

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Wellington International School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Wellington International School

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.wellingtoninternationalschool.com
Telephone	04-3484999
Address	P. O. Box 37486, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Keith Miller
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage 1 to Year 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2,325
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	29 (1%)
Date of the inspection	27th to 31st January 2013

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	9
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	9
How good is the students' personal and social development?	10
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	10
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	11
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	12
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next?	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

The student population of GEMS Wellington International School had increased by a small margin from the previous year. Almost a quarter of students were new to the school. Overall, the largest nationality group was British. There were sizeable minorities of other Europeans, Indian and Arab students and a wide representation of nationalities from around the world.

The school followed two main curricula. Children in the Foundation Stage and students in the primary and secondary phases followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales. Students in the post-16 phase undertook the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Islamic Education and Arabic provision followed the Ministry of Education guidelines. Classes had an average of 25 students; the teacher to student ratio was 1 to 13. Half of the students were in the primary phase and approximately one third were in the secondary phase. The provision for special educational needs was by two specialist leaders and 12 specialist staff working from a support unit, the Achievement Centre. The 179 teachers were predominantly British and almost all had teaching qualifications. There had been a significant change of teachers, due in part to the expanded student population. Of these teachers, 52 (29 per cent) were new this year and 65 (36 per cent) were in their second year. There were 68 teaching assistants. The principal had been in post since September 2012.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Outstanding

Key strengths

- The excellent attainment and progress maintained by students in English, mathematics, science and art, and the school's celebration of students' work;
- The outstanding personal and social development of the students, including their strong self-image, promoted by the school's outstanding care and support for them;
- High-quality teaching that was underpinned by skillful use of assessment, high expectations and a hands-on approach;
- The students' mature and extensive learning skills that enabled them to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the school;
- The excellent leadership at every level that ensured stability, a shared vision, a common sense of purpose and continued success.

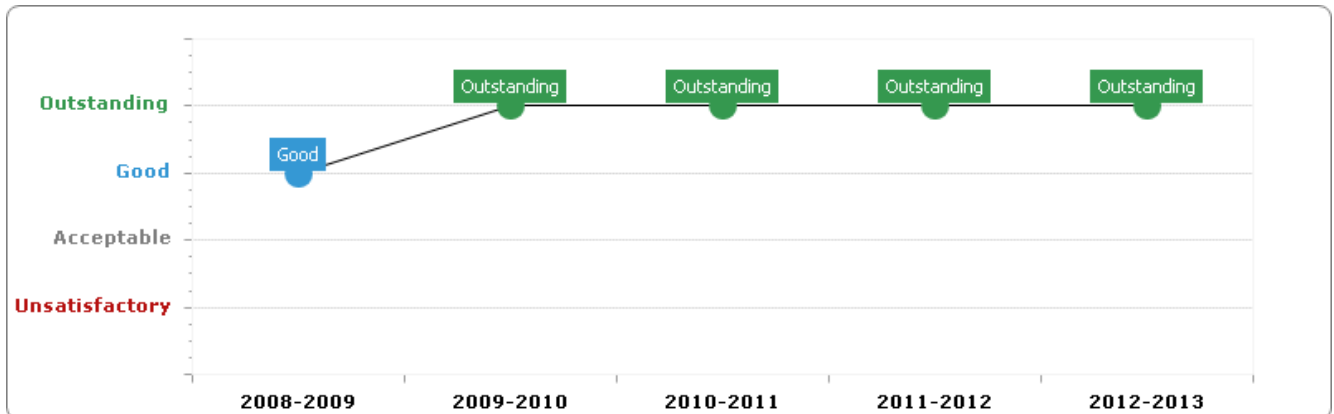
Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic by ensuring that:
 - the curriculum fully meets students' needs;
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of students;
 - teachers use resources more skillfully to support learning;
- Improve the opportunities for students to interact more with the local community of Dubai;
- Embed existing plans to provide a more consistently innovative and imaginative curriculum in all subjects throughout the school.

Progress since the last inspection

- There was improved attainment in English and progress in mathematics by students in the post-16 phase, and improved secondary students' science attainment;
- There was a continued and successful focus on students' academic progress, learning skills and personal development by all teachers, championed by all leaders;
- There were improvements in the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic;
- There was smooth transition to the new leadership team and assimilation of new staff.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science				
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
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	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Most students' attainment in English, mathematics and science was outstanding and was the main strength of the school. Test and examination results were well above international standards, but they were not quite so high in post-16 mathematics and science. In English, speaking and listening were advanced skills, even in the Foundation Stage. Students loved reading and read age-appropriate texts confidently. They wrote lucidly, accurately and imaginatively. Older students' essays were well structured and fluent. In mathematics, most Foundation Stage children had an excellent grasp of number, shape and measurement. From primary onward, students displayed impressive mental agility and calculation skills in their solutions of real-life problems. In all phases, students had mature scientific skills of enquiry based on a wide knowledge and hands-on experience. In Islamic Education, attainment was good in the primary years, where most students had a good knowledge of, for example, the pillars of Islam. Attainment was acceptable in the secondary years because students' knowledge was less secure. Attainment in Arabic was mostly acceptable, considering students' differing lengths of time learning the language. Students whose first language was Arabic had strong speaking and listening skills. However, attainment was unsatisfactory for these students in secondary because of their weak reading comprehension and writing skills.

