

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Royal Dubai School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Royal Dubai School

Location	Al Mizhar 1
Type of school	Private
Website	www.royaldubaischool.com
Telephone	04-288-6499
Address	PO Box 121310, Dubai
Principal	Kevin Murray Loft
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Foundation Stage to Year 6
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	958
Largest nationality group of Students	British
Number of Emirati students	121 (13%)
Dates of the inspection	5th to 7th November 2012

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The context of the school

GEMS Royal Dubai School is situated in Al Mizhar and opened in 2005. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total enrolment of 958 students, aged from three to 11 years.

The school followed the English National Curriculum. There were 42 class teachers, plus the Principal and a senior leadership team of five. In addition, there were 22 teachers in specialist departments. Students were grouped into 14 classes at Foundation Stage, 12 classes in Key Stage 1 and 14 in Key Stage 2.

One hundred and twenty-one students, about 13 per cent, were Emirati, with 58 of them in the Foundation Stage. Over 50 different nationalities were represented in the school's population. At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in his first year, having been appointed in September 2012. Twenty teachers were also in their first year at the school.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The children's outstanding progress in all key subjects in Foundation Stage and the outstanding progress made in science across the school;
- Students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour within a harmonious international community;
- The outstanding curriculum which engaged students, promoted their love of learning and enriched their experiences;
- The high quality of support for students, including those with special educational needs;
- The outstanding leadership and strong capacity for making further improvements.

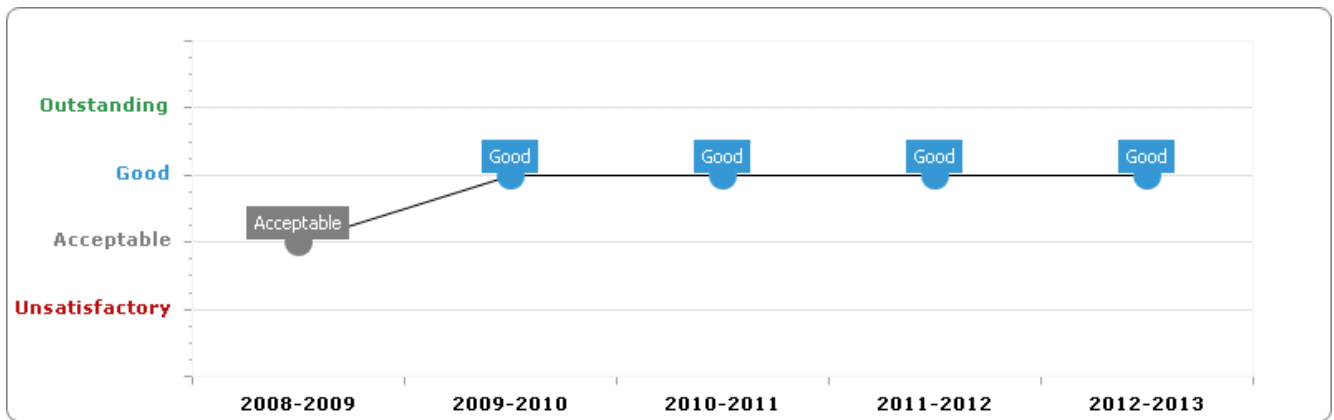
Recommendations

- Further improve students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Extend the successful student learning that is evident in the best lessons across the school;
- Refine the monitoring of teaching to focus on the quality of students' learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good progress was made improving students' progress, particularly in the Foundation Stage;
- The curriculum was improved, particularly in regard to students' understanding of Islam;
- Leadership had been further distributed, strengthening the school's self-evaluation and sustaining improvements made during changes in personnel;
- Good headway had been made in using information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance students' learning, internal communication and links with parents.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good
Arabic as a first language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good
Arabic as an additional language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good
English		
Attainment	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good
Mathematics		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good
Science		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Children's attainment in the key subjects in the Foundation Stage was good. Most children in the Foundation Stage 2 cohort were working above the expected levels in language and numeracy, and developing good early scientific skills such as making predictions. In the primary phase, attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable. Most Muslim students had adequate levels of knowledge and skills. Students in lower primary were able to list the pillars of Islam correctly, and knew major events in the lives of prophets and messengers appropriately. Students studying Arabic as a first language had acceptable listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, although their use of Standard Arabic was not well developed. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was good or better. In the higher primary years, students' attainment was well above curriculum expectations in reading and in line with expectations in writing. Students' strong attainment in oral language skills underpinned their good attainment in mathematics and science. Students could quickly recall basic number facts, such as multiplication tables, and apply them confidently when tackling mathematical problems. Most students could tell the difference between living and non-living things and understood living processes. They had good knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties. They knew about forces such as gravity and electricity. Most of the older students understood the concept of a fair test.

