

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Wellington International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Wellington International School

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.wellingtoninternationalschool.com
Telephone	04 3484999
Address	PO Box 37486, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Mrs. Mel Curtis
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,207
Number of Emirati students	19 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 8th to Thursday 12th January 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Sufouh, GEMS Wellington International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years. Currently the school roll is 2,207. The school follows the English National Curriculum from Foundation Stage to Year 11. Students were entered for IGCSE and GCSE at the end of the secondary phase. In the post-16 phase, students followed the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme.

There were 164 full-time teachers, including the Principal and the senior leadership team, and five part-time teachers. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 66 teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 77 classes. Around 85 different nationalities were represented among the student population. Fewer than one per cent of the roll were Emirati students.

At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in her third year in post and 54 teachers were newly appointed.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Outstanding

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

GEMS Wellington International School provided an outstanding quality of education. It had a very strong commitment to developing each individual academically and also as a person. Attainment and progress were good or outstanding in English, mathematics and science. They were generally acceptable or good in Islamic Education and Arabic. The school maintained a very positive ethos which was reflected in students' attitudes, behaviour and levels of maturity. At almost all levels, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were outstanding, with a commendable focus on developing a wide range of learning skills through the school's focus on students' learning. This was leading to increased self-confidence and responsibility for learning in a number of classes. The school curriculum offered a good range of activities for students.

The school had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous report. The quality of teaching and learning continued to improve. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education had improved for non-Arab Muslims. Attainment in Arabic as a first language remained an area requiring

further attention. The school had acknowledged the need to develop further curricular pathways to address the needs of all senior students. Given the outstanding leadership at all levels and their innovative approaches, the school had the clear capacity for continued improvement.

Key strengths

- The outstanding attainment and progress of students at the Foundation, primary and secondary stages in English and mathematics and at Foundation and primary in science;
- The attitudes and behaviour of students and the quality of their personal and social development;
- The commitment of the school to being an inclusive school and the effectiveness of provision of support for gifted students and those with special educational needs;
- The very effective focus of all staff on the development of students as confident and successful learners;
- The outstanding leadership of the senior and middle managers and the range of innovative approaches taken to continually improve the learning experience of all students.

Recommendations

- Further improve students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language;
- Continue to develop pathways in Key Stages 4 and 5, including vocational routes, to ensure that there are an appropriate range of options to meet the needs of all students.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Science				
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

Attainment at the Foundation and primary stages was outstanding in English, mathematics and science. In primary, it was good in Islamic Education and acceptable in Arabic. At secondary, students' attainment was outstanding in English and mathematics, good in science and acceptable in Islamic Education. It was

acceptable in Arabic as a second language but unsatisfactory in Arabic as a first language. At post-16, attainment in English, mathematics and science was good. In primary, almost all students had a clear knowledge of Islamic concepts such as the Pillars of Faith. Younger students in English were developing good listening and speaking skills. At post-16, students were making excellent progress in English in refining their examination technique. In Arabic as a first language, expectations of achievement were not high enough. In mathematics, students' problem-solving skills and abilities in mental mathematics were strong. Students were developing good skills in scientific method and could make good reference to science in real world contexts.

Across Foundation Stage, primary and secondary, progress in English, mathematics and science was outstanding. At post-16, it was outstanding in English and good in mathematics and science. In Islamic Education, students' progress was good at primary and acceptable in secondary. In Arabic as a first language, progress was acceptable. In Arabic as a second language, progress was good. The progress made by students with barriers to their learning arising from special educational needs was good overall. Those identified as being gifted were making outstanding progress.

Attainment and progress of the majority of Emirati students were broadly similar to other students. In English, mathematics and science, attainment was good and progress outstanding. In Arabic as a first language and Islamic Education, most had acceptable attainment and progress. Emiratis who were identified as having special educational needs, generally made outstanding progress but only showed acceptable attainment. Emirati students reported that they enjoyed school and appreciated how they were helped on their learning journey at the school. They had a clear understanding of their learning targets, and had developed appropriate strategies to ensure they achieved them.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Students demonstrated outstanding attitudes towards their learning, engaged in their work enthusiastically and enjoyed very good relations with each other. They showed an excellent understanding of healthy living, with a suitable focus on personal safety, including Internet safety. Physical and sporting activities were actively encouraged, with high participation rates. Attendance and punctuality were good. Almost all students demonstrated good levels of understanding of Islam and its importance in contemporary society in Dubai. They had excellent understanding of the local traditions and culture of the UAE. They were able to discuss Dubai's multi-cultural nature. Students contributed actively to the academic and social life of the school, including extensive support for younger students with their studies. They showed considerable pride in being citizens of Dubai and expressed genuine commitment to its future and development. Their environmental awareness of both local and global issues was outstanding. Economic understanding was well developed with an appropriate emphasis on enterprise and financial well-being.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Teaching for effective learning was outstanding in most areas. Almost all teachers had strong subject knowledge and understanding of their students' learning needs. Consistently high quality planning catered for the wide range of student needs in almost all curriculum areas. Teachers ensured that the needs of all were met, including the gifted, those experiencing difficulties and those for whom English was not their first language. Teachers collaborated with team colleagues to maximise opportunities for learning. Many teachers created contexts for learners to develop enquiry and higher order thinking skills, as well as problem-solving. Most teachers had very high expectations of achievement and lessons maintained a purposeful pace. Teachers utilised a good range of approaches in lessons and supplemented these with information and communications technology (ICT), projects and investigations. The school needed to continue to improve the teaching of Islamic Education and particularly Arabic. The quality of teaching in a range of other subjects was generally good, and at times outstanding. In all classes a positive learning environment was evident and all demonstrated a good variety of activities. Most embraced the use of the school's learner profile to focus their teaching on active learning, critical thinking, problem-solving and enquiry.

