

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Our Own Indian School

Report published in February 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Our Own Indian School

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsoo-alquoz.com
Telephone	04-3391188
Address	PO Box 26845, Dubai
Principal	Mrs Lalitha Suresh
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3681
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	29th September to 3rd October 2013

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The context of the school

GEMS Our Own Indian School is located in Al Quoz. The school had a total compliment of 3681 students at the time of the inspection. Students follow the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum.

Almost all students had Indian nationality with a few from Pakistan and other Asian countries. The school had 236 students with special educational needs. The school was organised into Kindergarten with 428 students, primary (Grades 1-4) with 1201 students, middle (Grades 5-8) with 1301 students and secondary with 753 (Grades 9-12).

Almost all teachers had appropriate teaching qualifications. The Principal had been in post for over a year at the time of the inspection.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Outstanding attainment in secondary mathematics;
- Outstanding student-teacher relationships in the primary, middle and secondary phases;
- Students' good, and sometimes outstanding, personal and social development;
- The outstanding secondary curriculum with a wide range of open choices for exam subjects;
- The clarity of vision of the principal and her drive for improvement.
- The new primary curriculum and the school initiatives to use IT to support learning (Bring Your Own Device)

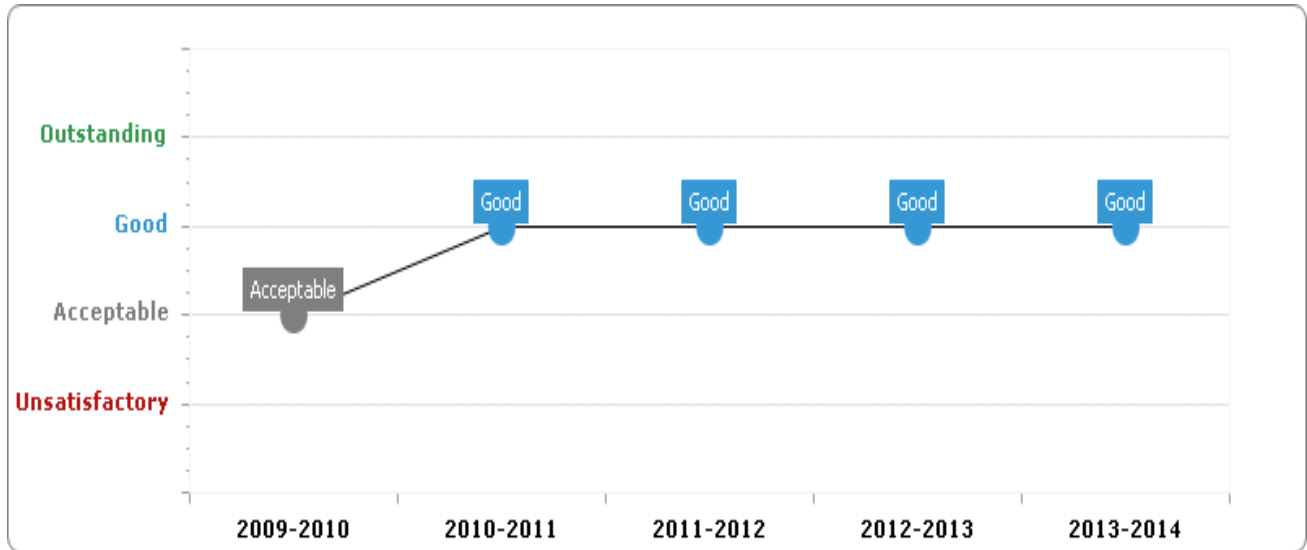
Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in Arabic by raising teachers' expectations and strengthening their classroom strategies.
- Improve the development of learning skills in the Kindergarten by ensuring activities are accurately matched to their ages and stages of development.
- Address the issue of overcrowding in Kindergarten to bring class sizes in line with KHDA requirements.
- Reduce the inconsistencies in classroom practice throughout school by ensuring lesson observations clearly identify where support and training are required to promote effective teaching.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good progress had been made in providing support for students with special educational needs to enable them to make progress in line with their peers, but the identification of the students' specific needs had not improved enough
- Teachers had made increasingly good use of online tools to analyse attainment data to track and monitor students' progress.
- Opportunities for active and collaborative learning had increased for the majority of students.
- Little or no progress had been made in improving attainment and progress in Arabic.
- The primary curriculum has improved and the school has a gifted and talented policy.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

Attainment in Islamic Education was good. Most students showed good knowledge and understanding of most aspects but their Qur'an recitation skills were underdeveloped. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable across the school. Most students had reasonable listening skills and could respond in conversation at an acceptable standard, especially secondary girls. A majority of students had underdeveloped writing skills. Attainment in English was good across all phases of the school. Almost all the students in the primary phase had developed good listening skills and were able to comprehend different forms of the written word. Attainment in mathematics was good in all phases except secondary where it was outstanding as shown by the excellent 2013 CBSE examination results in both Grades 10 and 12. Attainment in science was good throughout the school. By the time students left the school, the majority were working at higher than expected levels particularly in biology and physics. Attainment in Kindergarten in English, mathematics and science had been good for the last two years and the attainment of students entering Grade 1 confirmed this.

