

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Our Own English High School - Dubai

Report published in January 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Our Own English High School - Dubai

Location	Al Warqa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsoo-dubai.com
Telephone	04-2361335
Address	PO Box 3004, Al Warqa 3, Dubai.
Principal	Mr. Aziz Akhtar
Curriculum	Indian (CBSE)
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-17 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	9,344
Students' nationalities	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	30th September to 4th October 2012

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The context of the school

GEMS Our Own English High School is situated in Al Warqa. It opened in 1968 and had been on its present campus for just over a year at the time of the inspection. The total enrolment of the school was 9,344 students, aged four to 17 years. Classes were mixed through to Grade 4 and then girls only from Grades 5 to 12. The school had grown in size by 1,360 students since the last inspection.

The school followed the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum, but no longer offered the CBSE-International curriculum in Grades 1, 6 and 9. The school followed a GEMS/Indian curriculum in the Kindergarten.

There were 420 teachers on staff, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. There were over eleven nationalities comprising the student body, with 96 per cent of the students being of Indian heritage and the most of the others from Pakistan and other Asian subcontinent countries. The school was welcoming to students with special educational needs and the students were well integrated within classrooms and outside at break times. The school had appointed new staff members specifically to meet the needs of these students when withdrawn from mainstream classes.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- Outstanding attainment and progress in secondary English and science;
- The attitude and behaviour of students, particularly in the middle and secondary phases;
- The students' understanding of Islam and appreciation for local traditions and culture, particularly in the primary, middle and secondary phases;
- The understanding of students in the middle and secondary phases of civic and environmental matters;
- Outstanding health and safety arrangements for all students of the school.

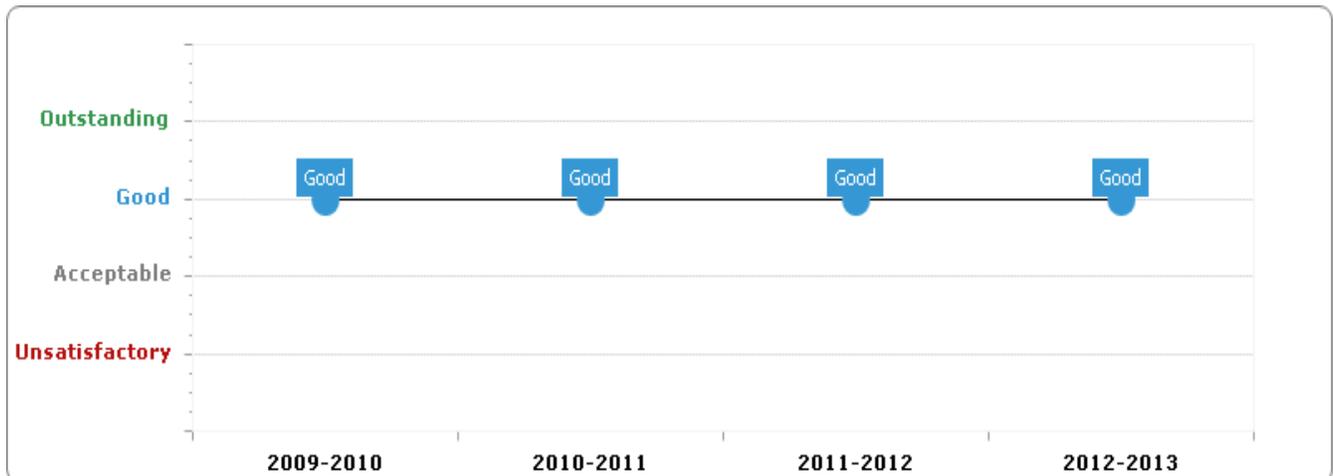
Recommendations

- Build on the improvements seen in Arabic lessons, wherein secondary students made good progress, so that attainment and progress is consistently good across the school;
- Increase the number of opportunities for students to learn independently and to think critically;
- Develop the expertise of staff members so that all students with special educational needs receive targeted support in all lessons;
- Evaluate teaching, learning and assessment more accurately to identify areas for improvement;
- Ensure that the governing body introduces formal links with parents and monitors school performance more robustly;
- Reduce class sizes in the Kindergarten to comply with Ministry of Education requirements.

