

The Indian High School Inspection Report

Primary to Secondary

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 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 Zabeel, The Indian High School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from primary to secondary, aged 10 to 18 years. The school follows an Indian(CBSE) curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 5578 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school and thought that the school was led well. Most felt that the school kept their children safe and treated them fairly. They also thought that the quality of teaching was good or better although over a quarter felt that teaching was an aspect for improvement. Over half of the parents said that their children required a lot of additional help at home with their study. A minority of the parents considered that the school should improve activities and opportunities outside the classroom. Most thought that the school helped their children to choose a healthy lifestyle. Almost all felt that communication between school and parents was effective and most reported that the school responded appropriately to parental concerns. However, a significant minority did not feel that they were involved effectively enough in the work of the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of the school was good, with several outstanding features. The school continued to offer a good quality of education, founded on a very strong community feeling, high standards and high expectations of student achievement. It had established and supported a number of initiatives which were enriching the curriculum and students' learning experience. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the last report. Its actions and innovations had impacted very positively on students' experience within the school.

Attainment remained good, with outstanding achievement in mathematics and science. The quality of teaching and learning was good in the upper grades, but was acceptable in the lower grades. The quality of student learning was not consistent across the classrooms and the progressive development of learning skills across the stages was underdeveloped. The needs of all learners were not met fully; the higher attaining students were not sufficiently challenged and the lower attaining students were not fully supported on a daily basis. Management of this aspect of the school's work was not systematic or rigorous enough at all levels.

Key features of the school

- The high level of commitment of governors, senior managers, leaders and teachers to the school and its students and to ongoing school improvement;
- The very effective and systematic approaches in place to manage the school and its complex operations;
- The establishment of a range of initiatives designed to improve the quality of student learning;
- The outstanding attainment in mathematics and science;
- The very positive ethos of the community and the very high expectations of student achievement in all areas of school life;
- The outstanding behaviour and attitude of the students at all stages, and their positive relationships with teachers and each other;
- The focus of management on improving aspects of learning for all students but the need to manage this process more systematically at all levels;
- The high quality of the curriculum, including innovations such as CBSE-i and a wide range of extra-curricular activities;
- The high level of pastoral care provided and the very good quality of careers guidance;
- The very good partnership with parents;
- The very good quality of the school premises and facilities.

Recommendations

- Explore and agree a common understanding and what constitutes good learning;
- Continue to focus on improving the quality of student learning to ensure a consistency of learning across classrooms and a progressive and broad development of learning skills across the stages;
- Build on current teaching practice to address the learning needs of all students, supporting those experiencing difficulties and offering higher attaining students an appropriate challenge;
- Build on the strengths of the current system of self-evaluation and school planning, to achieve a more systematic and rigorous management of the improvement of learning, ensuring an active involvement of managers at all levels to achieve this aim;
- Enrich the quality of delivery of the programme for Islamic Education;
- Provide parents with clearer information about the school's priorities and involve them more in plans for further improvement.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were good in primary while in secondary attainment was acceptable and progress was good. By Grade 8, most students displayed good understanding of the basic facts such as the five Pillars of Islam. Most students showed good knowledge of Islamic history such as the Prophet Mohammed's emigration to Medina. Students could recite and memorise the required chapters of The Holy Qur'an. By Grade 12, Most students showed good skills in the recitation of The Holy Qur'an. They were also making good progress in developing their understanding of how to be good Muslims. However, their understanding of how to apply Islamic values to their lives was not strong.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were good in primary. In secondary school, attainment was acceptable and progress was good. Students in Grades 5 to 7 were able to converse well. They responded effectively to instructions, acted out role play and familiar drama and read aloud correctly. Their reading comprehension skills varied widely. They had good knowledge of familiar grammar structures such as pronouns and the concept of singular and plural. They could also differentiate between verbs and nouns. In Grades 8 and 9, the majority of students could read fluently. However, students' ability to extensively apply what they learnt, whether orally or in extended writing, was generally less well developed in all grades.

Attainment and progress in English were good across the school. By the end of Grade 8, students listened with care and could provide appropriate oral responses to teachers' questions, although few gave extended answers. They were able to participate in conversations, read fluently and understood texts. Students were less able to use grammar rules while working through exercises. In secondary grades, almost all students were articulate and able to express themselves imaginatively. They could read competently with expression and understanding. They grasped the intricacies of poetry and could use their own words to explain poetry that they had studied. Most were able to write for different purposes and audiences.

