

Gulf Indian High 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.

The Gulf Indian High School 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 students' 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 Al Garhoud, the Gulf Indian High School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged from three years to 17 years. The school follows an Indian curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,990 students on roll. The school reported an acceptable rate of student attendance for the last academic session. The Principal had been in post for a relatively short time.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Overwhelmingly, the parents were very happy with the school, almost all agreeing that their children liked attending it, that the students' behaviour was good and that their children were treated fairly. Parents were very happy with the progress their children were making in English, but a significant minority were less sure about how well they were doing in Islamic Education. Almost all believed the teaching was good and that the staff expected their children to work hard and do their best in school. A minority of parents were unsure about the quality of the school's links with the local community.

How well does the school perform overall?

The Gulf Indian High School provided an acceptable standard of education, with some good features. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education was good. The students' attainment and progress in all other subjects were at least acceptable, with the exception of Arabic, in which standards were unsatisfactory in all age groups. Most students spoke English fluently, and listened and read to good effect in most lessons. Those who took examinations in Grades 10 and 12 reached the expected levels. The attitudes and behaviour of all the students were good. They were respectful and

courteous to their peers, staff and visitors alike. They understood the influence of Islam on their daily lives, and were appreciative of the hospitality shown to them by their Emirati neighbours. All students were proud to be citizens of Dubai, believing it had much to offer them in terms of employment and a good standard of living.

The quality of teaching and learning was acceptable across the school, but there were inconsistencies between age groups and subjects. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. A few lessons were not pitched at the correct level for the students as too little was expected of them and, consequently, they did not make enough progress. Students' work was neat and meticulous, and they spoke confidently in lessons. Their written work was usually marked, but the quality of the marking was inconsistent. Although teachers kept the results of tests in order to identify students who needed extra help, the support provided lacked rigour. The curriculum was of acceptable quality but lessons were too short to be used for the full range of effective teaching and learning approaches. The arrangements for the health and safety of the students were good. All staff took their duty of care very seriously and health and safety procedures were followed thoroughly and precisely. The buildings and facilities were safe, secure and well maintained. The school promoted healthy living in science lessons, but did not always provide healthy food, games or activities during break times.

The quality of leadership and management of the school was acceptable. The newly appointed Principal, senior staff and board members had both vision and a strong personal commitment to the health, welfare and success of the children. They had made a significant impact over a very short period of time, and parents and students spoke highly of a school that was now well ordered and disciplined. There was clear evidence of the leaders' and managers' capacity to make further improvements, although they lacked the expertise with which to carry out some aspects of their roles effectively.

Key features of the school

- Good attainment and progress in Islamic Education;
- Unsatisfactory attainment and progress in Arabic;
- The outstanding behaviour and attitudes of the students throughout the school;
- The lack of opportunities for students to write creatively in English and to plan and carry out investigations in science lessons;
- The limited curriculum, which was not meeting the needs of some groups of students;
- The outstanding arrangements to ensure the students' health and safety;
- The capacity of the Principal and senior management team to improve the school.

Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress in Arabic;
- Improve the quality of the students' independent writing by providing them with opportunities to write for a wider variety of purposes and audiences;
- Plan science lessons to include opportunities for students to carry out their own investigations;
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students;
- Ensure that leaders at all levels have opportunities for further professional development.

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

Students' attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education. Whilst most students at Grade 4 had memorised parts of The Holy Qur'an accurately, a few demonstrated outstanding skills in recitation, with exemplary pronunciation and intonation. They knew a good deal about The Prophet's (PBUH) family tree and his early life. Students in Grade 7 displayed good knowledge of The Prophet's (PBUH) companions, their life and the impact of their work in spreading the true word of Islam. They demonstrated good understanding of the importance of the five daily prayers. In the secondary school, students showed a deep understanding of Islamic principles, values and Islamic faith.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were unsatisfactory. In the early grades, students were able to identify and copy the letters at the beginning, middle and end of words. They demonstrated good handwriting and were able to repeat new words clearly. By Grade 4 a minority of students could answer simple questions and used pictures as an aid to creating stories. However, their reading skills were underdeveloped. Most of the older students could read and understand text, but their oral responses lacked fluency and accuracy. Whilst the older students could express meanings from Arabic texts in English, they could not use Arabic as a means of communication. Students across the school had poorly developed skills in writing.

