

# Indian High School - Branch Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 4

Report issued February 2010

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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 January 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 children's achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and its 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 Garhoud, The Indian High School – Branch provided education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 4, aged three to eight years. The school followed an Indian curriculum based on the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and was affiliated to the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE). At the time of the inspection, there were 4,119 children on roll. The reported rate of attendance during the previous semester was good.

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all responded very positively about most aspects of the school. They thought that their children liked school and that their progress was good in English, mathematics and Islamic Education. Almost all stated that students' behaviour at the school was good and that the school helped keep their children safe and healthy. Similar high proportions thought that the school had good links with the local community and was well led. A few parents thought that there was an insufficient range of enjoyable and stimulating activities for students and did not feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or complaints. A similar number reported that the teachers did not explain how they could help their children at home with schoolwork. These were the views of a very small minority, however, and were not endorsed by the parents who met the inspection team.

## How well does the school perform overall?

The Indian High School – Branch was a good school with some outstanding features. Students' attainment and progress were good in the key subjects, except in science, in which they were acceptable, and in Arabic, in which they were unsatisfactory. The students' personal and social development was outstanding in all respects. They exercised self-control well above what might be expected for their ages and their consideration for others was impressive. Almost all students were fully aware of, and showed respect for, Islamic culture. Many participated in the school 'green' patrol, keeping a watch on ecologically friendly behaviour within the school, such as recycling.

The quality of the teaching was variable. It was good or better in a majority of lessons and acceptable overall. It was strongest in English, mathematics and Islamic Education, contributing to the students' good attainment in these subjects. However, in Arabic lessons, some science lessons and a few lessons in other subjects, teachers demonstrated poor subject knowledge and a lack of awareness of how children learn. The quality of learning was better than that of the teaching because of the concentration and dedication of the students and their strong motivation to do their best. Assessment was acceptable overall. Students knew when they gave the correct oral or written responses but were frequently not given immediate guidance about how to improve. The curriculum in some subjects was responsive to the learning needs of the students and was of acceptable quality, overall. However, the development of higher order skills was not a feature of the syllabuses taught in most subjects and so the work given to the more able students often lacked challenge. Higher demands were made in extra-curricular activities and out-of-hours lessons, and these compensated to an extent for the lack of extension activities in regular lessons. The care and support given by the school were outstanding. Great efforts were made to ensure the welfare of all students at all times and particularly on their arrival and departure from school. Students and their parents were informed regularly of their progress.

Leadership was good. Strong teams of supervisors and subject co-ordinators were beginning to make an impact on raising standards of achievement and were in a position to take on more delegated responsibility. A single strategic plan mapped out a clear direction for the Branch School and the Senior School together. There was no separate analysis of the needs of the Branch School and no individual actions plan to help focus on the needs of students in the younger grades. Partnerships with parents and the local community were a strong feature of the school. Parents willingly volunteered to support the school in a number of ways. Their skills were used to enliven the curriculum with talks on subjects such as dental health and demonstrations of Indian dancing. Parents appreciated the good communication links and the accessibility of the Principal. Governance was outstanding. The board of trustees was made up of local business people who managed the finances on a not-for-profit basis. The Management Group, with parental, staff and ex-student representation, made executive decisions. The school's staffing, facilities and resources were good. The premises were of a very high standard with good specialist provision, but the school was not adequately staffed for the teaching of Arabic.

## Key features of the school

- Students' good attainment and progress in English, mathematics and Islamic Education;
- The school's caring environment, which ensured that students were safe and comfortable;
- The students' excellent attitudes and behaviour;
- Outstanding protection and support for students;
- The students' outstanding awareness of their civic responsibilities, their respect for Islam and their appreciation of traditional Emirati culture;
- Unsatisfactory teaching and learning in Arabic, because of poorly qualified staff with weak teaching skills;
- Insufficient opportunities for students to learn independently and too little challenge for the more able students;
- Outstanding governance and strong community and parental involvement.

## Recommendations

- Improve the proportion of good or better lessons by:
  - providing more opportunities for collaborative and independent learning
  - providing more extension activities to challenge the more able students
  - providing teachers with more accurate and robust feedback on the quality of their teaching
  - developing the effective use of assessment data for planning lessons;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Arabic by recruiting staff with qualifications in Arabic and Arabic teaching, and by developing the skills of existing staff;
- Provide better resources in each Kindergarten classroom so that the children can take part in role-play, find out more about the world around them and be rewarded when they complete their work.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good through Grades 1 to 4. Students in all classes could recite chapters of The Holy Qur'an and they were developing detailed understanding of Islamic values and knowledge of the Pillars of Islam. In Grade 1 most students could recite Ibrahimic Prayer, as part of the prayers, accurately and confidently. In Grade 2 almost all had a good knowledge of the Holy Mosque in Mecca. In Grade 3 most students understood the sacrifice made by the companions of The Prophet (PBUH). In Grade 4 most could demonstrate with clarity and confidence their understanding of how to what they learnt could be applied in their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory. The knowledge and skills of the majority of students were below expectations in listening, reading, speaking and writing. In Grade 1 the majority of students could read the alphabet letters with their written variations in many words. However, only a few could understand a range of familiar expressions. In Grades 2 and 3, the majority of students could read aloud short sentences from stories but most used inaccurate pronunciation. In Grade 4 only a few could understand and write the main points from familiar short passages. Most children could not understand key words in short sentences. They also could not understand basic instructions like 'read', 'open the book' and 'write'.