Children's progress through the Foundation Stage was outstanding in all three key subjects. The high quality of teaching and a vibrant, language-rich environment for learning was an important factor in their progress. Many children had very little English as they started school but soon began to recognise letters and learn the sounds they make. They rapidly learned to count and do simple calculations. They quickly developed understanding of basic scientific ideas, such as the five senses and their functions. In Islamic Education in the primary years, most Muslim students made significant progress in developing their recitation skills, and improved their knowledge of Islam's rituals appropriately. Most students in the upper primary years made good progress improving their listening and speaking skills in Arabic. Most students made the expected progress in reading and writing; around half made better than expected progress. The strongest progress was in reading, with students eager and able to use the many motivational opportunities provided to read for a variety of purposes. Students acquired very secure understanding of a range of numerical concepts and were able to apply it when solving practical mathematical problems. Students' progress in science was outstanding. This was particularly evident in the rapid gains made in their understanding of chemical and physical changes. As they moved through the school, they were increasingly able to explore scientific ideas methodically and independently.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students made similar progress to other students in most respects. Their attainment, to a large extent, depended on how long they had been in the school. Most who had been in school for two years or more were reaching the expectations for their ages. A significant factor in their achievement was the meticulous records kept by each class teacher of their individual progress. These included assessment data, background notes, key priorities, the support provided and samples of work. Parents were successfully encouraged to support their children's learning. The students benefited from the schools excellent liaison and translation arrangements.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Students and adults interacted in a calm and trusting atmosphere that was informal but purposeful. Attendance over the last full term was good. Students had an excellent understanding of the components of a healthy lifestyle and could explain the impact of personal choices on their own well-being. Students demonstrated good appreciation of Islam and had appropriate knowledge about the influence of Islam on the local society. They could explain the significance of 2nd December as well. Most students had good knowledge about their own cultures, and adequate knowledge of the local culture and traditions. Students had good understanding of their responsibilities as members of the community. The students' council organised charity events, and collaborated with parents to prepare Eid gift boxes for the support staff. Students' work and projects reflected their positive work ethic. Most students had strong environmental understanding; they participated in recycling events and could explain the concepts well; they understood the issue of the depleting ozone layer.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good in the primary phase and outstanding in Foundation Stage. Almost all teachers had strong subject knowledge and planned exciting lessons with practical and collaborative work to engage and motivate students. They created attractive learning environments and used class time effectively. High quality resources were deployed to enable students to develop deep understanding of abstract concepts through a multi-sensory approach. Most notable was the way in which information and communications technology was used to enhance and extend learning. Teachers engaged students in meaningful discussions and their skilful questioning promoted higher order thinking. In the best lessons, they acted as facilitators.

They allowed students to discover and learn for themselves, intervening when necessary to assess progress and challenge their thinking. A few teachers stuck rigidly to a plan and were overly directive, instead of allowing learning to take its own path. In a few lessons teachers' expectations of what students could do were inappropriate and so progress was limited.

The quality of students' learning was good in the primary classes and outstanding in Foundation Stage. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners who rose to a challenge and took responsibility for their own learning. They had good understanding of the skills needed to be successful learners. They reflected on these at the start and end of lessons and used them to identify next steps in learning. Most students could work well independently but they particularly enjoyed working with each other, when they could share ideas and support one another's learning. They embraced practical activities, which deepened their understanding and enabled them to see the relevance of their learning to the real world. They applied existing knowledge and skills to extend their learning to other subjects. Students were enthusiastic about discovering things for themselves. They made good use of books and information and communications technology to research various topics. Most students needed to develop their ability to select relevant information for projects.

