

Our Own Indian School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Report issued February 2010

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	2
Basic information about the school	2
How well does the school perform overall?.....	3
Key features of the school	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?	4
How good is the students' personal and social development?	5
How good are the teaching and learning?	6
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	7
How well does the school protect and support students?	7
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
Summary of inspection judgements.....	10
Next Steps	14
How to contact us	14

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.

Our Own Indian School was inspected in November 2009 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 Quoz, Our Own Indian School is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 17 years from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The school follows an Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 3,563 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents felt that their child liked school and that the students' behaviour was good. They felt that their children were expected to work hard and were encouraged to become responsible and independent people. Parents had the same view about the quality of teaching and their child's progress in English and mathematics. Most thought progress was good in science, though a few disagreed. The majority of parents could not comment about their child's progress in Islamic Education, but most felt good progress was being made in Arabic. Most parents agreed that the school was well led, consulted them, and gave them good information about their child's progress. Similarly, most felt comfortable when approaching the school with a problem, but a few disagreed that the school would do something about it. Almost all agreed that the school kept their child safe and healthy and most agreed that the school had good links with parents, explained how parents could help their children at home and showed concern for their child's welfare. The majority agreed that the school had good links with the community and felt that there was a good range of activities that their child found stimulating.

How well does the school perform overall?

The school's performance was acceptable overall, with some good features. The inspectors judged attainment in all the key subjects to be acceptable in the primary and secondary phases. However, progress in both Arabic and Islamic Education was unsatisfactory in the primary stage. Progress in Islamic Education was also unsatisfactory in the secondary stage. Attainment and progress were good in English and mathematics in the pre-primary stage. Students' good behaviour was a key feature of the school and this was evident in relationships with teachers and their commitment to their studies. However, attendance could be improved further. Students considered it a privilege to live in Dubai and understood the basics of the Islamic faith and local culture and traditions. Older students understood the role of Dubai as a potential centre of economic rejuvenation after the recession, whilst the majority were aware of the impact of climate change.

Overall, the quality of teaching was acceptable but was of a more consistently high quality at the pre-primary stage, where children were frequently actively involved in their own learning. Almost all teachers had good knowledge of their subjects but not always of how children learn. This was particularly evident at the primary and secondary stages. Students were willing learners, who readily demonstrated their knowledge of facts. Moreover, they thrived when given the opportunity to collaborate with others to solve problems. The school was improving its systems for assessment, and particularly good practice was developing in the primary phase. Overall, however, students were not consistently informed of how they could improve their work. The curriculum provided breadth and balance across the school and students benefited from their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for physical education were limited and the school could make further use of the community to enhance learning. Arrangements for the health and safety of students were good. All staff took their duty of care very seriously and health and safety policies and procedures were followed meticulously. This was particularly evident in the provision of staffing for school buses. The buildings and facilities were safe and well maintained.

The school was well led. The Principal had a clear vision and this was shared through the distribution of responsibilities to other leaders within the management structure. Comprehensive systems existed for self-evaluation to identify the school's priorities for development, but they needed to be more closely monitored to ensure their impact upon students' learning. The school had good partnerships with parents and kept them regularly informed about their children's welfare and progress. Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) managed the school and ensured it was kept accountable for its performance. However, no other stakeholder group had a role in the school's decision-making processes. The school was well staffed with suitably qualified teachers. There were sufficient classrooms but the school lacked specialist resources and facilities for physical education and practical science.

Key features of the school

- Students achieved at least acceptable standards in all the key subjects but made unsatisfactory progress in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Students' good behaviour, commitment to learning and willingness to take on leadership responsibility;
- Good teaching at the pre-primary stage, but a limited range of teaching strategies in use with older students.

Recommendations

- Improve the students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - making better provision for the needs of all students
 - developing strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop higher order skills such as creativity, critical analysis and problem solving
 - developing assessment and tracking processes so that students understand more clearly how to improve their work and teachers can use assessment information in their planning;
- Refine self- evaluation processes so that improvement planning focuses more clearly on learning outcomes for students.

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable, but progress was unsatisfactory. Overall, speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were acceptable but in the minority of classes students were not challenged to achieve higher standards. In Grade 2 most students were aware of the importance of the Prophet's Sayings (Hadith) and had adequate knowledge of how to perform prayers. Most students in Grade 3 knew about Friday prayer routines, requirements and meanings. Older students learned how to recite The Holy Qur'an with accuracy. In Grade 8 students discussed basic features and concepts, such as the oneness of Allah and fasting as a Pillar of Islam. Students' knowledge of Islam was improving, although only a few could discuss in depth how the main principles and values of Islam had an impact on their daily lives. In Grade 12, students made a few links between Islam and science.

