

# Gulf Model School Inspection Report

Kindergarten to Grade 12

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.

Gulf Model 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 Qusais, Gulf Model School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 12. The school follows an Indian curriculum based on the National Council for Education Research and Training guidelines. It operates in two shifts. Kindergarten, girls and boys up to Grade 3 attend in the morning and boys only in the afternoon. The school has a very large number of admissions during the academic year from students who have previously attended other schools. At the time of the inspection, an Acting Principal had been in post since June 2008. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,954 students on roll. The student attendance during the inspection was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Parents were very supportive of the school and almost all reported that their child liked school, made good progress in key subjects and they felt that behaviour was good. Almost all parents thought that staff expected their child to work hard, do their best and encouraged their child to become an independent and responsible person. Similar numbers of parents stated that teaching was good and that their child was treated fairly. Parents surveyed thought that the staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their child and taught them how to stay healthy. A minority of parents did not think the school provided a good range of activities that their child found enjoyable. A similar number thought that teachers did not explain how they could support their child at home with schoolwork. A significant minority of parents did not know if the school had good links with the local community or if their child was making good progress in Arabic.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, Gulf Model School provided an acceptable standard of education. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education, English and mathematics was acceptable. Attainment and progress in Arabic was acceptable in Grades 1 to 8. It was good in Grades 9 to 12 because older students had a thorough understanding of grammar and were able to apply their understanding in their speaking and writing. Attainment and progress in science was acceptable in Grades 1 to 12 but was unacceptable in the KG because the teaching was not suitable for delivering the curriculum and children lacked the opportunities to explore the world around them. The high pass rate in the Kerala and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) examinations reflected the good preparation for examinations and the support provided for weaker students in Grades 10 to 12. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good and students showed good self-discipline. Positive, respectful relationships between almost all staff and students were a key feature of the school. The school promoted a culture of respect and understanding of Islam. The students had an acceptable understanding of the economic and environmental issues in Dubai and beyond. Some senior students were well aware of global issues such as climate change and global warming.

Teaching and learning were acceptable in the majority of lessons from Grade 1 upwards but there was a significant minority of unsatisfactory lessons, especially in the KG classes and in mathematics lessons, across all age groups. The majority of lessons were dominated by teacher talk and an over-reliance on textbooks. Teaching was aimed at the middle ability students and the more able and those with difficulties did not have the support they needed to learn at an appropriate pace or level. Assessment was acceptable in Grades 1 to 12 but unsatisfactory in KG. Books were marked regularly but at a superficial level with limited guidance on what the student should do to improve. There was no system in place in the KG to record the acquisition of skills on a day-to-day basis so that planning of lessons could be based on identified learning needs of children. The curriculum was acceptable in Grades 1 to 12. It was broad and balanced with opportunities for students to extend their learning through the choice of study of four languages in addition to English. The school provided acceptable protection and support for students. Students were well cared for by their teachers and support staff. The building was clean and no serious hazards were observed during the inspection. Some aspects of care were unsatisfactory as the school was unaware of the unacceptable disciplinary practices of a few teachers. Staff knew their students well but did not track their progress in a systematic way, which would allow for earlier interventions rather than waiting for termly assessments.

Leadership and management of the school were unsatisfactory because of the weak skills of senior staff. Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school maintained current routines but did not have ambition for improvements in teaching and learning and higher levels of attainment. It was unaware of its strengths and weaknesses and senior management personnel had little or no capacity to improve without appropriate support. The day-to-day management of the split shift school system was good. Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents said that the school gave good information about the progress of their child and appreciated the regular opportunities to meet with teachers. Governance was unsatisfactory. The school did not have a consultative body to oversee its work. Staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory.

Resources for learning were insufficient and of poor quality and this had a marked impact on the ability of KG teachers to enrich the curriculum by incorporating activity based learning. Older students had insufficient books in the library and working computers to carry out personal research and this impeded the acquisition of good study skills.

## Key features of the school

- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour were a strength of the school;
- The day-to-day management of the school's split-shift arrangement was good. The changeover presented no problems and was a testimony to the supervision of teachers and support staff and the children's cooperation and purposeful sense of community;
- There were a significant minority of lessons, particularly in the KG classes and in mathematics lessons, where progress was not as good as it could have been because of inappropriate teaching methods;
- Children entered the school with little or no English. By the secondary phase progress in written and spoken English was good;
- Leadership and management were weak. Senior staff were unaware of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and had little or no capacity to improve teaching and learning without a great deal of support;
- A lack of awareness by the school of the unsatisfactory disciplinary practices of a small minority of teachers.

## Recommendations

- Improve the school's capacity for improvement through a review of leadership and management structures to create new staff teams whose focus is on raising students' achievement;
- Implement rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of lessons, including criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Use the information gathered to remove weaker teaching and unacceptable practice and identify good teaching and learning practice;
- Establish robust processes for school improvement planning which address key priorities for improvement;
- Establish a governing body with accountability for the actions it takes and which represents parents and other key stakeholders;
- Provide the resources needed to:
  - enable more activity based learning in the KG classes
  - Support students' personal research using library books and computers in the secondary phase.