The assessment of learning was outstanding in Foundation Stage and good in the primary phase. Foundation Stage parents provided a wealth of information about their children, which enabled teachers to plan effectively for their needs and interests. Detailed teachers' observations of children at work and play were used to extend learning and to target additional support when necessary. Foundation Stage records were passed to the children's primary teachers and their progress was carefully tracked. Most teachers used this information very effectively to plan, so that all students could make progress from their starting points. They adapted their plans according to what had been learnt in the previous lesson. A few teachers misjudged what students could do and progress was slower. Almost all students were involved in assessing their own progress and identifying next steps in learning. Written feedback in books was generally constructive and provided students with advice and guidance on how to improve their work. Although systems were in place to provide accurate attainment benchmarks against international standards, the analysis of rates of progress was less reliable.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was of outstanding quality in both phases. The cross-curricular approach had provided a holistic and enriching approach to students' learning, inspiring their interest with memorable experiences. Recent improvements had given students and their parents more choice and involvement in topics of study, which were carefully linked to students' lives and personal interests. Transition arrangements between Foundation Stage and primary had been significantly improved. All teachers were involved in the regular and systematic review of the curriculum. Continuous development had resulted in a very broad and balanced curriculum. It was carefully planned to meet the needs of all students in their personal development and academic achievement. However, the level of challenge for some students in Arabic and Islamic Education needed further refinement. There was a wealth of exciting opportunities for students to develop independent learning and critical thinking skills, as well as the innovative use of information and communications technology. The curriculum was enriched by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and events which stimulated and enhanced students' learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all students were outstanding. All sections of the school were well monitored and excellent procedures were in place to ensure that students were safe and secure at all times. The school premises were in excellent condition and exceptionally well maintained. Fire safety procedures were regularly reviewed and risk assessments undertaken. These resulted in secure administration of health and safety measures in all parts of the school. Transport facilities were of high quality, with very good safety features included. Good medical facilities were in place. The recruitment of a full-time medical doctor with multilingual skills added ease of access for students. A healthy lifestyle was promoted throughout the school in many ways, including regular health check-ups of students, monitoring of food in the canteen and lunch boxes and curriculum promotion. Teachers and support staff were aware of and implemented policies in relation to child protection, personal safety and bullying.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Almost all staff members were accessible and regularly approached by students when personal issues arose. Very positive staff-student rapport was evident throughout the school. A culture of mutual respect had inspired confidence and promoted trust. Both teachers and students displayed great pride in their school. Students' attendance and punctuality were well managed. Advice and support was given to students transferring to all levels within the school and to continue at the next phase in other schools.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The early identification of students with special education needs was a priority of the school. Early identification was achieved by a range of tests at admission and by careful monitoring of students' progress in all classes. Planning for students with special educational needs was evident in all classes and a graded approach of assistance was implemented when necessary. This included individual learning plans, in-class assistance and the use of specialist teachers. A good compliment of specialist teachers and assistants was available to enhance this process. Good monitoring of the progress of the students was in place in the majority of classrooms. In a minority of classes the implementation of plans for students required much greater rigour.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The effective senior leadership team had played a pivotal role in ensuring continuity during the change in principals. This meant that the efforts for improvement were not interrupted. Leaders at all levels had high expectations. There was a shared vision and commitment to ensuring that all students did as well as they could. Since his appointment, the new principal had empowered the leadership team. He had increased its membership to include wider representation, including a revolving role as 'key innovator.' Senior leaders and all teachers valued the encouragement of the principal in suggesting ideas, trying them out, and reviewing their effectiveness. This was exemplified by the improved provision for Islamic Education and Arabic and by a school-wide approach to promoting students' environmental understanding.

Self-evaluation was good and involved students, teachers, parents and members of the board. All members of staff were systematically involved in regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the school. This included daily reflection by individual teachers, regular year group and subject meetings and whole school conferences. Comprehensive action plans were drawn up and fed into the school's overall improvement plan. The school had revised the criteria for evaluating the quality of teaching, but judgements were somewhat generous and focused too much on teachers' performance rather than on students' learning. The school had a wealth of assessment data and used it to compare students' performance against international benchmarks. However, a succinct and accurate analysis of progress through the primary phase was not so well established. This meant that performance reviews were not always informed by valid information on the rates of students' progress.

Partnerships with parents and the community was outstanding. Communication between home and school was excellent. In addition to formal communication through newsletters, the school's website and written reports, there were ample opportunities for informal contact. The school had a full-time parental relations executive building links with parents. An Arabic and Islamic liaison officer was available to both parents and teachers as a resource and key link to the department. A community café was used extensively by parents following drop-offs in the mornings and before pick-ups in the afternoon.

Governance of the school was good. The leadership team received good support from the Corporate Management Board and the associated network. This was pivotal in helping to ensure the school's on-going effectiveness during the change in principal. Regular monitoring by the board provided useful feedback and helped school leaders identify strengths and areas for development. Parents were able to express their views through the full-time parent liaison officer and appreciated the open-door policy, although they did not have formal representation at the corporate level.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources remained outstanding. Teachers and support staff were well qualified for the roles they were in. New staff members were inducted very effectively so they could make a rapid start. All staff members benefited from extensive training opportunities which enabled them to hone their skills. The school was extensively resourced; for example, each teacher in the Foundation Stage had two assistants. Computer resources were of a high specification. They were used effectively to support learning; for example, students had access to tablet computers at any time.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	241	33%
	Last year	168	31%
Teachers	65		100%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

About a third of parents responded to the survey, similar to last year's response. The majority of parents were happy with all aspects of the school. They particularly liked the school's welcoming family atmosphere and the fact that children from a wide range of backgrounds got along so well together. Although a few parents would have liked more formal reports during the year, most believed that they were well informed about how their children were getting on. They appreciated the easy, informal contact that could be made with teachers and senior staff members. They were satisfied with the quality of teaching. They thought that the school cared for their children and that the staff had their children's safety and welfare as a priority. Parents remarked on the very positive effect of the new principal since his appointment. They reported that their comments were valued, and when appropriate, acted upon.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

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

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