In Islamic Education, students made good progress in lessons and over time in most aspects of the subject across the three phases. However, progress in reciting Qur'an with the application of Tajweed rules was limited. Progress in Arabic was acceptable across the school but with girls outperforming boys. Students made good progress in English throughout the school. In Kindergarten children made good progress over time in speaking, listening and writing as by the middle of KG2 they could write using a good range of phonic knowledge. In school-based tests in English, most students made good progress. Girls made better progress than boys in the primary phase and in external exams in the secondary phase. In mathematics, progress was good. In the Kindergarten this good progress occurred in the use of number rather than other aspects of mathematics. Examination results showed good progress between Grades 9 and 10 and between Grades 11 and 12. Progress was better by girls especially in the middle phase. Progress in science was acceptable in Kindergarten and good across all other phases. During their time at school, students were increasingly able to apply their learning with increasing accuracy to solve scientific problems. In Kindergarten, children gained factual knowledge of the world around them but they made limited gains in scientific understanding because they did not get sufficient practical experiences which would help them to do so.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was acceptable in Kindergarten and good across the rest of the school. The majority of students in the school were enthusiastic and motivated in their learning. Many had started to develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for them to reach the higher grades in their subjects. They were able to place their learning in context with the world around them such as in Islamic Education, when students were able to identify good and bad deeds, and relate them to their own lives. In lessons, students collaborated well and supported each other through discussion and with activities. When students were given the opportunity for independent learning through research and the use of computers, supported by 'Bring your own Device', they readily accepted the challenge. However these learning attitudes and skills were less evident in Kindergarten and in some subjects such as Arabic.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The students' personal and social development was outstanding. They were well behaved and actively engaged in and out of the classrooms. Student-teacher relationships were outstanding in almost all cases. Punctuality was outstanding and attendance was good. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across the school except the middle phase where it was outstanding. Students demonstrated clear understanding of Islamic values and their impact on life in Dubai. They respected and understood well each other religions and national celebrations. Middle school students in particular showed pride and knowledge not only of their own cultures and heritage but also that of the UAE. Community and environmental responsibility was good and outstanding in secondary. Senior students took responsibilities for themselves through a highly motivated student committee. Mentoring of juniors by senior students in the 'Children to Children' programme paved a way to greater bonding between the students and promoted peer learning. Students exhibited a strong social and environmental awareness as seen in the various projects taken up by the students themselves and their environmental club.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in the primary, middle and secondary phases, and acceptable in Kindergarten. Most teachers had good subject knowledge and planned lessons to meet the needs of the students in their class. There were increased opportunities for active and collaborative learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers deployed a range of teaching strategies to engage the learners. These included role play, discussion, debate and active learning in hands-on activities. The use of information and communication

technology (ICT) as a teaching strategy was effective in some lessons to reinforce students' learning. Targeted questioning provided additional challenge for students. The school has many examples of good teaching but these are not seen in every class. Teaching in Arabic was acceptable and in English, mathematics and science lessons teaching varied between the boys and girls sections especially in the middle and secondary phases. Where teaching was less successful, teachers did not adjust their planning to meet the needs of students in class by raising expectations, pace or challenge. In Kindergarten teachers could observed, the teachers did not adjust their planning to meet the needs of the students in the class either through appropriate teaching strategies or by raising expectations, pace and challenge. In the Kindergarten, teaching was less successful when teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations regarding listening and learning. When teaching was acceptable there was limited challenge and a narrow range of teaching strategies. In these lessons there was often a lack of resources.

Assessment was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the primary, middle and secondary phases. The school made good use of online tools from the GEMS Learning Gateway for monitoring and tracking students' progress. Teachers used the analysis of attainment data for tracking the progress of students. As a result, they had a secure understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses. Feedback to students was often given but sometimes it was focused on what was wrong rather than what students needed to do to improve their work. In the Kindergarten, teachers did not always use assessment accurately to plan activities that matched children's needs.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in Kindergarten, and the primary and middle phases. It was outstanding in the secondary phase. It had a clear rationale and was broad and balanced. The curriculum was reviewed and modified effectively and used pre-tests to identify learning and students' needs. The primary curriculum was strongly enriched with thematic approaches and cross-curricular links that led to enhanced learning but the links in other phases were not so strong. Students were frequently involved in a range of activities that established community links. Students made visits to a residential home for senior citizens, supported children in a local special needs school and collected and distributed food to labour camps. The school also provided a range of extracurricular activities for students such as robotics and astronomy.

