

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Heritage Launches its IB School in Gurugram

SPOTLIGHT | Aug 17, 2020, 13:57 IST



Heritage Xperiential Learning School (HXLS), the top-ranked CBSE school in the country, has recently launched its international campus in DLF Phase V, Gurugram. It is just a stone's throw from the DLF golf course, with easy access for both Gurugram and South Delhi residents. This is welcome news for parents from Delhi NCR, as there is a serious dearth of

good international schools in the region.

It is a well-established fact that a multi-disciplinary curriculum, based on 21st-century skills and pattern of assessments and examinations, that international schools offer prepares students much better for jobs of the future. However, unlike Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad where there is a significant shift towards International education, Delhi NCR has witnessed a slow movement and very few schools offer it here.

HXLS is no stranger to the international programme, having successfully run it alongside the CBSE curriculum since 2015. In addition, it has the superior advantage of having pioneered an experiential learning and project-based, expeditionary pedagogy in India, which is the ideal foundation for international programmes. In 2004, HXLS decided to get rid of textbooks, uniforms and examinations until Grade 8 in divergence with the prevalent practice at that time. While India's new National Education Policy is now emphasising the importance of aspects such as critical thinking and 21st-century skills, HXLS has been running a curriculum based on learning around these best practices for over 15 years.

Mr. Manit Jain, co-founder of HXLS, observes, "Given our rich experience of real, meaningful, project-based learning, International Baccalaureate (IB) was a natural fit for us. While we have completely revamped the CBSE curriculum, we still have to operate within the constraints of national frameworks, which sometimes become limiting. IB would truly make the spirit of our work come alive, in a manner that we have always intended. Our work is based on the Expeditionary Learning Schools in the US, the premier experiential learning organisations in the world." Expeditionary Learning Schools are inspired by the work of Kurt Hahn, who was also the founding head of the world's first IB school, the United World College, in Wales. HXLS, with its background in expeditionary learning, is thus embracing the true essence of an IB education.



The Heritage international campus is uniquely designed to dovetail spaces with the curriculum to maximise learning. Spaces are treated as the third teacher and learning is supported by a domain that includes physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials. The social environment includes activities and social interactions, and the inner or spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions and imaginations held by the child.

The spaces are specially designed to be flexible so that they can be responsive to the changing needs of children and the curriculum, and allow modifications according to lesson plans and classroom delivery. These free-flowing, modular spaces allow children to think freely and to expand their imagination. They provide the experience of collaborative large-group and small-group activities while small nooks and corners enable solitary activity. Minimal barriers between the outdoors and indoors enhance the feeling of space and closeness to nature.

Equal emphasis is placed on ensuring that each child grows into a self-aware, conscientious world citizen, a learner for life, and a creative, connected and collaborative problem solver. This enables the child to understand the balanced growth required in different domains: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative. Students are supported to develop their habits of work and learning. These habits transcend any single curriculum area. They help students to live and breathe the school's Dharmic principles and the meaning of the proprietary Human Framework, specially established to nurture joyful, healthy, resilient, and socially responsible individuals. The school also integrates maker-centred learning as a pedagogical best practice.

When we spoke to some parents in Delhi NCR, they shared their misgivings about international programmes. Their primary concern seems to be that Indian universities do not accept international school students. Mr Spokey Wheeler, Director and Head, International School, addresses this concern: "On the contrary, some of the top universities in India prefer international programme students. In fact, 43% of all IB graduates go into Indian universities. Apart from this, international programmes are recognised by the Association of Indian Universities, Universities of Mumbai, Delhi and Pune, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies and Gujarat University. Globally too, international programmes open the doors of opportunities in the US, UK, Canada, Australia, France, Scandinavia, Singapore and Dubai."

The first IB school was set up in India in 1976, and Cambridge has been in India for over 50 years. Ms. Yogesh Dhingra, academic mentor for Heritage and former Director, academics for Dhirubhai Ambani International School, explains, "With a proliferation of international schools, an entire ecosystem has come up around international programmes with better faculty and investment in teacher education. As a result, some schools have performed exceptionally well; for instance, Dhirubhai Ambani International School has one of the highest average IB scores in the world." She adds that parents should keep in mind that while choosing a school for their child, it is important to understand the ethos of the school to gauge how well it will perform on international programmes.



International programmes address the learning needs of today's world where merely content-based education is obsolete when students can access content through technology. Students need to learn how to learn, wherein research, communication and collaboration become crucial with value being given to academic honesty. According to Mr. Vishnu Karthik, a cognitive neuroscience graduate from Harvard University, the world is a completely different place today. "The advancement of technology has transformed the way we learn, work, live and communicate. It is estimated that children entering school now will eventually work in careers that are unheard of today," he elaborates. Thus, many parents' argument that a conventional education system, which was good enough for them, should be fine for their children as well becomes redundant.

It is important to recognise that international schools focus on and develop crucial skills for employment and employability such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, leadership and adaptability while placing equal value on each student's cultural roots. While the country's antiquated schooling system slowly learns to adapt to the requirements of a rapidly transforming world, schools like HIXS shows hope in bringing a model of education that embraces the future, here and now.

Disclaimer: This article has been produced on behalf of Eduxa Education by Times Internet's Spotlight team