

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Wellington Academy - DSO

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Wellington Academy - DSO

Location	Silicon Oasis, Dubai
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemswellingtonacademy-dso.com
Telephone	050-5534175
Address	PO Box 49746
Acting Principal	Clive Westall
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-16 / Foundation Stage to Year 10
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,235
Largest nationality group of students	UK
Number of Emirati students	47 (2%)
Date of the inspection	19th to 22nd November 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Silicon Oasis, GEMS Wellington Academy is a private school providing education for boys and girls, aged three to 16 years. The school served a multi-national community and students attended from 77 different countries. The largest group of students were UK nationals and the next biggest group was from other European countries.

The school offered the English National Curriculum. There were 151 full-time teachers, including the Acting Principal and senior managers. Approximately 60 per cent of teachers had been appointed this session. All had appropriate teaching qualifications. Ten per cent of students had been identified as having some form of special educational need.

The school opened in September 2011 and had more than doubled in size in 2012. It added Year 10 in September 2012 and had plans to continue to add additional secondary years.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The positive attitude of students and the part they had played in forming a cohesive learning community;
- The school's approaches to identifying and supporting children who were learning English as an additional language and those with special education needs;
- The quality of leadership in the school including most of the middle managers;
- The opportunities provided by the school for parents to be involved in their children's education;
- The quality of the learning environment and the enrichment provided by the extra-curricular programme.

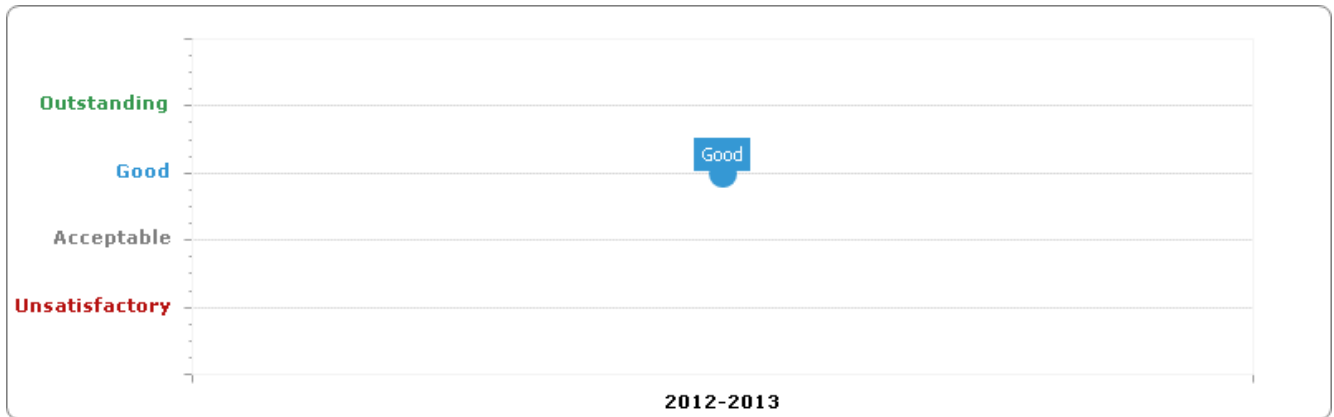
Recommendations

- Improve progress and standards of attainment in Islamic Education;
- Improve progress and standards of attainment in Arabic by taking account of how children learn languages;
- Extend and build upon the best practice in the school to improve further the quality of teaching and learning across the school;
- Improve the precision of lesson evaluations used by senior leaders in the school.

Progress since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of the school.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	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
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in key areas of learning was varied. Across the school, students' attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable. However, the majority of students were not confident and struggled with some recitation and found it difficult to explain its meaning. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable in the primary phase and unsatisfactory in secondary. Almost all secondary students were not confident enough in using standard Arabic independently to communicate in writing and speaking and often reverted to colloquial Arabic or English to express their ideas. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was unsatisfactory. Most students were working below expectations in reading, writing, listening and speaking. They were unable to confidently and independently speak to each other in Arabic. Writing across the school was also underdeveloped. Children's attainment in English and mathematics at the Foundation Stage was in line with expectations for their age and was acceptable. Their attainment was good in science. Children were able to draw upon their knowledge gained from home. Primary students' attainment in English was acceptable and good in mathematics and science. Secondary students' attainment was good in English, mathematics and science. Most students in Years 1 to 10 had well developed scientific skills.

