

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS World Academy

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS World Academy

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsworldacademy-dubai.com
Telephone	04373 6373
Address	PO Box 126260, Al Barsha South, Dubai
Principal	Dan E. Young
Curriculum	IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,024
Number of Emirati students	23 (2%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 12th to Thursday 15th March 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Barsha South, GEMS World Academy is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged from three to 18 years. There were 1,024 students on roll at the time of the inspection, an increase of over 200 since the school was previously inspected.

The school follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, which is externally examined in Grade 12. This year, the first Grade 12 students from the school will graduate with an IB Diploma. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is for Grades 1 to 5, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) is for Grades 6 to 10, and the Diploma Programme (DP) is for Grades 11 and 12.

The school served a widespread multi-national community. The largest group of students, about ten per cent, have United States backgrounds. Others were from the UAE, other Arab countries, the United Kingdom and Eastern Europe. Most students were at varying stages of learning English as an additional language. About two per cent of the students were Emiratis. There were 102 appropriately qualified teachers on the staff.

One third of students were new to the secondary school this year and ten per cent of the students were new to the primary school. Since the last inspection, the school had gained authorisation for its MYP and DP courses from the IB Organisation.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The GEMS World Academy continued to provide a good education for its students. It had improved since the last inspection in some aspects and maintained strengths in others. The Kindergarten provision was outstanding as were students' attitudes and behaviour. Most teaching quality remained good but the monitoring of it did not clearly link teachers' actions with their students' progress. The school enabled most new students to assimilate quickly into the school's ethos and expectations, partly through strong partnership with parents. The school's arrangements for the health, safety and support of students remained outstanding. The facilities and resources were also of outstanding quality. Outstanding

leadership had informed school improvement and growth, and leaders showed the capacity to make further developments.

Students' attainment and progress were generally good across the key subjects, linked to the good teaching. In the Kindergarten, children made outstanding progress because of the quality of teaching and teachers' understanding of how young children learn best. In English, most students, particularly those learning it as an additional language, made excellent progress because of good teaching and because it was the language of the school. Most students learning Islamic Education and Arabic reached acceptable standards because teaching was weaker than in other subjects. Older students' progress in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory because the time allocated did not meet Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements. Provision of Arabic for older students also did not meet MoE requirements.

Key strengths

- The Kindergarten provided children with an outstanding start to their education;
- Students had respect and tolerance for one another and adults;
- The school cared for and protected its students exceptionally well;
- Outstanding leadership had enabled teachers to continue to improve;
- The school's facilities and resources provided an inspiring learning environment.

Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic, and ensure that the school fully complies with MoE regulations;
- Maximise opportunities for students to learn about Emirati and Islamic culture, and the wider community;
- Provide consistently good teaching;
- Increase the rigour of monitoring teaching quality and link judgements on teaching quality to students' progress.

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Unsatisfactory
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	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	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

Students' attainment in the key subjects was mostly good. In Arabic and Islamic Education, attainment was mostly acceptable and in English it was outstanding in the Kindergarten and PYP. In Islamic Education, most students reached acceptable standards but their memorisation skills were weak. In Arabic, listening was better developed than speaking and reading skills, which were acceptable. In Arabic as an additional language, most students could answer teachers' questions correctly using a word or short phrases in Arabic. However, a minority needed translation into English to understand the lessons. In English, students' oral skills were very well developed, and their writing, especially of extended pieces, was good. In mathematics, students had effective calculation skills and could apply their knowledge well in real life situations. Manipulating numbers and solving problems were less well developed. In science, students' investigative skills were good but their knowledge and understanding were not as strong.

Students' progress was mostly good although in the Kindergarten it was outstanding in English and science. Progress in English was outstanding in most of the school through a combination of support, teaching and immersion in the English medium of the school. In Islamic Education and Arabic, students made good progress often because of the use of technology in some lessons. However, the progress of older students was impaired by low attendance and because there were less than the required number of lessons. Students with special educational needs made good progress in key subjects and towards their individual goals.

Emirati students made good progress and attained as most other students in the school in the key subjects. Their attainment in Arabic and Islamic Education was acceptable. A few attained more highly than their peers and they made particularly good progress on enquiry-based learning and problem solving.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

Students behaved extremely well. In lessons, they were self-disciplined, needed little supervision and supported one another readily. Their work ethic was excellent. They were very considerate and had strong rapport with one another and adults. Students were very well aware of what constitutes a healthy life-style, although not all exercised regularly. Attendance and punctuality were good. Students understood Islamic values and their effects on Dubai, but they lacked detailed knowledge. They were very aware of the multi-cultural nature of the world through other students. They absorbed culture through their involvement with music, art and literature. Students were responsible 'citizens' of the school. The student councils were effective and guided by all students' opinions. Students were pro-active in supporting others less fortunate, for example in developing countries. However, links with the local community were limited. Students knew how Dubai had developed and understood environmental issues, such as the need to recycle, but their commitment to conservation was underdeveloped. The environmental awareness of children in the Kindergarten was very good for their age.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

The quality of teaching was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good elsewhere. Lessons were very carefully planned, generally well-paced and included a balanced emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, and the development of skills and understanding. In addition, planning incorporated the use of real-life contexts in most subjects, encouraging the students to make connections beyond the classroom. There was excellent use of resources to support learning, including information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers had created positive learning environments where student-teacher relationships were based on shared purpose and mutual respect. However, there were inconsistent levels of teacher interventions while students were working independently and in small groups. In some classes, whole class teaching strategies did not meet the needs of students and, as a result, limited progress.