Attainment in mathematics was outstanding across all grades. Student progress was good in primary and outstanding from in secondary. Almost all students were able to manipulate numbers, algebraic expressions and equations with ease and could accurately construct geometrical shapes, diagrams and graphs. Most students had an excellent grasp of mathematical vocabulary and were able to use mathematical reasoning to make useful connections between different areas of the subject. Primary students were less able to solve problems mentally and their skills of estimation and approximation were underdeveloped.

Attainment and progress in science were outstanding. Workbooks showed that students were studying topics above age-related expectations. Tests showed most students made better than expected progress. Grade 8 students were able to define reflection and its laws and could discuss virtual and real images. Grade 10 students researched and presented a lesson on genetics, answering technically complex and varied questions. Grade 12 students used convex and concave lenses to calculate focal lengths and others used specialist apparatus to find the frequency of the AC mains electricity supply. Data showed most students attained scores above international CBSE standards.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. All students were motivated to learn and behaved very well in class and when moving around the school. They listened attentively to their teachers and to each other, and most participated enthusiastically during class discussions. Almost all students displayed excellent understanding of healthy living through participation in different types of sports and by avoiding non-healthy foods. School records showed a good attendance rate. Students were punctual in arriving at the beginning of the school day and in moving to their next class.

Students' Islamic, cultural and civic understanding was outstanding. They were aware of their responsibilities at school and in the community through participation in many clubs in and outside the school. Almost all students had a well-developed understanding and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and showed respect for different religions. Students saw this as a source of social and personal growth. They valued the importance of Islam in their lives.

Economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. Students showed excellent understanding of the factors influencing Dubai's development and of the contribution that they might make to its future success. They discussed professionally Dubai's progress and could identify many of its unique economic features. Students were fully aware of current environmental issues. They spoke clearly about appropriate solutions to improve environment and reduce pollution. Students engaged in many local and international initiatives related to the environment, such as a recycling project, Green Patrol, partnerships with DEWA, Nokia and Green Olympiad.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was broadly good in secondary and acceptable in primary. Teachers had secure subject knowledge, made links to previous lessons, shared the learning objectives of the lesson with students and gave clear explanations. Lessons were mostly well-planned and time management was effective. However, lessons were frequently over-directed and questioning tended to be closed. Teachers had good relationships with students and offered appropriate praise and encouragement. While teachers may have known students' strengths and weaknesses, lessons did not always meet the needs of all students, beyond some targeted questioning. Consequently, the lower attaining students were not as well supported and higher attaining students were not challenged sufficiently within lessons. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) and other resources in teaching was limited and interactive white boards were not used to their full capacity.

Students had positive attitudes to their learning, were well prepared for lessons and remained on task and motivated throughout their classes. They were able to make connections between previous and new learning and make links to real life situations. When students were required to work together in paired discussions and small group work they did so effectively but such learning opportunities were infrequent. Students were occasionally required to develop

enquiry and research skills and to work collaboratively to produce presentations. Whilst students clearly enjoyed active and hands on experiences, most of their learning was passive. There were very few opportunities for students to engage in higher order and critical thinking.

Assessment practices were inconsistent across the school; it was acceptable in primary and good in secondary. At the higher grade levels, where there was an increased focus on examination outcomes, assessment tended to be more rigorous and was used more effectively to support learning. In the lower grades, the use of assessment to improve learning and raise attainment was minimal. Generally, feedback to students about how to improve their work was limited. Students' notebooks were marked but diagnostic comments were lacking in most cases. Online feedback from formative and summative assessments identified areas of weakness but did not provide sufficient advice about the next steps they should take to improve their work. Student self-assessment and peer assessment had been recently introduced and whilst this was a positive step, the full potential of these forms of assessment had not yet been fully exploited. Nevertheless, the schools had analysed the results from these forms of assessment and were beginning to use the outcomes to inform some planning at whole school and department level.