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

Progress and attainment in Islamic Education were acceptable and reflected expected age-appropriate levels. At the primary level the majority of students had a sound knowledge of Islam including the biography of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Most students demonstrated a sound understanding of key values and an ability to extend their learning to encompass the contexts of their daily lives. In Grade 4, students could recognise the significance of the revelation. Grade 8 students could explain their understanding of 'The Dignity of Work in Islam'. Most primary students made acceptable progress in their recitation of The Holy Qur'an. Secondary students had an acceptable understanding of The Prophet's sayings (PBUH) and The Holy Qur'an.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory in the primary grades and good in the secondary grades. Primary students understood some spoken words and phrases; they could ask and answer simple questions. In Grades 2 to 5 the majority of students could read and understand a few new words each lesson but few could write sentences independently. In Grade 8 the small amount of writing was neat and well-formed. Progress was unsatisfactory in Grade 2 to 8 as there was too little development of speaking skills and a limited range of vocabulary. In Grades 9 to 12 most students could read with good or outstanding fluency. By Grade 10 students could understand written texts from various contexts. They made good progress in applying their knowledge of grammar and sentence construction so that their speech and writing included more complex sentences.

Attainment in English was acceptable for all grades. Progress was acceptable in KG and Grades 1 to 8, and good in Grades 9 to 12. By the end of KG 2, children were able to understand a range of words and phrases and respond to simple instructions and questions. By the end of Grade 8, students had gained the skills to participate in conversations using proper pronunciation and had acquired the reading skills to gain a full understanding of texts. Secondary students understood more complex structures and responded accurately to comprehension questions. In writing, there was an over emphasis by staff on functional grammar and, consequently, students demonstrated weak skills in writing.

Attainment and progress in mathematics was acceptable. In KG classes the children had developed a sound concept of number and could identify, count, write and order numbers up to 50. The majority of the lower primary students used mathematical language, knew their addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts and could solve simple word problems. Grade 8 students could solve algebraic expressions. Senior students could understand age-appropriate mathematical concepts and solved textbook-based problems. Grade 10 knew the trigonometric calculations by heart and used this information to find the distance of a point given the angle of elevation and depression. Steady progress was noted in terms of students' increasing ability to solve more complex and difficult problems.

Attainment and progress in science in the primary and secondary grades were acceptable. In the KG attainment and progress were unsatisfactory; children had some basic knowledge of the world around them but this was below age-related expectations and their progress in developing skills to observe and question was poor. Throughout the rest of the school, students' knowledge of scientific facts and phenomena was acceptable. For example, students in Grade 3 could explain the effect of

the earth's rotation and by Grade 9 they understood the way sound is transmitted. There were, however, very limited opportunities for practical work and students' skills in scientific enquiry were below expected standards. Notably, they lacked skills in using scientific methodology for investigations that involved the control and precise measurement of variables.

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

The attitudes and behaviour of all students were good. From the youngest children upwards, they showed a high level of responsibility and self-discipline and were polite and well behaved. Older students were aware of their responsibilities and duties as members of their family, their school and the community and even KG children knew that they should show consideration for others. Student-staff relationships were positive and students in all sections of the school felt that they could ask their teacher for help. Attendance and punctuality were both good.

Students' civic understanding and their understanding of Islam was acceptable. Many students acted as class monitors and made a small contribution towards organising events. Each day began with Qur'anic recitation. Throughout the school, there was a culture of appreciation of the Islamic way of life and respect for its value systems. Students were aware of the UAE heritage, appreciated traditional sports like camel racing and falconry, and enjoyed festivities.

Economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Primary and secondary students were proud of their national identity as citizens of Dubai. Many wanted to remain in the UAE and showed high aspirations for future careers. Students were able to talk in an interesting way about the city, its tourist attractions, popular sports, its local festivals and culture. Students knew of the need to care for the environment by cleaning streets, growing trees, conserving water and reducing pollution. They were aware of efforts to use "grey water" and were aware of Dubai's initiatives to adopt green policies.

## How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was acceptable in primary and secondary grades but unsatisfactory in the KG classes. Most teachers knew their subject well, except in primary Arabic lessons where teachers lacked the necessary vocabulary and pronunciation; some teachers also had insecure subject knowledge in mathematics. Lessons were clearly planned but the pace of learning was not maintained because teachers talked too much and allowed too little opportunity for students to work either on practical tasks or collaborate with each other. Questioning techniques used by the teachers did little to extend students' thinking or encourage them to explain themselves. Most teaching met the needs of the majority of students by simply being aimed at those of average ability. Teachers in the primary classes were too heavily reliant on textbooks and were not skilled enough at working with the subject matter in a lively or imaginative way. This affected the pace and quality of learning. For example, in lessons such as science, students had few opportunities to undertake practical work, experiment, or develop scientific skills. Relationships between staff and pupils were positive, but there was little room for student initiative. Examples of drama, creative and imaginative play, and group work were seen but were rare. In KG classes, the teaching did little to motivate or engage children.