Students made acceptable progress in Islamic Education but unsatisfactory progress in Arabic as a first language. Students' writing skills were not improving sufficiently in the primary phase as teachers provided insufficient challenge. The progress of students learning Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in the primary phase but unsatisfactory in secondary, as they depended too much on pictures and other clues when completing tasks. In the Foundation Stage, the rich learning environment and skilful intervention of staff helped children to make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Students' progress in English was good in the primary years and outstanding in the secondary years, largely as a result of the consistently very high standards of teaching in the later phase. Progress in mathematics and science was good in Years 1 to 10. The use of relevant real-life contexts in these subjects enhanced learning. Students with special education needs made good progress in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment was acceptable in all key subjects except in Arabic. Their progress was good in English and mathematics, and acceptable in science and Islamic Education. However, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory in Arabic. Students' attendance was good in the current term. Most of them had been punctual and only a few were late more than twice. Their attitudes and behaviour across the school were good. Students had good relationships with each other and with teachers. They regularly

completed their homework and showed a good work ethic. The assessment and tracking of the attainment and progress of Emirati students was good, but the Arabic department had a less well developed system. There was good support for Emirati students throughout school. Parents were encouraged to be involved in their children's education. The school promoted and celebrated the culture and heritage of the UAE.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Across the school, students' attitudes and behaviour were good. They took on roles and responsibilities willingly and mostly responded well to staff. Incidences of misbehaviour were mainly in lessons where students were not challenged appropriately and where classroom management was poor. Most students demonstrated an understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. Attendance in Foundation Stage was acceptable, and good elsewhere in the school. Students had a good understanding of Islamic values and local cultural heritage. They took the initiative in Islamic greetings. Students could talk about the significant developments in Dubai in the last 40 years. Most were able to talk about projects and community work they took part in. They were positive about the students' council and its potential in representing the students' voice. Most students took pride in their roles and responsibilities. They discussed environmental issues confidently and participated in schemes and projects that promoted greater awareness of conserving energy, water and electricity and recycling within the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good across all phases of the school except in Islamic Education and Arabic, where it was less effective. Almost all teachers were enthusiastic and planned their lessons well. Most had good subject knowledge and knew how students learned their subject. Most teachers planned a variety of activities with a wide range of appropriate resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to meet the needs of all students. The interaction of teachers with students was mostly good and there was a good balance between teacher-led and student-initiated activities. Most teachers managed lessons well with a brisk pace. However, at times, the fast pace was at the expense of deeper learning and often there was insufficient time given for reflection. In many lessons, there were different levels of challenge although the most able were often not sufficiently extended. Most teachers used effective questioning in order to assess students' understanding.

The quality of learning across the school was good. Most students were keen and enthusiastic learners. They could work well in groups and consequently they were in a strong position to learn from each other.

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Most students worked equally well by themselves and were able to take responsibility for their learning, even from the youngest age. They were able to build on previous knowledge and understanding and make links between what was learned in different curriculum areas. Most could relate what they learned in school to their experiences out of school. Students enjoyed communicating their learning to others and were confident in expressing their views. Almost all took the opportunity to use ICT as a tool for learning. Most students had appropriate research skills. However, the development of critical thinking skills was variable and often limited by the closed nature of the planned activities. Extended projects, offering students choices on presenting their learning, were a feature of many classrooms.

