

# INSPECTION REPORT

## GEMS World Academy

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS World Academy

Location	Al Barsha South
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.gemsworldacademy-dubai.com">www.gemsworldacademy-dubai.com</a>
Telephone	043736 373
Address	P.O. Box 126260, , Dubai
Principal	Dan E. Young
Curriculum	IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,478
Largest nationality group of Students	US
Number of Emirati students	27 (2%)
Date of the inspection	11th March to 14th March 2013

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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 1,478 students on roll at the time of the inspection, an increase of over 450 since the school was previously inspected. One third of students were new to the secondary school this year and thirty per cent of the students were new to the primary school.

The school followed the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, which has external examinations in Grade 12 in order for a student to qualify for the IBO diploma. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) was offered for students for Kindergarten to Grade 5, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for Grades 6 to 10, and the Diploma Programme (DP) for Grades 11 and 12. The school was authorised for PYP, MYP, and DP.

The school served a widespread multi-national community. The largest group of students, about twenty per cent, had Northern American backgrounds. Others were from 78 different countries including the UAE. Most students were at varying stages of learning English as an additional language. About two per cent of the students were Emiratis. There were 150 appropriately qualified teachers on the staff, an increase of 48 new teachers in school.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

## Key strengths

- The outstanding attainment and progress in all key subjects in Kindergarten;
- The outstanding attainment and progress in English and science in PYP;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour across all phases;
- The outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum in Kindergarten;
- The outstanding provision for students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language.

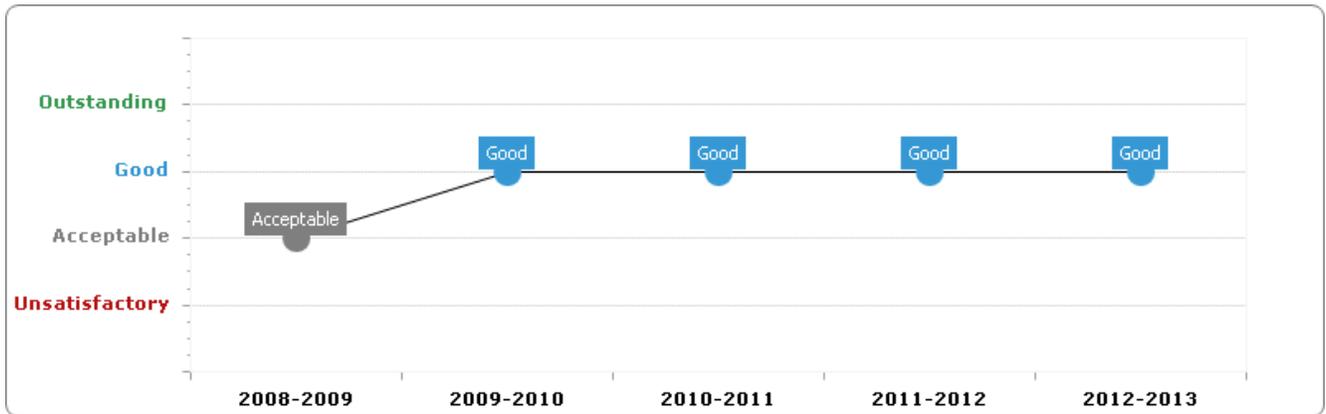
## Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic by raising expectations in lessons;
- Deepen students' understanding of the heritage, culture and Islamic values of the UAE;
- Ensure teaching consistently provides a good level of challenge and more opportunities for inquiry and critical thinking for all students;
- Ensure assessment data is accurate and used consistently across all phases to underpin the progress of all students;
- Implement rigorous processes to evaluate learning more accurately across all subjects.

## Progress since the last inspection

- The children's progress in mathematics in Kindergarten had improved to outstanding;
- The sustained outstanding attitude and behaviour across all phases;
- The outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum in Kindergarten;
- The school had continued to improve the effective arrangements to support students with special educational needs and this remained an important strength of the school.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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

[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	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

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

In Islamic Education, the attainment of most students in PYP was in line with curriculum expectations. Students' knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts, Islamic Fiqh, and Seerah was appropriate. In MYP and DP most students had difficulty linking Islamic concepts to Qur'an and Hadith references. In Arabic as a first language, students had good listening skills. Their reading skills were developing across the three phases. Writing skills and extended writing were underdeveloped. In Arabic as an additional language, the reading skills of students in PYP and MYP were developing slowly. They could repeat familiar words in short sentences but with some errors. In English, attainment in Kindergarten and PYP was outstanding for students who were native English speakers and for those who learned English as an additional language. Listening and speaking skills developed very rapidly because of skilful interactions between students and adults. Reading and writing were very well developed and older students wrote fluently for a range of purposes and audiences, showing a clear awareness of the power of language to persuade, and justify. In the MYP and the DP, attainment in English was good. Reading, speaking and listening skills developed well. Students read a wide range of age-appropriate texts confidently. There was a large number of expatriate multi-language students and there was a gap between students' writing and other skills, which remained as students moved through the school. Approximately 25% of students were studying English as an additional language. Nevertheless, the writing of most older students was well-organised and coherent. In mathematics, attainment was outstanding in Kindergarten and good in the rest of the school. There had been significant improvements in this subject over the course of the past year and the MYP phase was particularly notable in having improved the quality of its results. This was the result of teachers promoting thinking skills and practical applications of mathematics to real life situations. The whole curriculum was well planned and organised and, in their lessons, students demonstrated good levels of understanding, skills and knowledge. Attainment in science was outstanding in Kindergarten and PYP and good in MYP and DP. In Kindergarten and PYP the use of inquiry learning, based on open-ended questions and predictions, enhanced learning. In MYP, the balanced coverage of the science disciplines and mapping of assessment against MYP criteria supported progress. In DP, students did not use higher level thinking enough.

