

GEMS Jumeirah Primary School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 6

Report Published May 2010

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report	2
Basic information about the school.....	2
How well does the school perform overall?.....	3
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations.....	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	9
Summary of inspection judgements	11
Next Steps.....	15
How to contact us.....	15

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

GEMS Jumeirah Primary School was inspected in October 2009 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Jumeirah, GEMS Jumeirah Primary School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged three to 11 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. The Principal took up his post in September 2009. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,229 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Overwhelmingly, the parents were very pleased with the school. Almost all parents agreed that their children liked school; that the teaching was good; that their children were treated fairly; and that the children were being encouraged to become independent and responsible people. Parents liked the range of activities available to their children and almost all agreed that they were comfortable approaching the school with any questions or complaints. Most parents felt that the school would act promptly to address any issues and that teachers were good at explaining to parents what they could do at home to help with their children's work. Almost all parents felt that their children were well cared for and that levels of health and safety were high. Links with parents were thought to be good; parents confirmed that the school had responded well to the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Parents were very happy with their children's progress in all subjects, except for Arabic. Parents confirmed that the school was very well led.

How well does the school perform overall?

GEMS Jumeirah Primary School provided a good quality of education and a number of its elements were outstanding. It met its aim as a learning community with perceptive and energetic leadership from the Principal supported by a unified and committed management team. Inspectors judged students' attainment as outstanding in English and mathematics. At the Foundation Stage, attainment in science was outstanding. Attainment and progress in Islamic and Arabic Education were now acceptable at all stages of the school. Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding and the school had developed many cross-curricular links to support students' understanding of Islam and of the economic and environmental challenges for the nation, and the inspectors judged these areas to be good. Children's learning in the Foundation Stage and assessment throughout the school were outstanding.

Teaching in the primary phase and learning throughout the school were good. Students' learning had improved since the last inspection as a result of the development of the tracking system and teachers' greater focus on the needs of individual students. Teaching had also benefited from a number of teachers' reflections on their classroom practice and teaching techniques, but this did not apply to all teachers. A hallmark of the school was the high quality of relationship between students and teachers which underpinned the naturalness and effectiveness of the lessons. The school had worked hard on the inclusion of all students, including those with particular learning needs, within mainstream lessons. The support of these students by their fellow students was admirable. Assessment of students' work was thorough and carefully directed so that students and their parents were well aware of the levels reached and the targets set for further development. Assessment included praise and encouragement but remained focused on the strategies to improve students' attainment. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage was outstanding and good in the primary stage. The wide-ranging curriculum, whereby students were able to develop their skills and knowledge, was under review as part of the Principal's vision for students' learning. The school was committed to retaining the exposure of students to a wealth of learning opportunities whilst aiming to meet the needs of the many nationalities in the school and also to meet national requirements. The number of lessons for Arab students to study Arabic did not fully conform to the Ministry of Education guidelines but the allocation had improved since the last inspection. The school had maintained the outstanding provision for the care and support of students. Whilst strongly conforming to all the requirements and policies in terms of health and safety, the key to the high quality of care was how well the teachers knew the needs of each student. This knowledge of the individual student, together with more detailed awareness of academic progress, contributed to the greater effectiveness of the tracking system. The care of students in all spheres of their school activities led to students being confident and focused, as well as enjoying their school life.

The leadership and management of the school were outstanding. Staff were fully involved in self-review and development and were strongly aided in their professional improvement by the school's programme of continuing professional development. Staff were carefully recruited and fully supported by senior managers, who ensured that staff enjoyed access to a high quality of resources which they used effectively in their teaching. The Principal had not only been instrumental in addressing the recommendation of the previous inspection regarding the tracking of students' progress but was already seeing the results of his new strategies for the school's self-evaluation and engagement with the parents. The recommendation regarding Arabic had been addressed but not fully implemented. The school's promise to its parents was very well met.

Key features of the school

- The strong practice of inclusion whereby all students were able to participate in the life of the school;
- The committed and knowledgeable leadership of the Principal with his clear vision for the future development of the school;
- The natural atmosphere of the school community reflected in highly supportive staff-student relationships underpinned by mutual respect and strong support of students;
- A learning culture of enjoyable endeavour, progress and exemplary behaviour;
- Students' outstanding attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6;
- The wide range of extra-curricular activity supported by the school's high quality of facilities and resources;
- The engagement with parents to involve them in the life and development of the school;
- There were remaining weaknesses in the curriculum for Islamic and Arabic Education.

Recommendations

- Continue to strengthen the initiatives already in place for the teaching of Islamic and Arabic;
- Continue to strengthen the cross-curricular inclusion of civic and Islamic understanding throughout the curriculum.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable. In the early primary years the majority of students distinguished between Allah's creations and those made by man. Students knew basic information about the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), such as his birth and childhood. The majority of older students could recall and tell some of the Prophet's (PBUH) stories such as Adam and Ibrahim. They understood the Pillars of Faith and the power of Allah. The majority of students could recite some short Surahs from The Holy Qur'an.