Assessment was good across the school. All new students were tested as they entered the school and the information was used, with that of existing students, to set challenging individual student targets. The data was accurately analysed at an individual level and used to identify the progress of different groups of students. The new assessment systems were becoming increasingly more effective in tracking the learning of students; however, systems for Arabic and Islamic Education were at an early stage of development. Individual targets were routinely shared with parents and students; they featured in reports, in home/school diaries and class books. Teachers regularly marked books and comments were made about the quality of the learning. Peer assessment and a variety of self-assessment techniques were used well in all subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum across the school was good. It reflected the school's vision, had a clear rationale and met the needs of most students. It was broad and balanced, and promoted regular opportunities for independent learning. Strategic and medium-term curriculum planning resulted in good progression and continuity. Good transition programmes were being extended and careers education was supplemented with work experience opportunities. The review and development of the curriculum was very effective and included widespread involvement of stakeholders. There were some distinctive features, such as promoting the local culture, heritage and aspects of life in Dubai and the UAE. The school was successfully introducing the revised Early Years Foundation Stage programme. Curriculum enrichment was outstanding. A rich and extensive range of extra-curricular activities was complemented by a varied programme of visits, field trips, competitive sport and other provision. Opportunities for personal and academic challenge were also provided, for example, through mathematics competitions. The school had made a good start in developing curriculum links with the community.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Clear procedures and policies were in place for maintaining the health and well-being of students. Few incidents of anti-social behaviour had occurred. The clinic was well organised and detailed logs were kept on all students treated by the nurse or doctor. The curriculum promoted healthy eating. The buildings were well maintained and clean inside. Disabled students had full access to all parts of the school. There were clear systems in place to ensure that students were safe while in school, outside in the playground or when travelling on school buses. Staff had received child protection training.

Relationships between staff and students were good in almost all areas of the school. Monitoring of attendance was thorough and resulted in good attendance. Students with English as an additional language were well supported. Their needs were accurately assessed and their progress was closely monitored. The quality of in-class support received by students, particularly those who found learning difficult, was generally good. The well-being and personal needs of all students were clearly identified.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special education needs were assessed carefully upon admission. The team of specialists focused effectively on identifying students who had special educational needs. Staff accurately specified the students' individual learning needs and provided appropriate support to enable them to make good progress across the school. Students received effective support in class or through individual or group support in The Achievement Centre.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Acting Principal was taking the school forward effectively. He was supported very well by a skilled senior team. Leadership was shared very well and middle managers, including the English, mathematics and science co-ordinators, were having a positive influence on students' learning experiences. A number of other teachers were also given leadership opportunities. Communications and relationships between managers and other staff were good.

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Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had very effective procedures for evaluating the quality of its work. Managers used a variety of approaches to find out how well students were being taught. However, their judgements on the quality of teaching and learning were sometimes over-optimistic. Appropriate school improvement targets were selected and clear strategies had been devised for achieving them. The school had an effective performance management system which included the provision of further training for teachers and other staff. Progress had been made in improving the school this year. Nevertheless, there were some shortcomings in the quality of teaching in certain departments which managers and teachers needed to address.

The links with parents and the community were good. The school was quick to involve parents after it opened and had established effective 'parent engagement groups'. Communication between the school and parents was good with regular weekly bulletins. Reports on students' progress were issued three times each year. The interim reports for Years 1 to 10 were brief, but the final reports had sufficient detail including students' targets. Parents had very good access to teachers and were welcomed into the school on a daily basis. The school was developing its links with the local community.

Governance was good. Directors exerted a positive influence on the school and held the Acting Principal and school to account. The rapid development of the school had created difficulties in the provision of car parking, the commissioning of facilities and the provision of resources on time. The governing body sought the views of parents regularly. However, there was not a wide stakeholder representation on the Board.

The school ran smoothly on a day-to-day basis and efficient systems were in place to deal with routine matters. The school was staffed with sufficient, well-qualified teachers, including a good range of specialists. The premises were bright, airy and of high quality. The facilities included high quality classrooms and specialist accommodation. However, as a result of the rapid development of the school, the science laboratories were not yet fully functioning, computers were not yet fully installed in the libraries and teachers had difficulties in accessing printing and photocopying.

[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	234	14%
	Last year	The school was not inspected in 2011-2012	
Teachers	71		45%
Students	8		15%

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

Almost all parents thought that their child was receiving a good education at GEMS Wellington Academy. They thought that the quality of teaching and learning was good, except in Arabic. Students also felt that teaching and learning were good. Almost all parents felt that there was a wide variety of subjects and interesting extra-curricular clubs and activities. Most parents thought that their child was making good progress in English, mathematics and science, but only a minority thought that their child was making good progress in Arabic and Islamic Education. Parents of children with special education needs were pleased about the progress their children were making. Most parents thought that reports on their children were helpful. A significant number of teachers commented on the shortage of resources arising from the rapid expansion of the school. Most parents and the majority of teachers thought that the school was well led.

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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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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