In Arabic, attainment was acceptable throughout the school. Progress was acceptable in the secondary section but unsatisfactory in the primary. In Grade 2, students learned the Arabic names for zoo animals and, in Grade 4, students could identify words related to houses and the city. Students in Grades 6 to 8 listened intently to their teachers, spoke clearly and had acceptable reading and writing skills. Most students accurately copied words and phrases from the board and responded correctly to their teachers' questions. A few students in the secondary grades had good writing skills. Students in Grade 8, for example, could explain and use the two different variations in the

pronunciation of the Arabic definite article. However, most students were not able to write and construct sentences or link them to form a short text.

In English, student attainment and progress were good in the pre-primary and acceptable in the primary and secondary sections. Children at the pre-primary stage could link words with their starting letters and trace their shapes. Overall, students' experiences in speaking, listening, reading and writing were confined to the textbook content. For example, in Grade 3 students were enacting situations using a limited range of 'Greeting Words'. Writing in Grades 11 and 12 contained elements of imagination and creativity but, generally, students did not demonstrate the ability to write in different styles.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good at the pre-primary stage and acceptable in the primary and secondary stages. At the pre-primary stage, children displayed good number sense and formed numbers correctly. The majority of primary students used mathematical language, knew the four basic operations, solved practical word problems, identified factors and multiples, used single digit divisors and solved decimal fractions. Throughout Grades 1 to 12, the majority of the students identified the principles involved in solving problems and justified their solutions using appropriate symbols and terminology. They proved hypotheses and solved mathematical problems by selecting appropriate techniques.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable at all stages of the school. Over time most students acquired scientific knowledge and concepts at levels in line with their age and international expectations, but their progress was inconsistent. In Grade 2 students were able to use scientific terminology to describe the protection offered by a 'kutcha' house. By Grade 8 they could use their understanding of electrostatic charge to discuss safe places during a lightning strike. Regular opportunities to develop science skills by observation and experience were limited to the higher grades, but students demonstrated their ability to use practical equipment confidently and accurately. There was limited evidence of students conducting individual investigational work.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The attitudes and behaviour of the students were good. They moved around the school in an orderly manner, were courteous and showed respect towards adults and their peers. Many gave willingly of their time to assist teachers and other students with their work. Almost all students could engage in discussions confidently and with poise. They were well behaved in the classrooms and shared positive relationships with the teachers. Their sense of belonging and security was evident in their commitment to work and school activities. Most students were punctual to school and classes, but attendance could be improved further.

Students' civic responsibility, understanding of Islam and appreciation of local culture were acceptable in pre-primary and good in the primary and secondary grades. Students took proactive roles in school life through activities such as Globex and the United Nations Simulation Council. They understood the basics of the Islamic faith, local culture and traditions and actively participated in local and international celebrations. Living in Dubai was a matter of pride and privilege for them.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in pre-primary and good in the primary and secondary grades. They understood the effects of recession on Dubai and its residents and older students appreciated the role of Dubai in becoming a centre for economic rejuvenation. Participation in activities such as cleaning the beach, recycling waste on the school campus, and contributions to various good causes such as 'Dubai Cares', showed the students' concern for others. The majority of students were aware of the impact of global warming and climate change on Dubai.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of the teaching was good in the pre-primary stage and acceptable in the primary and secondary stages. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge and managed the lesson time to ensure that students made progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding concepts. In the pre-primary stage effective planning addressed a range of individual needs, promoted children's active involvement in their lessons and provided a balance of activities. Resources such as flash cards, visual material and information and communication technology (ICT) were regularly used in this context. Within a positive learning environment, teachers used probing questions to arouse children's natural inquisitiveness. However, in the primary and secondary phases, questioning was often restricted to reinforcing previously learned knowledge; lessons were teacher-centred and based entirely on textbooks. A few teachers used wider strategies to engage students but, overall, whole-class teaching was the norm and teachers did not provide a sufficient range of tasks to meet the learning needs of all students.

The quality of students' learning was good in the pre-primary stage and acceptable in the primary and secondary stages. Almost all students were willing learners and were very confident when demonstrating learned knowledge and facts. Children at the pre-primary stage responded well to the many opportunities to be involved in their own learning: when recognising the alphabet and relating sounds to words, for example. At the primary and secondary stages students were often passive participants but, in a minority of lessons, their learning was evident because they were challenged to apply higher order and critical thinking skills, or collaborate with others to solve relevant problems. Opportunities for research and investigation were limited.