The curriculum design to meet the educational needs of all students was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in all other phases of the school. The school modified the curriculum in many different ways to meet the different needs of almost all students, including those with special educational needs. However, these curriculum modifications had not been implemented in all subjects. Secondary students were offered a wide range of courses including entrepreneurship, home science, psychology, physical education and music. This considerable widening of the curriculum had provided students with greater opportunities to help them to fulfil their talents, interests and aspirations. On-line courses helped students to assess what courses would suit them best when they left the school.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety in the school were outstanding. Safety measures were securely in place with proper monitoring of the students on the buses. Playground areas were safe and well maintained. Good medical facilities with one doctor and four nurses in a well-equipped clinic provided regular health check-ups. Fire hydrants were strategically placed in all the corridors with an evacuation plan posted near all exits. Regular fire drills were carried out with students and teachers well aware of the procedure involved. The school child protection policy was implemented vigilantly by all staff. Almost all the classrooms and other areas of the school were clean and hygienic. The canteen provided healthy food options.

Relationships between staff and students were outstanding and the school successfully promoted very good attendance and punctuality. There were good processes in place to follow up referrals of students with special educational needs but the diagnostic identification of students with special educational needs by school staff was just developing and individual education plans were not yet detailed enough. There was good support for students who required additional help in some subjects or classes. The support students gave each other in mixed ability groups was outstanding, which resulted in the good progress of all students. There were good systems in place to provide students with personal and career guidance.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership was good. The principal had a clear vision which was shared widely. Good distributed leadership had been securely put in place with clear lines of responsibility. She had introduced many useful practices and policies such as those for gifted and talented students and a thematic primary curriculum but these initiatives are yet to impact fully on standards of attainment and progress.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Heads of department were involved in action planning. Action plans were relatively recent and had not been fully evaluated. Progress in addressing the recommendations from the last inspection report was varied. Regular observations of all teachers in lessons using a proforma based on international best practice was a strength but the school had not yet become proficient at objectively evaluating the findings and relating these to areas for improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents were very supportive of the new principal and appreciated the open, informal communication with school. More formal consultation through 'Friends of Our Own Indian School' was not well established and had low levels of parental involvement. There were regular reports to parents on their child's progress. The school had had some success in attracting sponsors for school events but it had not developed business and community links enough.

Governance was good. GEMS representatives made regular visits to the school and monitored school actions and outcomes. The directorate organised a parent satisfaction survey to collect parents' views but there was no direct involvement of parents with governance. No formal meeting structures were in place for the GEMS staff to meet parents other than on enrolment issues but GEMS staff were available to meet with parents at the offices or on the school site if requested. Governors had not addressed the issue of overcrowding in Kindergarten.

The management of school is acceptable. The school operated very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Most teachers were qualified for their subject. The premises were well maintained to support the curriculum and extra-curricular activities of students. The school had solved the issue of access to computers through the 'Bring Your Own Device' project. Teaching assistants and resources were not used effectively enough. Overcrowding was still an issue and the school was not compliant with class size regulations for Kindergarten children. In this part of the school classes of over 30 children in small classrooms limited the range of teaching strategies which could be used.

[View judgements](#)

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

The support for students with special educational needs was good. Students made good progress and gained similar knowledge and skills as their peers, because of mixed ability grouping. Their understanding was enhanced by the ethos of the school which encouraged students to support one another. Overall, their progress was good except in Arabic. Parents were fully involved in the process and were given helpful advice through emails, coffee mornings and monthly newsletters.

The school had good systems for following up referrals and identifying students with special educational needs. However, the tools for fully diagnosing specific difficulties were weaker. A strength of the school's organisation was the individual accommodation plans which informed every teacher of the students' physical requirements. The needs of students were reflected in the differentiated lesson plans but these were not delivered consistently. The individual education plans were acceptable but not dated, did not have success criteria and were not always challenging enough. The systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress were good. The curriculum was modified in a variety of ways to meet the needs of different students. The ethos of the school was fully inclusive and the special needs policy was generally implemented successfully. The department has worked very well as a team with each member assigned specific roles. As a result, good progress had been made since the last inspection in addressing the recommendations of the report.

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	966	39%
	Last year	925	42%
Teachers	74		46%
Students	387		75%

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

Almost all parents and students reported positive sentiments about most aspects of the school. They thought school transport was safe. Almost all parents and most students thought the school looked after students well at school. Almost all parents reported that the school welcomed students with special educational needs. Parents and students thought good progress was made in science and English. Almost all students felt they were becoming positive and productive members of the school community. Only a small majority of parents and under a half of students thought progress in Arabic as a second language was good. Just over half parents and a significant minority of teachers reported the school had not discussed or provided information on how the school had performed in international assessments. Two thirds of students and a small majority of parents thought the school listened to their opinions about their school.

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.

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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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