Learning was acceptable at primary and secondary level but unsatisfactory in KG where students were not encouraged to learn through activity or exploration. Almost all students displayed positive attitudes to learning and were respectful to each other and teachers. They expressed themselves well in English and were able to offer opinions when opportunities arose. Students' answers in lessons indicated careful preparation at home but there was little project work on display and students were not able to relate their learning to the outside world.

Assessment was acceptable at primary and secondary level but unacceptable in KG. Organised procedures for record keeping by class teachers and supervisors, class tests and term end examinations provided information on gains made in understanding and knowledge. Reports were given to parents at the end of each term, and assessment data was the basis for oral feedback to parents and students at open days; this data was also used to identify students needing extra help. Most teachers in Grades 1 to 12 had a reasonable understanding of individual students' strengths and weaknesses but did not use this effectively enough to plan lessons or pitch work for students at the right level. The practice of allowing the whole class to chant answers meant that teachers could not assess which students had understood or learned anything in the lesson. Consequently, in many lessons, all students did the same work, which was too easy for the most able and too difficult for others. The impact of this was particularly noticeable in the KG classes where children showed a wide range of ability and skills on entry to school, but all did the same work irrespective of prior attainment. Students' notebooks were checked regularly in the primary classes, but teachers did not provide helpful feedback to help students understand what they needed to do to improve their work.

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

The curriculum was acceptable in the primary and secondary but unsatisfactory in the KG. It was generally broad based and balanced and followed the syllabus prescribed by the Indian Curriculum authorities, the National Council for Education Research and Training. Students had a good range of subject choice as it included many activities such as dancing, singing, art and physical education, as additional curricular activities. In secondary school, both science and commerce subjects were offered and students could choose any language from the five available: special English, Malayalam, Hindi, Urdu and Arabic. There was provision for both Kerala and CBSE board exams at the end of Grade 10 and 12.

The KG curriculum had serious weaknesses. Although it had a clear rationale it did not focus sufficiently on identifying a wide range of strategies and activities to make lessons interesting and relevant to the children. The curriculum was reviewed in the secondary school, only when needed, to meet the requirements of the public examinations. Competitions and celebrations during special assemblies were a regular part of the school calendar but these were not integrated well with subjects to make cross-curricular links and support experiential learning. Most students were free to participate in the literary, sporting and cultural events organised by the school.



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

Arrangements for protecting students were acceptable. The school buildings and facilities were well maintained, hygienic and clean. Students' safety was ensured during travel to and from the school by bus. Fire safety equipment was in place and most staff and students were aware of the procedures to be followed, although evacuation times fell slightly behind civil defence recommendations. Regular medical check-ups were carried out and health records were up to date. Students with special educational needs were identified but there was no specialist teacher available who could support learning and offer advice to teachers. Healthy lifestyle was promoted through displays and some physical activity. Child protection policies ensured that teachers were recruited with Consulate verification and Ministry approval. However, the procedures for keeping children safe by checking on the conduct of teachers were unsatisfactory.

The quality of support provided by the school was acceptable. The relationships between most staff and students were based on mutual respect. Teachers knew their students' circumstances well and could identify the social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs of the youngsters in their care. A few students approached teachers for advice on educational progress and choice of subjects for the board examinations. The school's behavioural policy was followed by most staff and contributed to a calm working atmosphere. Parents were informed, often verbally, about instances of misconduct. Students' overall progress was tracked through regular testing and assessment procedures. Attendance was recorded regularly. The school managed punctuality efficiently using the withdrawal of privileges as sanctions where appropriate.

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

Leadership and management were unsatisfactory. The Acting Principal, Deputy, Heads of Subject and Supervisors had a positive influence on the daily management of the school. The school responded to external demands such as those from examination boards but was largely reactive and, until the inspection, had not considered the need to change. Senior leaders were in temporary positions and did not have the mandate or capability to move the school forward and improve standards as the owner and Acting Principal undertook all decision-making. The Supervisors were keen to take on additional responsibilities, which they saw might lead to improvements in standards, but were constrained by a restricted job description and a demanding teaching load.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The lack of a rigorous, systematic process of self-evaluation has been a significant obstacle to school improvement. The school did not know its own strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and was unable to plan targets that were needed to improve the situation. Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents had a high regard for the school but a significant minority did not think the school had good links with parents. They would have liked to have had more discussions with other parents and their children's class teacher in a class group. Several were interested in becoming involved in school governance. The school sought to work cooperatively with parents of children that fell behind. The school had limited links with outside organisations and other schools.

Governance was unsatisfactory. There were no plans in place at the time of the inspection to ensure that an advisory board would be in place before the end of the academic year.

Existing resources such as the science laboratories were not well used and this was an ineffective use of a valuable resource. Although science lessons for the older students predominately took place in the laboratories, they were not used for carrying out individual scientific investigations. Most computers were out-dated and some were not working. The book stock in the library was very poor both in quantity and range of subjects covered and this restricted the ability of students to work independently. Teachers were well qualified and the majority had teaching qualifications but there were very limited opportunities for professional development through which to improve teaching and 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto: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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