The students' attainment and progress in English were acceptable overall, but the quality of their writing was less impressive than their reading, speaking and listening skills. In the Kindergarten, the children could converse in English and could read and write simple words accurately. At the primary and secondary stages, the students could read and speak fluently, but their written work lacked flair and creativity. Students at both stages participated in discussions, demonstrated good understanding of texts and expressed their thoughts with clarity. Students' reading skills were improved by regular visits to the library, but across the school there were too few opportunities for students to write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

In mathematics, the attainment and progress of students were acceptable. Though all passed the Grade 10 examinations, only a small proportion of students achieved the highest grades and proceeded to Grade 12. In the Kindergarten, children were able to use number and identify everyday shapes correctly and as expected for their age. Students in the primary age range made acceptable progress. Their work demonstrated growing confidence in manipulating algebraic expressions, calculating areas and volumes of regular and irregular solids, and investigating shapes practically in

geometry. Building on earlier work, secondary age students developed a mature approach to problem solving and extended their skills in algebra to include proofs of trigonometrical identities and calculations, using both differential and integral calculus.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable. In the Kindergarten children demonstrated basic understanding of their immediate environment and could name domestic and wild animals. By the end of Grade 5 most students could identify plants, describe seasons, explain the effect of force and classify levers in theoretical terms. By Grade 8, most had a good knowledge of human systems and could describe the functions of most organs in detail. In the secondary school, students showed good use of scientific terminology and could solve problems using complex formulae. They could carry out prescribed experiments but did not have opportunities to conduct independent investigations. Most had a secure and in-depth knowledge of the subject; however, only a few students could analyse and apply what they had learned.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The students' personal and social development was good. All students were very well behaved and courteous at all times. They were punctual to school and ready for the next lessons, even in the lower grades. Students showed consideration towards each other and respected school rules. Older students assumed responsibilities as school councillors and house secretaries and took great pride in discharging their duties. They enjoyed organising various literary and cultural events and demonstrated leadership when training younger students. Attendance was acceptable.

Most students showed appreciation of Islam's influence in their lives. For instance, they welcomed the ban on public smoking and drinking and said they avoided eating in public as a mark of respect in Ramadan. Most were particularly appreciative of Arab hospitality and regarded Dubai as their home.

Students across the school took pride in Dubai's success story, describing in detail its national heritage and its architectural marvels such as the Burj al Arab and the Burj Khalifa. Older students attributed Dubai's development to the economic prosperity of the petroleum industry and the leaders' vision. They believed Dubai had much to offer expatriates in terms of employment as well as a good standard of living. Most could discuss with clarity the effect of the recession on the economy and how it affected their lives. Most students understood the need to conserve resources and reduce pollution, and they applauded Dubai's environmental initiatives. They welcomed the eco-friendly Metro and contributed to sustainability by recycling batteries, cans and mobile phones.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching in the school was acceptable overall, although it was inconsistent across the grades and in the different subjects. Most teachers had good subject knowledge and were able to share it at an appropriate level with the students. Lessons were effectively planned in most classes and had a clear sense of direction. The teachers made adequate use of resources, although the range was limited and there was no integration of information and communication technology (ICT). In the best lessons, teachers used good questioning skills to check understanding, initiate discussion, and relate concepts to prior learning and real life experiences. Strategies for active learning, collaborative

work and the development of critical thinking skills were inconsistent. Few teachers made efforts to encourage independent learning among students through discussion and debate.

Students were enthusiastic and involved in their learning but were not provided with enough challenges in lessons. They demonstrated good factual knowledge in most subjects, even though they appeared to be passive in lessons. They were able to work in groups when given the opportunity. However, when tested at the end of the lesson, the majority could not apply their knowledge in an unfamiliar context. A few students could ask their own questions of the teacher, which was evidence of their beginning to think for themselves and make connections with their own lives and to their prior learning. Students had a good understanding of ICT but used it to enhance their learning in only a very limited way. Progress during lessons was acceptable in most classes because of the teachers' low expectations of the students. The students lacked the skills to be able to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts or to transfer what they had learned from one context to another.

Assessment was used as a tool to establish the level of understanding achieved by the students at the end of most lessons. However, the approach was mainly based on testing students' knowledge of facts rather than evaluating the students' strengths and weaknesses. Students did not yet have opportunities to evaluate their own or others' work. Assessment data was regularly used to analyse the trends in attainment. This information was then used to organise additional reinforcement activities for the students in order to improve their performance. The students' written work was marked regularly but the feedback they received sometimes did not include guidance on how to improve it. Teachers did not use the assessment data systematically to plan their lessons to meet the needs of individual students.