Attainment and progress for students of Arabic as an additional language were acceptable. Students in all years made acceptable progress in listening, speaking and writing. By Year 6, the majority of students were able to communicate in short sentences in both writing and speaking. Native Arabic speakers made acceptable progress in the acquisition of key skills. Their reading and speaking skills were more fluent than their writing. Conversation in pairs about stories showed an acceptable level of communication.

In English, progress through both Foundation Stage and the primary phase was good and attainment was outstanding. Students consistently attained standards far above age-related norms. By the end of the primary phase students were achieving levels in the English National Curriculum tests which were far above average. Particular strengths were the speaking skills, with students being articulate and showing confidence and fluency while using a well-developed vocabulary. Reading and listening skills were well developed, and both younger and older students were able to read aloud with expression and fluency. Handwriting and presentation in notebooks were very good and short comprehension exercises were completed accurately. Younger students were able to write short, original sentences. Primary students showed creativity in personal writing with age-appropriate use of persuasive vocabulary and grammar.

In mathematics, students made good progress and reached outstanding levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. This marked an improvement since the school was last inspected. By the end of the primary phase students were achieving levels in the mathematics National Curriculum tests which were above average. Attainment at the end of Year 2 was above average. Mathematical skills and understanding were well developed throughout the school. In Foundation Stage, children were confident in their mathematical understanding and demonstrated very good awareness of shape, numeracy and mathematical language. Their grasp of sequencing was particularly strong. In the primary phase students extended their use of specialist mathematical language to a high level and were adept at work in 3-D shapes, fractions, measurement and square and cubic numbers. Students were observed using their mathematical skills in other subjects and topic areas. Progress in problem solving was slightly slower than that in other areas and the school planned to improve this aspect further.

Attainment and progress in science were good in the primary phase. In Foundation Stage attainment was outstanding while progress was good. Children in Foundation Stage developed their investigative skills and scientific knowledge through engagement in a variety of activities that provided them with the opportunity to probe and explore the world around them. Whilst progress continued to be good in the primary phase, attainment to the highest level was hampered by an inconsistent approach to investigation work. By the end of Year 6, almost all students had good scientific vocabulary, understood classification data collection and had grasped a number of scientific concepts which they were able to relate to their lives and the world around them.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Staff had created a positive and supportive learning environment and students spoke highly of the school and staff. The attitudes and behaviour of almost all students in class and around school were marked by a naturalness which reflected the mutual respect between students and teachers. Almost all of the students exercised outstanding self-control and showed this quality both in collaborative and independent learning. Students played sport with a competitive spirit but exhibited obvious respect for their opponents and referees. Attendance was good, as was punctuality to lessons.

Students' understanding of Islam and the civic aspects of Dubai was good. Primary students demonstrated a clear understanding and appreciation of what was special about Dubai and this was reflected in lessons and in the classroom displays of students' investigations of Dubai society. Primary students also showed age-appropriate knowledge of Islam as was clear in both lessons and discussion with students. Foundation Stage children showed understanding appropriate for their age and, although articulate, were less confident when asked to give reasons for their ideas and opinions. Almost all children said they enjoyed living in Dubai and could explain the multi-cultural aspects of society in the United Arab Emirates.

Students understood the economic and environmental challenges facing the region. They were able to explain and illustrate, through class displays, the issues of the economic cycle, pollution and waste. Students' understanding of local environmental issues was enhanced by participation in re-cycling projects and awareness of the role of the metro system in reducing the negative effects of pollution and global warming. Community service projects involving outreach to the elderly helped students appreciate the contribution all groups can make to society and aided students' understanding of age-related issues in society as a whole.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good with a significant number of lessons being assessed as outstanding. Teachers planned their lessons very effectively and introduced good variety into the learning experiences of their students. Throughout the school, teachers' subject knowledge was strong as was their confident use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance students' learning. The aims of almost all lessons were made clear for the students and were reviewed at the end of the time allocated. Work was planned to meet the learning needs of all students and classrooms were well organised. Students experiencing difficulties with their learning were given very good support and included fully in the lessons, but, at times, the more able were not sufficiently challenged. The school had introduced on its intranet a clear system of targets for all children in all areas of the curriculum in order to provide targeted objectives to all students. Teachers created successful working relationships with their students, and many were skilled at using questioning techniques that invited students to think critically. In the outstanding lessons, students were encouraged to challenge the teacher's view or to provide a different argument, notably in English. A particular strength of the teaching was the teachers' use of the ample resources at their disposal, which included the significant contribution made by teaching assistants and learning support assistants. In Arabic, insufficient links were made by teachers to the daily lives of the students.

The quality of students' learning was good. Students clearly enjoyed their lessons and showed good motivation, high levels of concentration and a desire to succeed. Throughout the school students worked with a real sense of purpose in a natural atmosphere of calm and order. This stemmed, in part, from the teachers, almost all of whom managed class control well by their quality of teaching and engagement with students. Students worked well individually and the majority showed excellent skills as independent learners. In paired and group work students supported one another effectively. Students appreciated and supported the school's inclusive policy.

The assessment strategies were outstanding. Class assessment was notable and this was combined with written assessment which merged encouragement with the setting of realistic goals for development. In almost all English lessons, there was a culture of self-review, where students had been taught how to be critical of their own writing and given strategies for self-improvement.