Attainment and progress in English were good throughout the school. By the end of Grade 4 the students' attainment was better than expected of children of that age. Attainment was best in speaking skills. Considering that most children come from non-English speaking backgrounds, the students made commendable progress in spoken English. Most spoke fluently, using a wide-range of vocabulary with good intonation and expression. Listening skills ranged from good in the Kindergarten to outstanding in Grades 1 to 4. Reading and writing skills were strengthened among these older children by the use of 'word power' books, prepared by the school. Their handwriting skills were also well developed.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were good throughout the school. Students consistently attained standards above age-related norms. In the Kindergarten, children confidently displayed a consistent level of understanding in activities featuring numeracy. In Grades 1 to 4, they used correct mathematical language and worked confidently when expressing time and describing the properties of increasingly complex geometric shapes. They were proficient in the four basic mathematical operations and their related terminology. Students applied mathematical skills confidently in other subjects.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable throughout the school. Children in the Kindergarten knew about healthy eating, road safety and the effects of the changing seasons. Students at Grade 1 knew that plants needed water and sunlight to grow and they understood basic environmental issues. Older children knew the effects of wind and could identify which food items were the products of plants. Students in Grade 4 understood how organisms grew and the types and roles of different foodstuffs. However, students were given few opportunities in science lessons to develop their investigative skills or to conduct and record practical experiments.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The quality of the students' attitudes and behavior was outstanding throughout the school. They were exceptionally well behaved in almost all classes. They conducted themselves in an orderly and polite manner when moving around the school site. All were keen to learn. Student-teacher relationships were very positive and were characterised by mutual respect. Teachers displayed a great deal of patience and care, which helped the children to enjoy their time at school. There were rarely any latecomers. Attendance was good, although better in Grades 1 to 4 than in the Kindergarten.

The students' civic understanding, their understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local culture and traditions were outstanding. Students fully understood their civic responsibilities and played an active role in maintaining discipline and cleanliness around the school. They cooperated with one another and were sensitive to the needs of their peers. Almost all children were fully aware of and showed respect for Islamic culture. They demonstrated extensive knowledge of Dubai's landmarks, its culture and its heritage.

The students' understanding of economic and environmental issues was also outstanding. They linked developments in the UAE to the discovery of oil and were aware of the importance of trade to its growth. They understood its importance as a tourist attraction and as a land of business opportunities, and attributed it to the leadership of the country. The students could also explain the need for conservation activities and the environmental projects in which they were involved.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

The overall quality of the teaching was acceptable in both the Kindergarten and through Grades 1 to 4. Teachers prepared their lessons well to cover the school's curriculum, using a common lesson plan. Their lessons had learning objectives, but they did not always make clear what the students were expected to learn. As a result, students sometimes spent significant amounts of time in unproductive activities once they had completed the lesson objectives. In the most effective lessons, particularly in English, teachers used a range of stimulating activities, which encouraged students of different abilities to learn. Teachers in these lessons taught briskly and with enthusiasm and, as a consequence, the students were always keen to answer questions. In the majority of Arabic lessons, too much time was spent talking in English.

Learning overall was good throughout the school. All the students enjoyed learning and maintained a positive attitude towards their studies. The teaching environment in most classrooms contained a range of stimulating displays and examples of students' work. Students knew their strengths and weaknesses and often made good progress, even when the teaching was not as effective as it could have been. In the Kindergarten, children developed their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of integrated activities. In Grades 1 to 4, students listened attentively in class and completed tasks on time. However, in the majority of lessons there were only limited opportunities for students to develop independent learning and there was too little challenge for the more able. In some subjects students applied their knowledge and understanding to the real world and could connect what they were learning to what they already knew. However, the depth and range of new learning was too often limited to the acquisition of a few items of knowledge. The students' work was invariably

neatly presented, accurate and written in correct English. However, their critical thinking and their application of knowledge and understanding to extended tasks and problem solving were underdeveloped.