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. It ensured that all Ministry of Education and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) requirements were covered to a sufficient depth. The school used the National Council for Education and Research review and evaluation procedures to update and amend curriculum content, although the results of this were not well documented. Lessons were too short to enable teachers to employ the full range of effective teaching and learning approaches. The curriculum content enabled students to build on what they had learned in previous grades but many teachers did not interpret the CBSE syllabuses imaginatively and, consequently, students' progress was often less than it could have been. The provision for children with special educational needs was insufficient to ensure their progress. These students did not have appropriate individual learning plans tailored to their needs. The curriculum had too few extra-curricular activities to encourage students' social and personal development. However, an interesting and positive feature was the student-driven co-curricular programme involving creative arts, physical education, debating clubs and cultural events. This programme helped students to develop their leadership and learning in different contexts. For example, the debating society enabled some students to extend their communication skills and gain confidence in addressing a range of audiences. The school's use of National Day was particularly successful and culminated in two local awards. The school used the

local community to enrich learning. For example, among other excursions into the locality, the Kindergarten visited the fruit and vegetable market and older students took part in the Dubai beach clean-up programme.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Provision for the students' health and safety was good. Procedures to ensure students' safety at the start and end of the school day and on buses were outstanding and ensured an orderly and punctual beginning, middle and end to the day. However, procedures for regular risk assessments were not formalised and records of regular fire practices and evacuation times had not been kept, although a certificate of approval had been given by the Civil Defence with regard to the most recent fire practice. Facilities were acceptable and the building and site were kept in good repair and provided a safe, secure and hygienic environment for students and staff. The clinic kept excellent records and gave very good health care as needed. Whilst Kindergarten children learned about how to wash themselves and clean their teeth, a healthy life style was not actively promoted in the older classes. The school had informal procedures for child protection but lacked a formal written policy.

The school provided good support and guidance for the students. Relationships in the school were very good and mutually respectful. The counsellor gave good guidance to students and was available at any time if they had concerns. Although behaviour was excellent, the school had no explicit policy for behaviour management, rewards and sanctions to inform new staff of agreed systems. The tracking of students' academic progress and personal development and the identification of students with special educational needs were acceptable. Attendance records were kept well and were available to parents at any time via the intranet. Records of punctuality were well managed by the receptionist.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. The newly appointed Principal had already made an impact on the life of the school. Parents, staff and students spoke highly of the improvements he had made in such a short time. In particular, they valued the new approach to discipline, which was evident in the smooth running, and day-to-day organisation of the school. Performance management was used to identify staff who needed support and the Principal acted swiftly when such issues arose. The senior leadership team were aware that further improvements could be made and demonstrated the capacity to make these improvements.

Processes for self-evaluation were acceptable. Whilst the Principal valued contributions from staff, students and parents, there were no formal procedures for checking on all aspects of school life. Minutes from meetings accurately identified the school's strengths along with areas for improvement. Consequently, the school had recently written a plan that identified appropriate priorities for development. Senior leaders were monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. However, they lacked the training and expertise with which to carry out these aspects of their roles effectively.

The school's partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. The school informed parents on matters relating to their children through a variety of means including text messages,

internet and newsletters. Many parents attended parent-teacher meetings and spoke highly of the students' science and art exhibitions, which they believed enhanced the quality of learning. They were aware of recent changes, acknowledging the improvements brought about by the senior leadership team. However, their views were not actively sought and they had little knowledge of the school's priorities for improvement.

The school had a governing body who were representative of the school community and who were actively involved in the day-to-day running of the school. The Director of the Board was a visible presence throughout the school day and available for consultation with staff and students. Board members had a good knowledge of the requirements of the curriculum, but were not yet fully involved in the process of self-evaluation. Of particular note, and commendable, was the aid they provided for families who were in need of financial support.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Most staff had the expertise to teach their subjects, although there were inequalities in the provision for girls and boys. For example, there was no physical education teacher for the girls and, consequently, they did not have sport lessons. The premises were adequate, but classrooms were small and restricted opportunities for active learning. Whilst there were enough appropriate textbooks, there were few additional resources in classrooms to enhance learning. The library was adequately stocked with a variety of appropriate books. However, students had few opportunities to use the library to develop as independent learners because they were restricted to timetabled library sessions and were unable to borrow books. Recent improvements in the provision for ICT had not yet begun to make an impact on the quality of 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:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Kindergarten	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 12
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	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
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: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

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

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