The quality of learning was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good elsewhere. Students were enthusiastic, self-disciplined, respectful and collaborative learners who presented their ideas confidently. They showed the ability to reflect meaningfully on how they learned and set goals for new learning. Students made good connections between different aspects of learning and to their own experience. This was done through enquiry-based learning in most subjects. Whilst students approached learning positively overall, when teachers' expectations were not clear or appropriately challenging, they lacked a sense of urgency in completing tasks, therefore limiting their progress.

Assessment was outstanding in the Kindergarten where there were examples of focused assessments and note taking. Assessment was good elsewhere. The school monitored students' progress over time, including the use of teachers' assessment records and portfolios of students' work. Students were consistently involved in assessing their own learning and that of peers, setting targets for improvement and monitoring their own progress. A range of assessment strategies was employed to give a balanced view of each student's personal, academic, and social development. Whilst a large amount of assessment

data was collected, it was not being used consistently to inform the next phase of learning for individuals and groups. Planning included different teaching strategies, but their effects in lessons were inconsistent and most able students did not receive sufficient challenge. The quality of feedback to students in different key subject areas was varied.

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

The curriculum was outstanding in the Kindergarten, PYP and MYP phases and good in the DP phase. The school was authorised by the IB Organisation to offer their programmes, which meant a comprehensive curriculum in most subjects across the school. The Kindergarten curriculum was diverse and provided a broad range of interesting activities, but access to outdoor education was limited. The school exceeded requirements by offering Arabic for Kindergarten children. This encouraged enjoyment of the language and preparation for the first grade. The curriculum was generally well balanced but did not meet MoE requirements in Islamic Education and Arabic for older students. One of the strengths was the themes of study across different subjects, which contributed to the quality of learning in most phases. The school made outstanding arrangements for students with special educational needs which enabled them to make good progress. The integration and use of ICT was excellent throughout the school and music was a strength of provision. The DP was only recently established and was developing well. There was a good range of additional activities.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

The quality of health and safety arrangements was outstanding. Staff members assiduously provided a safe and hygienic environment. Supervision of students was done lightly but was very effective. School nurses gave lessons on healthy living. They helped the doctor conduct regular health checks and keep meticulous records. The canteen provided nutritious and healthy eating options. Child protection policies were reviewed annually with staff members. Safety drills and evacuations were conducted routinely in co-

ordination with the Civil Defence authority. Equipment checks were fully up-to-date. Facilities, grounds and transportation arrangements were managed to ensure full compliance with government regulations. Relevant files were available and kept current. Thorough procedures ensured safety during the construction of the second phase while school was in session.

The school continued to provide outstanding support to students. Excellent staff-student relationships were a strong feature of the school. It was clear that students were well supported in academic, social and personal matters. The school had developed and implemented rigorous and detailed processes for the identification, assessment and support of students with special educational needs and for late learners of English. The school was extending support in recognition of gifted and talented learners' needs. The progress of students working with learning support teachers was very well documented. There were effective systems for on-going collaboration with parents and classroom teachers to ensure that the needs of this group of students were met. Support and advice regarding future education were of a very high standard. Attendance and punctuality were closely monitored on a daily basis.

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

The quality of leadership was outstanding. The Principal and senior team were a cohesive group whose shared and separate responsibilities were clearly outlined. Their ambition and vision had enabled the school to grow and improve. They had enabled the school to make good progress on improving since the previous inspection and showed the capacity and determination to continue improving. There was a secure management structure with well delegated leadership responsibilities and effective systems for communication. Relations among leaders were professional and mutually supportive. Communications between them made best use of technology.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Self-evaluation was broadly based and regularly considered both students' and teachers' performance. The monitoring of teaching quality did not link it

well enough to students' progress and so was over-optimistic. The overall school strategic plan set the scene for subject and departmental plans, some of which had measurable success criteria. Teacher performance management was well established and informed the professional development programme well.

The partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. The school worked very closely with parents to help their children's education. Liaison with parents through clear communication channels had led to high rates of parental satisfaction. Parents were very welcome in school and helped in class. The Parents' Association was an effective group supporting the school and representing parental views. Communications were thorough, informative and fostered dialogue. The school was an active participant in GEMS group activities to support school improvement and student participation in the broadest sense.

The quality of governance was good. School owners played a significant role in supporting the school and holding it to account for its performance. They saw that the school benefited from corporate arrangements and systems, and supported the school well through strategic financial planning and staff training. Although there was no direct representative of the parent body on the board, owners sought out parents' views through surveys.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. They all combined to make a vibrant environment for learning. There were excellent levels of staffing with teachers and others very well qualified and well deployed. There was a good range of additional staff to meet students' needs directly such as counsellors and medical staff. There was an extensive variety of purpose-built learning facilities from extensive physical education equipment to the planetarium and auditorium. Resources for learning were wide-ranging and of excellent quality. For example, the school embraced technology as both a learning tool and a significant aid to administration and organisation.

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	92	16%
	Last year	94	16%
Teachers	43		43%
Students	67		39%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey. There was a notable unanimity of positive views expressed by parents, students and teachers on nearly all issues. Nearly all parents and students thought that they were making good progress in the key subjects. Students, parents and teachers felt that both Muslim and non-Muslim students had a good understanding of Islam. They thought that the school was well led and that it listened to their concerns. There was a high degree of satisfaction with school communications, including school reports. Parents were very pleased with their involvement in school and with what the school provided. They agreed with the last report's accuracy and knew about what the school did to improve.

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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