Assessment throughout the school was acceptable. Teachers regularly assessed the students' work using a range of formal and informal methods in lessons. Students received oral and written feedback on their work to ensure that they had covered and understood the syllabus. However, teachers too frequently ignored incorrect responses and students' misunderstandings were often not explored. Students gained some idea of how their work could be improved, but it often lacked immediacy and the opportunity was lost to put insecure learning on a stronger foundation. The school recorded a large amount of data about students' attainment but teachers did not use it consistently to plan tasks and activities to meet the needs of students of different abilities, particularly the most able.

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

The curriculum in the Kindergarten and for Grades 1 to 4 was of acceptable quality, with some good features. Permanently affiliated to the CBSE board, the school drew heavily from the Indian National Curriculum guidance (NCERT framework) to include many activities that added breadth and balance. For example, practical life exercises, sand and water play, storytelling, puppet theatre and organized outdoor games gave an additional dimension to learning in Kindergarten, but they often took place outside the classroom. There were no resources in the Kindergarten classrooms for role-play or other practical activities. The reading programme, the recess radio activities and thematic assemblies supported the outstanding progress of many students in language and social skills. The curriculum was regularly and systematically reviewed both at the end of each semester and annually, which ensured continuity between grades. Good use was made of external measures to assess the students' progress in mathematics and English and the information was used to improve the curriculum. There were ample opportunities within and outside school for students to develop leadership qualities and participate in local and global community initiatives. For instance, they could be members of the school council, the green squad, or participate in the Jumeirah beach cleaning and paper recycling projects. Useful links were made between subjects in Grades 1 to 4, which increased their relevance to the students' experience. However, the more able students were not challenged enough, and the science curriculum in particular provided too few opportunities to develop scientific investigations.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for protecting and supporting students were outstanding. All staff members were diligent in their duty to care and protect. Arrivals, departures and all aspects of the school were well supervised throughout the day by conscientious teachers and support staff. Buildings, facilities, and transport were safe, secure and well managed and maintained. The school was clean and well ventilated. Procedures for fire and evacuation emergencies were well established. Bus drivers and food servers were qualified and trained annually. Fire hoses and extinguishers, air ducts and water



tanks had been inspected. Regular health and safety checks ensured that accidents were minor and kept to a minimum. Healthy lifestyles were promoted through the curriculum and in physical education activities, with additional support from the school medical staff, working with students and their families. Child-protection procedures were well established and known by staff and students.

The quality of support for students was also outstanding. Staff members were genuinely caring and relationships with students were positive. Children respected and cared for each other well and, as a result, this aspect of their behaviour was outstanding. Excellent systems were in place to check the academic and personal development of all students. Guidance and support from teachers, counsellors, special education and medical staff members were very effective. Attendance and punctuality were well monitored and appropriate action was taken when there were concerns. There were good arrangements for transitions within the school and for the move from Grade 4 to the Senior School.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management of the school were good. Good leadership qualities were demonstrated at most levels. The Chief Executive Officer gave a strong steer to the strategic direction of the school and was ably assisted by the Branch Principal in the implementation of plans. The Principal had established good teams of supervisors and subject coordinators with increasing delegated responsibilities. Leaders had the capacity to plan for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Effective strategic planning was carried out jointly with the senior school, which set the agenda for development. However, there was no separate analysis of strengths and weaknesses for the Junior Branch and no separate action plans that could have secured even more improvement. There was a good system for monitoring the quality of teaching. However, it did not sufficiently differentiate between teachers or pinpoint aspects of teaching that needed to be improved. The frequency of formal lesson observations was adequate but more were needed to monitor the implementation of changes.

The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and there was excellent communication between school and home. Parents particularly appreciated the ability to check their children's performance on-line. Parents' views were collected through annual questionnaires and the subsequent analysis of responses led to further improvements in school communication. Parents were actively involved in the life of the school. Parents volunteered to assist teachers in a variety of ways and their support in the Kindergarten was especially valuable. However, there were no formal consultations with parents to help define priorities and the future direction of the school.

School governance was outstanding. The governing body incorporated a range of representation from parents, staff and members of the local business community. Parents had good access to the chairman through e-mail and he visited the school regularly. The governing body did not formally separate its functions for each of the two schools for which it had responsibility and there was no specific representation of the Junior Branch School on the management committee that made executive decisions. Nevertheless, the governance arrangements were highly effective.

The school's staffing, resources and facilities were good. The school had a stable staff with a low rate of turnover. Most of the staff were well qualified and had been retained for long periods. However, the majority of the teachers of Arabic were not suitably qualified. A positive learning environment was created in and around the school through wall displays showcasing children's work and the breadth of the curriculum. Good information and communication technology resources were available for learning but teachers still required training in the best use of these in their classrooms. Resources for developing scientific skills were unsatisfactory in all grades. Those for activity based learning in the regular Kindergarten classrooms were also unsatisfactory.

## 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:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of children' learning	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all children?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support children?		
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1-4
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
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](http://www.khda.gov.ae)

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