Progress since the last inspection

- Attainment and progress in Arabic had improved in the secondary phase and was now good;
- Assessment systems in the school had improved but still not sufficiently informing planning and teaching;
- The school was compliant in the weekly time allocations for Islamic Education and Arabic lessons;
- Not enough teachers modified their teaching methods or differentiated effectively in their lessons for the students with special educational needs.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment was at least good in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science and acceptable in Arabic. Attainment in secondary English and science was outstanding. The majority of Muslim students understood and applied Islamic etiquettes to a good level; they could also explain the Islamic morals and values in depth. A few could analyse and infer lessons from Prophet Mohammed's Seerah and link it to their lives. In English, students demonstrated good writing, speaking, listening and reading skills; they were outstanding in the secondary phase. High quality discussions were a feature of secondary lessons. In mathematics, students showed good number and calculation skills, were able to solve problems well, and in secondary classes, manipulated algebra accurately and confidently. Investigative, critical thinking and higher order skills were under developed in both mathematics and science. Most students' understanding of scientific concepts and their use of scientific language was strong. Their ability to hypothesise, draw conclusions from results and apply learning to real life issues was less developed.

Students' progress in most key subjects was at least good, with the exception of secondary Islamic Education, where it was acceptable. Progress in Arabic lessons was noted to be good and this was confirmed by a review of the students' books. Progress in English for the most able was inconsistent because of lack of challenge. Progress was outstanding in the secondary phases because of a strong emphasis on debate and oral presentations. Good progress was seen in mathematics, even when solving word problems, and especially for the most able students who were challenged more appropriately. Real-life mathematical problem-solving helped students to develop better understanding. Progress in secondary science was outstanding. Apart from the secondary phase the opportunities for students to experiment were limited. The progress made by students with special educational needs was acceptable in the majority of key subjects, but good in mathematics and science where more appropriate support was provided.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in the middle and secondary phases and good in the Kindergarten and primary phases. Behaviour in classrooms, corridors and recreation areas was very good and most students managed their own behaviour effectively. However, children in the Kindergarten were presented with too few opportunities to develop self-discipline. Senior students made a very positive contribution to monitoring the safety and security of young children. Punctuality was good for all years but attendance for the Kindergarten and primary years was unsatisfactory. It was acceptable in the secondary phase and good in the middle school. Students showed a very good understanding of Islamic values. They

appreciated the relevance and impact of these values on everyday life in Dubai and reflected upon key messages in relation to their own lives and experience. Local traditions and cultural heritage were well known and understood by students who recognised their importance, relevance and value. They demonstrated a mature grasp of cultural diversity and breadth including music, art and literature from around the world. They participated actively in environmental projects and could explain the importance of alternative energy. Students took initiative by taking part in community organised events. However, only a few showed a good understanding of environmental sustainability.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in all phases. Teachers were well organised, although sometimes their lesson plans were not fully followed. Most teachers demonstrated a good knowledge of their subjects. Teachers often started with a helpful review of what had been covered in the previous lesson. Teachers mostly shared the lesson objectives with the students, but often this was in terms of what would be learnt rather than the skills that would be developed. Time management was effective overall, but there were occasions when plenary sessions were rushed or the teacher summarised the learning instead of the students. There was a good rapport between most teachers and students. When differentiation was planned, it was often through worksheets that had some good extension questions for the more able students. Teachers rarely provided students with opportunities for critical thinking. The teaching of information and communication technology, physical education, humanities and other subjects was good overall. In successful lessons, such as that seen in secondary commerce, students carried out their own research on entrepreneurs and presented their findings to their peers. Middle school students took advantage of the excellent studio facilities to demonstrate how emotions can be communicated through dance.

Students' learning was good in all grades. Most students demonstrated a good commitment to their learning. They behaved well and the majority showed enthusiasm for their work. They learnt about real life situations in most subjects. Learning was at its most effective during group work because students were actively engaged. Although information and communications technology was well used by students in computer-based lessons, there were minimal opportunities for its use in other subjects. As a result, opportunities for independent learning and research during lessons were very limited. Learning for students with special educational needs was very limited during normal lessons.

Assessment was good across all phases of the school. School systems were consistent and a large amount of accurate data was collected. This was analysed well at individual and class level but not at grade level or phase level. Additional support was given when identified by assessment. Parents and students had access to the assessment results through the web portal. Students received feedback on their performance