In Islamic Education, in PYP students made good progress in linking Islamic concepts to Qur'an and Hadith references. However, progress was acceptable in MYP and unsatisfactory in DP. In Arabic as a first language, students in PYP and MYP phases were making acceptable progress in listening. However, their speaking, reading and writing skills were weaker. In Arabic as an additional language, students' speaking, reading and writing skills required further development, particularly in MYP. In English, progress was outstanding in KG and PYP, and good in MYP and DP. This was linked to the quality of teaching, especially the high expectations for younger children.

Listening and speaking skills developed more rapidly than reading and writing. In the MYP and the Diploma Programme progress was good although progress was more rapid in reading than in writing. Most older students demonstrated increasing confidence in their abilities to draw on the works of different authors to support their opinions in complex literature discussions. In mathematics, progress was outstanding in Kindergarten and good other phases of the school. In science, progress was outstanding in Kindergarten and PYP and good in MYP and DP. Progress in Kindergarten and PYP was outstanding because students were set tasks and they were guided to explore inquiries and present conclusions in a variety of ways. In MYP and DP the pace of the lesson and inconsistent expectations restricted progress. The progress of students with special educational needs was also good as they were very well supported.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students achieved good levels of attainment and progress. This was in line with the rest of the students in the school. In Phases 1 and 2, teachers linked the curriculum to Dubai, the UAE and the outside world, which helped strengthen the learning of students. The school had a range of regular communication with parents about the education of their children. Emirati students were a major group in displaying exemplary attitudes, behaviour and relationships. The school had a well-developed curriculum and experienced teachers who supported the learning of all students. The support for students with additional needs was outstanding and Emirati students were able to access this help whenever they had identified needs.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The students' attitudes and behaviour was outstanding. They were polite in interactions with peers and confident and respectful when speaking with adults. They were sensitive to the needs of others and accepted and celebrated the differences inherent in a large school with a diverse population. The students demonstrated an excellent understanding of a balanced lifestyle, including healthy diet habits and the need to engage in physical activity and the arts. Attendance throughout the school was good. The IB learner profile formed the basis of student behaviour and attitudes but further development of the characteristics of the learner profile needed to be developed as the students matured. Students understood and appreciated the expectations of an Islamic society. They had good knowledge of the culture of Dubai and identified the features that had changed over time. They described their own cultures and traditions and provided details and examples. Students' deeper understanding of Islamic values, local traditions and heritage was developing.

Students contributed to the life of the school and the broader community through the action component of the PYP, Community and Service in the MYP and Creativity Action and Service in DP. Two elected student councils met weekly to gather students' views. The students understood the importance of environmental sustainability and, through their subject-specific work, had taken some actions to support the local environment. However, many of these had not been transferred to the school environment. Student-initiated action needed further development to include the local community in and around UAE in an authentic and sustainable context.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching in Kindergarten was outstanding, because it was very carefully focused on children's needs, ensuring tasks were challenging. Children benefited from frequent opportunities to develop enquiry skills. Interactions between adults and children were excellent. For students of all other ages teaching was good. Teachers had good subject expertise and a clear understanding of how children learn. Most lessons were well planned, with good use of excellent resources. However, in a minority of lessons a narrow range of teaching strategies did not engage students fully in their learning. Occasionally, insufficient opportunities were provided for students to develop critical thinking and enquiry skills and to become independent learners. Teaching in Islamic Education in MYP and DP was unsatisfactory. In some lessons in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language, teachers' subject knowledge and knowledge about how students learn was weak. Work lacked challenge and a narrow range of teaching strategies was used, which did not interest students.

Learning was outstanding in Kindergarten because students were active and enquiring, sustaining interest and concentration for long periods. They enjoyed the challenge of difficult tasks, showing persistence and determination in solving problems. Elsewhere in the school learning was good. Students enjoyed their work and made connections between their learning and real life. They were willing to take risks, proposing lines of enquiry and asking questions: however these were frequently not followed through by teachers. When given the opportunity, students collaborated well, with all students making a positive contribution. In some lessons critical thinking and enquiry skills were well developed, but this was often limited by lack of opportunity. Learning in Islamic Education in the MYP and DP was unsatisfactory as low teacher expectations sometimes led to lack of engagement and unsatisfactory progress. Students did not enjoy some of their lessons, especially in Arabic as an additional language, because the narrow range of teaching styles used did not engage their interest.