Learning was outstanding across the phases. The school had an extremely strong learning ethos. The Wellington 'learner profile' provided a very sound framework for teachers planning students' learning experiences. Students were highly motivated and increasingly took responsibility of their own learning. They asked questions to clarify their understanding, increasingly debated their points of view, and engaged readily in activities. In the best lessons, this rich dialogue was seen to challenge and expand students' thinking. While critical thinking was developing, it was not yet embedded across all areas of the school. Teachers used group and paired activities regularly as an integral and increasingly effective part of lessons.

Assessment was outstanding. A broad and imaginative range of assessment strategies was a feature of almost all classes. The school collected high quality data using a range of innovative methods. Trends in students' performance were identified through consistent analysis and then matched against predictions. Teachers used assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and the curriculum and as a guide to lesson planning. The school regularly informed parents about students' strengths and weaknesses. Student self-reflection and target-setting were developing well. While there were some outstanding examples of regularly marked workbooks, the quality of marking was inconsistent across the school. The best examples provided a brief, purposeful summary to encourage and guide students' future work.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

The curriculum was outstanding at all phases and provided a broad and balanced programme. Transition arrangements between phases of the school were carefully planned. Wide-ranging curriculum review took place at all phases of the school, with a focus on learning methodology. This included a number of developments to support higher attainment in the Diploma Programme. There had been some improvement in the curriculum for Arabic as an additional language, but the curriculum for Arabic as a first language remained underdeveloped. The creative curriculum in the Foundation Stage and primary effectively integrated and connected subjects. Cross-curricular links were made in secondary, as appropriate. There were extensive opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking and the application of learning to practical contexts. The curriculum made extensive provision for gifted students and those with individual learning needs. The introduction of the IB Diploma provided extensive challenge for the most able. However, vocational pathways at post-16 were developing. Many clubs and activities, and a wide range of field trips enriched the curriculum.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. Systems and routines were rigorous and effective in maintaining the high quality environment and promoting its safe use. Movement around the school was orderly and calm and the arrangements for dismissal and bus transportation were effective. The school building and its high quality facilities were fully accessible to all students. Record keeping was meticulous, both for regulatory safety requirements such as fire drills and for any treatment given by the resident medical staff. The school successfully promoted awareness of the importance of healthy living for students of all ages both through the regular curriculum and by specific projects. Canteen food was monitored for its balance and students benefited from an excellent range of sporting activities. Child protection arrangements were robust and regular training ensured that all staff understood roles and responsibilities.

The school provided outstanding support for students. The school managed behaviour very well. 'The Achievement Centre' provided exemplary support to students with special educational needs, English language learners and those identified as being gifted. Individual learning plans (ILPs) were agreed with parents for students requiring specific support. Pupil learner profiles were devised to inform teachers where students had barriers to learning. Parents were involved in the development and review of ILPs which contained very appropriate learning targets, although these needed to be made more student-friendly. The school monitored attendance and time-keeping closely. Links with external support agencies were very good. A counsellor provided excellent advice to students and their parents, and helped ensure students' well-being. The school's careers guidance counsellor provided senior students with very good guidance about future education and career pathways.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The Principal/CEO offered the school a very strong vision and encouraged a wide range of innovative initiatives. The senior leadership team demonstrated strong and dynamic management, underpinned by a very strong commitment to school improvement. All five members were insightful leaders and led on a wide range of initiatives. The distributed leadership model successfully empowered middle managers, who made a very strong contribution to school improvement. Leaders successfully involved teachers and other stakeholders in the change process through continual consultation. Commendably, students were clearly involved. The school had the clear capacity to deliver continual and innovative improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. Senior and other leaders monitored closely the quality of teaching and learning through the tracking of student progress and a thorough programme of classroom observations. The school's self-evaluation reports were extremely comprehensive. The whole school improvement plan had resulted in genuine improvement in a number of areas. In terms of the recommendations of the previous report, the school had had success in certain areas. The quality of teaching and learning continued to improve and there was a greater flexibility in the classroom experience. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education had improved for non-Arab Muslims. Attainment in Arabic as a first language remained an area requiring further improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. There was very good communication between school and individual parents. The school offered parents a very good range of information on its work at a variety of levels. Regular workshops and curriculum booklets kept them appropriately informed and helped them develop strategies for supporting their child's learning. The recently formed WIS Council

sought to ensure greater involvement of parents in decision-making. There was a very good range of community links.

Governance was good. The school was very well supported in a range of ways. There were clear opportunities for the school to discuss its progress on a regular basis. Governance clearly held the school accountable. The school had recently established a parent-staff group which aimed to involve parents more meaningfully in decision-making processes.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. All staff were well qualified. Each year there was a significant staff turn-over, but the school had a very good programme for providing induction for new teachers. The school also provided a range of relevant training opportunities for all teachers and classroom assistants. The school campus offered a very generous and stimulating learning environment and very effective use was made of the school's open areas. The school was very well resourced. Students had very good access to information technology as an integrated part of learning.

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 that responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	91	6%
	Last year	120	8%
Teachers	59		33%
Students	69		28%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey. Almost all were satisfied with the quality of education in the school and felt that teachers had the necessary skills to teach their child. They stated that their child enjoyed school and was treated fairly. Most said that the school was well-led and that parents were effectively involved in the life and work of the school. A number wanted more information on the school's plans for improvement. Almost all teachers thought the school was well-led. Most thought that students' behaviour was good and that students were well looked after. They felt well supported by the school in their professional development. Almost all the students who responded stated that they enjoyed life at school and that they had someone in school they could trust and talk to. Most thought their lessons were good and that teachers helped them to understand how well they were doing.

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.

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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