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

The curriculum was based on the English National Curriculum. Its quality in the primary phase was good while it was outstanding in Foundation Stage. The curriculum offered its students breadth, balance and relevance in almost all areas. The curriculum had a clear rationale and was regularly updated to help students relate to their local environment. Physical and practical experiences were well planned within the curriculum and an extra-curricular programme of activities during and after the school day extended the students further. The English National Curriculum provided a high level of challenge to almost all students, but this level of challenge was not evident in all science lessons. There were weaknesses in the curriculum for Islamic and Arabic Education. The time allocation for Arabic for Arab students and Islamic Education for both Arab Muslim students and for non-Arab Muslim students was below the Ministry of Education requirements. The curriculum was thoroughly and regularly reviewed and updated by the curriculum committee. This review included analysis to ensure that the curriculum provided a balanced development of students' skills while responding to their individual needs. The committee was aware of areas to develop further in the curriculum and had effective action plans in place. The curriculum was planned to ensure continuity and progression across the school. Cross-curricular themes were well managed and enhanced the continuous development of students' skills and thought processes. The achievement centre was very well managed by a team of specialists catering for varying needs such as counselling, speech therapy, listening skills and fine motor skills development. Community links were developed through a variety of activities to cover a wider range of exposure for students to Dubai and the UAE, but this aspect was yet not fully developed.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Policies were well framed and known by staff, but, more importantly, the practice in health and safety reflected the high level of care by which staff supported students. Students and the parents confirmed this in discussion and through questionnaire responses. Policies and risk assessments for child protection, anti-bullying, attendance, punctuality, access, security, fire safety and medical care were seen to be effective in practice supported by comprehensive and accurate records. The accommodation was of a very high order and maintained to an equally high standard, which strongly supported the quality of the students' development. The school emphasised the promotion of healthy lifestyles through the work of the head of well being, and its physical education programme. Students enjoyed excellent supervision at all times.

The relationship between staff and students was a strong feature of the school. They exhibited a natural ease in each other's company, had mutual respect for their views and ideas and enjoyed conversing with each other in the daily life of the school. Students, equally, showed a very high level of respect and care for each other, particularly for those with special educational needs. A clear and pro-active behaviour policy was in place, but students were naturally well-mannered and positive in all their activities. Students valued the support of their teachers and also appreciated the structures for being involved in the development of the school through such activities as the pupil council. These relationships and opportunities were a significant factor in the students' development into confident and ambitious but caring young people. The tracking of students' well-being and academic progress was rigorous. Most importantly, the strong culture of personal and academic care stemmed from staff knowing their students and their individual needs very well. Whilst many students move on to a partner senior school, advice was given on choices for secondary education. Reports to parents provided excellent information about academic progress and personal development.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was outstanding throughout the school. The highly effective senior leadership team was committed to maintaining high standards and further school improvement. They had set the school's change agenda through staff consultation and delegated responsibility to teams which engaged enthusiasm and accountability. The performance management system included school priorities linked to effective continuing professional development. This could usefully include a greater emphasis on self-reflection. Besides taking a strong strategic lead, the senior team had well-developed communication systems which gave them early warning of potential issues in order to resolve them before they became significant problems.

The school improvement plans were drawn from self-evaluation that focused the school's energies on improving students' learning outcomes. The priorities were the right ones to continue the drive for further improvement. At the heart of the needs analysis process was the ICT based system for tracking student progress which was significantly improving the setting of challenging targets. The school had quickly put in place provision improvements recommended at the previous inspection and gains in student outcomes were already evident.

The school fostered highly effective links to help parents support their child's learning. The school used ICT to very good effect to do this; the planned virtual learning environment being a good example. The school provided accurate information on student progress, encouraged parents' access to class teachers and suggested how parents could support learning at home. Parental engagement was an important factor in maintaining high standards. The very good range of local and international links broadened students' understanding and kept the school in touch with educational thinking and assisted its self-evaluation. Community links had been developed but there was more to do in this area, including the exploration of a link with a local public school.

Governance was provided by Global Educational Management Systems (GEMS) senior executives, school principals and a board of experienced members. Board members and the nominated executive member regularly visited the school. Governance provided educational, legal, financial and regulatory support as well as a rigorous structure for monitoring and guidance. This was augmented by conduits for receiving parents' views, including a parental advisory group to communicate issues and promote ideas about school development. Governance also had a compensation and grievance committee to which parents could appeal in cases of complaints unresolved at school level.

The school had a good number of well-qualified, experienced teachers to provide a high quality education for all its students. This included students with additional needs for whom specialist support was used well to complement the school's outstanding provision. Teaching assistants ensured all students accessed the full curriculum. Improvements to the staffing structure avoided duplication of effort and increasingly focused staff energies on improving student progress. Staff had created a highly effective learning environment. The quality of themed displays was excellent. The library and discovery centre was a well-used resource that the school sought to enhance. Information and communication technology equipment levels were keeping pace with increasing demand and staff and students used them highly effectively.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Good
Progress over time	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group: Foundation Stage	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. 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.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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