for the ages of the students in the school. Records were kept of safety incidents and the subsequent actions taken. Medicines were stored with their expiry dates recorded. Bus roadworthiness was checked and fire extinguishers were up-to-date. Healthy living was promoted in school life in many ways; through the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, posters and in assemblies. An appropriate child protection policy was in place and understood by all staff on the premises and on the buses.

The relationships between students and their teachers were excellent. The counselling service available for students, teachers and parents was all-inclusive and highly effective. Monitoring of changes in students' well-being and personal circumstances was effective and resulted in almost all referrals having positive outcomes. The supervision and management of students' behaviour were clearly defined and understood by both students and staff. Students with special educational needs were well catered for and arrangements for extra support were very effective in terms of learning outcomes. The new system for tracking students' academic progress was well structured and contained much useful information. The management of students' attendance and punctuality was excellent.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership throughout the school was good. It benefited from the collaborative management structure of the combined Indian High School and involved contributions from a wide range of senior staff. The Principal identified and promoted a clear vision for the school, which helped to achieve continuity between the school's two sites. Supervisors and subject co-ordinators were given appropriate responsibilities for the pastoral and academic life of the school. Co-ordinators identified and promoted the needs of less able students rather than those of all abilities. The school was run with great efficiency in its use of time and space.

Good processes and initiatives for self-evaluation and improvement planning were carried out in conjunction with the senior section of the school. Improvement plans and initiatives to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report were carefully thought out.

Priorities had been identified, although these were concerned mainly with processes for change rather than focusing on the desired improvements for students. The school was ambitious to change and was receptive to new ideas. Monitoring the quality of teaching and planned sharing of good practices took place infrequently.

The school had created outstanding partnerships with its parents and the local community. Parents had many opportunities to be involved with their children's education and many participated in storytelling, dance activities, the celebration of festivals and joining in family activities. Communication with parents was excellent and they had easy on-line access to detailed electronic reports about the curriculum and their children's progress. The school was very receptive to concerns raised and suggestions made by parents, often through the parents' council. A valuable range of field trips, visits, charity initiatives and inter-school competitions ensured that students experienced worthwhile links with the wider community.

The quality of governance had been maintained at an outstanding level. The Chairman and his board of trustees achieved a highly efficient oversight of the management and performance of the school and held it to account through various committees. The school benefited from access to a wide variety of advisory committees which provided valuable support and advice. Many of these groups had representation from an extensive range of committed stakeholders, many of whom were past parents, staff and students.

The quality of staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school premises were very well maintained and efficiently used, and provided appropriate specialist facilities and reasonable outdoor space. The school had invested heavily in electronic resources and faced the challenge of ensuring that staff members were properly trained to use them effectively. Teachers were well deployed according to subject specialties in nearly all subjects. Many of them were relatively new to the school and their on-going professional training and development were an important priority for the school. Training and support had not addressed all teachers' needs and skills sufficiently.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
0% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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