Assessment was acceptable at all stages, but there were inconsistencies across the school. Comprehensive records were kept of students' achievement and the results analysed to determine progress. Good practice had been developed in the primary phase, where assessment grades were related to the acquisition of skills. These grades were used to inform future lesson planning and to help students understand what they should do next. However, across the school as a whole, assessment was not sufficiently robust or coordinated. Students' evaluation of their own and others' work was not a regular feature of the school's assessment procedures. Marking in books gave students only limited feedback about strengths and areas for development.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable throughout the school and followed the Indian CBSE curriculum. It was broad and balanced across all three stages of the school, although opportunities for physical education were restricted by a lack of facilities and participation in the expressive arts was provided only as extra-curricular activities. Some lessons were as short as 30 minutes, which limited the students' development in some subjects. The curriculum was reviewed annually at school, phase and subject levels. This had resulted, for example, in a change of English textbook for Grades 1 to 4, but had reinforced the school's reliance on a textbook based curriculum. Consequently, it was not always the case that the needs and interests of all students were being systematically catered for. There were good arrangements for transfer to the school and for transition across the different phases within the school. The school also made provision for secondary students to make guided career choices. Cross-curricular links were limited and opportunities were not fully utilised to build useful connections between subjects that would promote greater coherence in the curriculum. For example, although every class had ICT equipment, it was used as a teaching tool rather than as a means to develop students' ICT skills. Students benefited from a range of extra-curricular activities like Globex and inter-house competitions. Students were participating in the United Nations Simulation Conference during the inspection. However, parents indicated they would like to see more opportunities for physical activity. The school was aware of its place in the community but made only limited use of it to enhance the curriculum and bring greater meaning to learning.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Measures taken by the school to ensure the students' health, safety and security were good. School administrators, teachers, support staff and security guards were vigilant in their responsibilities. Regular checks throughout the school were conducted to maintain a safe, hygienic learning environment. Suggestions for improvement were acted upon quickly. The facilities were kept in a good state of repair. Students were well supervised in classrooms, playgrounds, assemblies and transport areas, where bus attendants, teachers, transport company personnel and older students collaborated to supervise riders on 54 buses. The school maintained and monitored records of inspections, fire evacuation drills and serious incidents. There was a centrally located, well-equipped and well-staffed Health Clinic on the school site. Students were screened for general health, height, weight and body mass index. Medical staff maintained records related to medicines and supported teachers in promoting good nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Child protection procedures were in place.

The school provided good support for students. Overall, student and staff relationships from pre-primary through Grade 12 were good, encouraging students to be respectful and courteous to one another, their teachers and visitors. Students' overall well-being and progress were supported by a school counsellor, who met with referred students for academic, behavioural, emotional and vocational reasons. Informal and formal assessments were conducted, with ensuing parent conferences to set interventions. There were systems to track and monitor student progress and attendance.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal had a clear vision for the school, which he promoted with passion and conviction. His aim was for children to achieve at an international level, within the context of respect that is intrinsic to the Indian culture. Effective management was achieved by thorough, well-defined academic and administrative functions, the former being an excellent model of distributed leadership. Leaders at all levels shared the same vision and were empowered to lead the teams for which they were responsible, in line with the school improvement plan. Through a chain of accountability, there was a common purpose and an associated capacity to improve. Regular performance management was in place but review outcomes were not sufficiently co-ordinated to ensure a consistent impact upon learning and professional development.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were of acceptable quality. In recent years the school had developed a wide range of evaluation processes to inform school planning. These included staff, student and parent questionnaires, clear line management, performance management, regular lesson observations and work scrutiny. However, whilst these identified areas for improvement, the results were not analysed sufficiently to determine the key priorities that would directly influence students' learning and progress. Similarly, whilst school and subject development plans existed for the current and previous years, they lacked detail regarding responsibilities, time frames and success criteria, against which progress could be monitored.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were positive about the school in meetings with inspectors and in their responses to most aspects of the questionnaire. They received regular information about a range of school matters, including children's progress and welfare, and valued the ease with which they could meet with school staff face to face. Academic reports were prepared once a term in the senior grades and six times a year in the lower grades, (pre-primary to Grade 4). The school and students benefited from an increasing range of links with the municipality, school networks and local universities, but engagement with the business community was limited.

Governance was acceptable. The school was managed by GEMS and the Principal was accountable to them for the school's performance and for meeting statutory requirements. However, no other stakeholder group had a designated role in school decision-making: parents were informed of decisions rather than consulted about them.

Staffing, facilities and resources were of acceptable quality. The school was well staffed with suitably qualified teachers, who were successfully deployed to meet the needs of the curriculum. The premises were adequate and there were sufficient classrooms for teaching, but the shortage of sports facilities and laboratories restricted the delivery of physical education and science. There was good provision for ICT: all the teachers had their own laptop computers and each classroom was equipped with a data projector. However, these resources were not used effectively to enhance the students' learning.

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.

The four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

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

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

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

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Pre-Primary Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

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

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