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

The school's curriculum was outstanding overall, with a very clear philosophy and rationale. It was broad and balanced and offered a significant range of choices for students in the later grades. It also demonstrated good continuity and progression, with appropriate focus on ensuring good transitions. It ensured a sound balance between academic excellence and extra-curricular activities. Consequently, the curriculum provided students with a holistic education and opportunities for high performance in the external examinations. The review and enrichment of the curriculum was effective in meeting the needs of almost all students. In order to meet the changing needs for an international education, the school had commendably introduced the CBSE-i curriculum. The opportunities provided through the skills-based and resource-based learning initiatives enabled students to extend their learning effectively. Facilities such as the Business Centre gave a real context to students' learning. Cross-curricular links were well established. The successful student participation in various events at national, and international levels, demonstrated significant continuous enhancement of learning. The school had established meaningful and purposeful links with the outside world, both local and global. It successfully supported several charities. The school had also established a link with a school for Arabic language enrichment to improve teaching and learning of Arabic. There was an appropriate emphasis on raising students' awareness of healthy living. The curriculum and programmes of work of the senior school were carefully drawn up through collaboration between the subject coordinators, to take previous learning into account.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of the school's arrangements for health and safety was outstanding. The students were well supervised and their well-being was a priority for the school. Transport arrangements were safe and students were monitored when boarding the bus. A child protection policy was in place and medical provisions met the requirements of the Ministry of Health. Fire drills were carried out by the school and the evacuation plans were executed according to Government guidelines. The school supported healthy living effectively by promoting it through, for example, the sale of healthy food in the canteen, by displaying informative posters in the corridors and through key messages at assembly. The school also emphasised physical activities and sports to promote and reinforce healthy living. The risk management policies of the school ensured that the students were protected at all times.

The quality of support and guidance was outstanding. The school employed professionals such as doctors, nurses and counsellors to support the emotional well-being of the students. Careers counselling was an important and effective feature of the school. It ensured that the students received guidance according to their interests and aptitudes. The programme for special educational needs was in place and differentiated activities were planned. Staff-student relationships were exemplary and the school cared about the holistic development of its students. The tracking system enabled the students to understand their academic performance and, also the progress they were making. The school had systems in place to monitor attendance and to follow up on student absence.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The overall quality of leadership and management was outstanding. The Chief Executive Officer gave a very strong lead to the school, always emphasising the highest achievement for all and the need for continual improvement. He had initiated and facilitated a number of innovative developments. He was very well supported by the principals who were committed, insightful and effective managers in their sections. Supervisors and heads of department were empowered to manage their areas and did so very effectively. While leadership was very effective in most areas, management of the improvement of learning was not systematic or rigorous enough to ensure consistency across classrooms and a progressive development of learning skills across the stages. The roles of leaders were not defined clearly enough and there was not a common understanding amongst leaders of what constitutes good learning.

Self-evaluation was good. The school monitored and evaluated its development in a systematic way. Since the last inspection, the school had established core groups to monitor areas aspects of the work of the school. Teachers' classroom practice and planners were regularly evaluated and professional development was a clear component of individual teacher improvement. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the last report. However, the focus on planning and systematic monitoring for improvement of students' learning skills, was not sufficiently prioritised and did not involve all stakeholders.

The partnership with parents was outstanding. There were very good levels of communication, supported by the effective Parents' Communication Centre. Parents could access information online using the students' academic tracker. Parents had a range of opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. The school had established a Parents' Focus Group to represent their views. It had set up purposeful links with the community, including supporting charities. Nevertheless, not all parents were fully informed about the school's priorities nor were their views sought on improvements to the school.

Governance was outstanding. The school's governing body, led by a very committed chairman, was well-established and experienced, and demonstrated a clear focus on high achievement and improvement. The structure of governance at different committee levels enabled an appropriate balance between offering focused support and advice and holding the school accountable.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Teachers were suitably qualified, many with significant experience. The creation of some innovative learning areas and supporting-staff roles was assisting improvement in learning in areas such as the CBSE-i area and Learning Square. However, ongoing improvement in the teaching of Arabic was not fully supported. A significant team of ancillary staff ensured the smooth running of the school. The premises were outstanding. The spacious campus was well laid out and maintained. Sports facilities were excellent, as were the school cafe, library and Parent Communication Centre. The school had created some further innovative areas such as the Business and Science Centres. The school had good provision of ICT equipment, but its use as an integrated part of learning was not monitored as carefully as it should be.

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:	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Acceptable
Progress over time	Good	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:	Primary	Secondary
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	Good	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Good	Good

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

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

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

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Primary	Secondary
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:	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Good

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

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

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

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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