Assessment was outstanding in Kindergarten and good throughout the rest of the school. Teachers generally knew their children's strengths and weaknesses and used this information to plan lessons that met students' needs well. The use of assessment information to plan activities for children with special needs and those at the early stages of learning English was excellent. However, it was sometimes weak in Islamic Education and Arabic. The quality and accuracy of assessment data was generally good, but was inconsistent, especially in some subjects in the MYP. In some areas of learning it was difficult for the school to analyse students' attainment against international standards as school-based or modified assessment systems were used. The quality of oral feedback was good, but written feedback was of more variable quality.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was outstanding in Kindergarten, PYP and MYP and good in DP. The curriculum was well developed in all phases of the school and showed evidence of shared planning and review. It also met the demands of the relevant IB programme of study and was in line with the IB requirements. The provision for students with special educational needs was a strength in school and the curriculum was effectively modified to meet their needs. The school was expanding and an issue regarding outdoor space for Kindergarten had been satisfactorily addressed by the school. Enquiry was developing in the PYP but was still inconsistent in the MYP and DP sections. There was still a compliance issue in the DP section where a few Arab students were not attending Arabic as a first language lessons.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. The school provided a safe and secure learning environment. The premises were maintained in an excellent condition. Staff were updated regularly on child protection arrangements. All medicines were stored safely and administered responsibly by the school medical staff. Detailed records of fire drills and other statutory safety requirements were maintained. Students displayed a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and the cafeteria provided suitable healthy food choices. Bus safety arrangements were stringently followed.

Excellent relationships between staff and students were the basis of the mutual respect that was evident in students' outstanding behaviour. Recording of attendance and punctuality was rigorous and contact was made with parents if a student failed to appear without explanation. Procedures for monitoring students' academic progress were effective. Students were able to seek advice and support on academic or personal issues and were confident that their concerns would be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

[View judgements](#)

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

Procedures for identifying students with special educational needs were highly effective. Well-qualified specialist staff provided strong support to students, either in-class or in small withdrawal groups enabled students to make good progress. Students' good progress was also supported by very well-constructed individual learning plans that provided teachers with clear guidance on how students' particular needs should be addressed.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. There was a positive working ethos in school within the leadership team. Internal promotions within the leadership team were strategic and new senior leaders had made an effective start. The distribution of responsibilities was effective, particularly at senior management level. The vision of the school was clear and shared with the school key stakeholders. The capacity of a few leaders to support and drive school improvement was sometimes hindered by a lack of accuracy in self-evaluation. There were limited opportunities for personalised professional development in some of the weakest areas in school. For example, the professional development provision in Islamic Education and Arabic. In these key subjects the intervention of school leaders had not led to any notable improvement.

Self-evaluation plans were good. Priorities for improvement were identified clearly and distributed between the different senior leaders. They included milestones which were monitored closely through a reporting and reviewing system. However, the team in charge of evaluation of teaching and learning did not always have the capacity to measure the subject knowledge and attainment and progress of students in some subjects, such as Islamic Education and Arabic. This factor hindered the improvement of those areas. However, the school had sustained its strong performance in key aspects of school life, such as its curriculum in some phases and in teaching, learning and assessment in Kindergarten.

Partnership and communication with parents were outstanding. Parents were very well informed about all aspects of their children's lives in school. Parents used the on-line system regularly to track their children's work and to liaise with teachers. Parents were actively involved in school life through the Parent Teachers' Association and academic activities such as class parents, school excursions and guest speakers. A high level of engagement was also noted during sporting activities. An active Emirati mother's group ran Arabic language lessons and invited parents to explore local tradition and culture.

The quality of governance was good. The governing board played an important role in supporting the school. It assisted the school well through strategic planning, staff training and provision of high quality facilities. However, the governors had not been successful in addressing the longstanding issues in Islamic Education and Arabic. Students' attainment and progress were worse than in the previous year. In addition, there was still a matter of non-compliance in Arabic in the Diploma programme. The board had not held the school to account in those areas. Also, there was no direct representative of the parent body on the board although parents were consulted through surveys and discussions.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Teachers held qualifications appropriate to the age ranges they taught and were deployed effectively. For example, teaching assistants were used effectively in the majority of lessons. Resources for learning, such as interactive white boards in lessons were used by both teachers and children. The PE and music facilities were high quality and varied. The number of books in the library was increasing and included a variety of attractive Arabic books. The number of students in school was growing and the school was vigilant about its capacity to accommodate them.

[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	205	21%
	Last year	95	17%
Teachers	86		58%
Students	70		33%

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

There was an increase in the number of parents responding to the survey from the previous year, although only about a fifth of the parents responded. Responses were broadly positive. Significant trends in the parent survey indicated satisfaction with the strong sense of community and the welcoming ethos that the school provided. The teaching staff were praised for their dedication, attention to individual students and approachability. Many parents and students appreciated the diversity of cultures within the school and the opportunities that these interactions provided for their children along with the celebrations at different special events. The excellent facilities were also highlighted and the impact that these had on providing diverse opportunities for students were mentioned by many parents, teachers and students.

## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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