but there was little on how to make improvements. Consequently, student involvement in their own learning was less effective. The teachers knew their students fairly well. However, they did not sufficiently use their assessments to adapt teaching and thus improve learning. The assessment of students with special educational needs was at an early stage of development. The identification of and support for a wider range of specific learning difficulties was under-developed.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was broad and balanced. All students successfully sat the CBSE examinations and were well prepared for further education. The curriculum had been reviewed, taking into account the views of parents, and was compliant for teaching time in both Islamic Education and Arabic. Students had good opportunities to make choices and a separate science stream had been established; consequently almost all Grade 10 students opted to remain in the school. Good continuity supported the majority of students to make good progress. However, the curriculum was not sufficiently matched to the needs of students requiring support in their learning. Neither did it consistently provide the more able with challenging work. For example, Kindergarten science offered relatively few opportunities for investigation. Transition arrangements, both from Kindergarten into primary and then into the secondary grades were good. There were high quality enrichment activities. However, participation was extremely limited; students reported to inspectors that they would like access to a greater range.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Provision for health and safety was outstanding in all aspects of school life. The school offered a clean, hygienic and safe environment accessible to all its students. Effective procedures were employed to ensure the secure storage of hazardous equipment and chemicals. Comprehensive and very professional health care and health education was provided across the school. There were outstanding arrangements to ensure the safe and efficient transportation of students to and from school. The school had rehearsed procedures for the evacuation of the school in the event of emergency. This had been done one phase of the school at a time, but no whole-school drill had taken place by the time of the inspection.

Teachers had very good rapport with students and exemplary behaviour was a notable feature. A culture of mutual respect had inspired confidence and promoted trust among teachers and students. Both groups displayed great pride in their school. Attendance and punctuality records were accurate and parents supported the school's policy in its efforts to reduce absences, particularly in the Kindergarten and primary phases. The advice and support for almost all students was good. High quality support and careers guidance were available at all times to students from Grades 9 to 12.

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

A minority of students with special education needs were enrolled in the school. The school had begun to implement procedures for identifying such students, led by the specialist staff and counsellor with the support of class teachers and parents. The provision of individual education plans was developing well. Support given to students individually outside the classroom and in lessons was effective and often resulted in good progress. However, few teachers modified their teaching methods, differentiated effectively or had a good understanding of the range of special educational needs. As a result, not enough students had their special needs sufficiently met. Their overall progress was acceptable, although it was stronger in mathematics and science.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was good. The new Principal had successfully settled the school in its new building as well as absorbing a further one thousand students. The senior and middle leadership teams had increased in size and included new posts but the capacity to improve was limited by the extent of delegation that is possible with a relatively small team of leaders for such a large school. Regular meetings between the many teams in the school ensured a common direction and focus. The Principal had set clear goals for year-on-year improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good overall, but there were some weaknesses in the way the school judged its effectiveness. Plans for improvement were in place and set out clearly the actions needed for improvement. Staff members were involved at all levels in self-evaluation and action planning but the criteria for making judgements at times lacked rigour. An effective system of teacher appraisal was in place but insufficient prominence was given to teaching and learning. There were no clear links between lesson observation scores and teacher appraisal judgements. The data from lesson observations was not aggregate or analysed to provide useful data to support teaching and learning improvements.

Partnerships between the school and parents and the community were good. Parents praised the school for its highly effective communication systems and the accessibility of teachers. The school had a highly motivated group of parents called 'Our Own Voice' that aspired to be a link between school and home. Parents were keen to be involved in the life of the school and readily volunteered their services by, for

instance, painting murals in the Kindergarten and giving talks on internet safety. The school had some useful community links but its contact with local businesses was limited.

Governance was acceptable. Although there was no formal advisory body with stakeholder representation for the school, parents were able to communicate with the owner's representatives directly by e-mail. The Principal was held to account by the directorate but they did not use sufficiently robust sources of data to ensure they had an accurate critique of performance. The governors had insufficient regard for the impact of class sizes on the quality of education provided, particularly in the Kindergarten.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school ran very smoothly with good communication systems and organisation as demonstrated by the well organised arrival and departure of buses. The building was spacious, and the range and quality of all specialist facilities was good. However, the number of children in Kindergarten classes exceeded Ministry of Education requirements and there were few classroom assistants. Almost all other classes were similarly too large. Resources were mostly good, including access to information and communications technology facilities in all rooms, but the Kindergarten classes lacked the simple resources necessary for good early childhood education.

[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	3124	39%
	Last year	4569	55%
Teachers	70		17%
Students	398		26%

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

Parents had difficulty logging-on to use the on-line survey, but the response rate was representative. Parents at a meeting during the inspection and in the survey expressed very positive views about the school. Similar supportive comments were made by senior students and staff. Almost all who responded thought their children were making good progress in English and most indicated that their children were making good progress in mathematics and science. Only 39 per cent of parents thought progress in Islamic Education was good. Almost all parents and most students reported an enjoyment of the school. Almost all students and parents and all staff appreciated the care and safe environment for the students. Almost all parents thought that school reports were regular and helpful, but over one third of students did not think they got helpful feedback on their learning. About half of the parents and students thought they were involved in making decisions about the school. By contrast, most teachers indicated they were involved in decision-making.

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

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