Students' progress was outstanding in English, mathematics and science, except for post-16 science where it was good. Students rapidly developed their knowledge and skills from the Foundation Stage onwards. Language skills were quickly acquired through the promotion of discussion and rich opportunities to read and write. This was much truer of English than of Arabic, although progress was mostly good for second language learners. The progress of students whose first language was Arabic was acceptable, but not higher because they did not develop good reading and writing skills, despite their good knowledge of grammar. Alongside a strong knowledge base, students developed excellent investigational and research skills which enabled them to solve problems in mathematics and science thoughtfully, often intuitively and usually successfully. Progress in Islamic Education was good in the primary phase because students learned to relate Islamic values to real life. In the secondary phase, students' memorisation and recitation skills were not developed enough. The progress of students with special educational needs was the same as that of other students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students prospered at this school, just as other students did. Their attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education and acceptable in Arabic. Their progress was outstanding in English, mathematics and science, but attainment was good, not higher because they tended to start from lower starting points

when they began school. Their attitudes, behaviour and social development were outstanding; they displayed an excellent work ethic. They were proud of their own heritage, whilst sensitive to other cultures. Emirati students received exactly the same provision as all other students. Indeed, one of the school's strengths lay in the way it treated all students equally. The school knew exactly how well Emirati students were progressing and provided skilled support and advice when appropriate. Parents were very supportive and were routinely involved in their children's education at school and at home.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students had extremely positive approaches to learning. They initiated and managed their own projects, frequently thinking 'outside the box'. They accepted critical feedback with maturity, listening attentively to the views of others. They looked towards fulfilling their dreams, having high aspirations that ranged from anticipating life in university or just being old enough to use the 'big boys' library. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie, and all willingly helped and supported each other. Students proudly confirmed that 'everyone can be themselves in this school'. Behaviour was not perfect but it was nevertheless outstanding. Students were generally very aware of components of a healthy lifestyle and made wise choices about food and sport. Attendance was acceptable; there was some tardiness at the start of some post-16 lessons. Students had a clear understanding of Islamic values and their influence on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. They could explain how Dubai helped poorer countries. Almost all students had an excellent understanding of the traditions, culture and heritage of Dubai. Students were aware of the importance of other cultures within Dubai and developed successful relationships with other students from different cultural backgrounds. Students showed an impressive level of allegiance and commitment to their school and global community. Their involvement in the local community was less well developed. They displayed a real pride in their work, which was celebrated throughout the school. Students had an excellent work ethic and talked about 'being the best you can be'. They had very good opportunities to develop enterprise skills. Recycling and energy-saving projects affected daily school life positively. As part of a new initiative, students grew organic food as ingredients for healthy school lunches.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teachers had strong subject knowledge and most understood how to maximise students' progress and learning through careful planning. Teachers shared clear and challenging learning outcomes. Most lessons had a brisk and purposeful pace. Teachers ascertained and reinforced students' understanding with probing questions. These forced students to think critically and to dig deep into their vocabularies to respond fully. The better teachers also used questioning to generate a rich learning dialogue within their classes. Teachers

had very high expectations of students and there was little difference between the performances of different groups in lessons. In all phases, teachers placed emphasis on developing age-appropriate problem-solving skills, critical thinking, analysis and research. When teaching was less effective, lessons were unimaginatively planned, had too little challenge and learning that did not relate enough to real life.

Students' mature and extensive learning skills were a key strength. In all phases, students were highly motivated, engaged and enthusiastic learners. In the Foundation Stage, children developed independent learning skills and learned to take some responsibility for their own learning. As students progressed, they were encouraged to set achievable learning targets and track their own progress. In group work, including paired talk and group problem solving, they collaborated adeptly to achieve the learning goals. Students showed a developing ability to apply their knowledge to new situations, and to the real world. By post-16 age, most students were skilled in analysis, thinking critically and presenting arguments.

Assessment procedures remained outstanding across the school. Nevertheless, the school had further strengthened its systems. The new marking policy had improved the quality of feedback to students on how to improve their work. Students were much more confident in assessing their own work and that of their peers. Effective questioning was used to check students' understanding during lessons. Conversations about students' learning enabled teachers and middle leaders to monitor students' progress and to allocate support for those with additional learning needs and special talents. They also ensured subsequent expectations had the right levels of challenge. End-of-year results were analysed to compare actual attainment against predictions and international benchmarks, and to check the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was comprehensive and very well structured. Lessons and activities promoted challenge, enjoyment, progression and choice in learning for all students. In the Foundation Stage, there was a very effective balance between child and teacher-initiated learning. Planning across phases took into account previous learning, ensuring smooth progression in most subjects. However, curriculum expectations in Islamic Education and Arabic were not high enough to meet all students' needs. As a result of regular review, students' interests were at the heart of teachers' planning. Therefore, the curriculum became more relevant and engaging for students, and included many links to current events across the world. Themed, cross-curricular links and a range of activities, including field trips, residential excursions and projects ensured that skills across different subjects were developed well. However, in a minority of lessons, the curriculum content lacked interest and challenge. There were opportunities across the school for students to develop

entrepreneurial skills, including working partnerships with international businesses in the UAE and further afield. Extra-curricular activities were available for students but these varied in quality and quantity.

[View judgments](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. The school provided an exceptionally safe and secure learning environment. The premises were maintained in an excellent condition; all areas were clean and litter-free. Staff members were regularly updated on child protection arrangements and made aware of any student's medical needs. All medicines were stored safely and administered responsibly by the school doctors and medical staff. Arrangements for the evacuation of the school building in the event of an emergency had been improved.

Exits from the building had been widened and new evacuation routes established to ensure there were no congestion points. Detailed records of fire drills and other statutory safety requirements were maintained. Bus safety arrangements were stringently followed and drop-off and pick-up times were carefully supervised. Not all parents were considerate at these times, and caused unnecessary delay and congestion.

Relationships between the staff and students were excellent. Staff members had extremely good knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. The recording of attendance and punctuality was accurate and parents were contacted if a student failed to appear.

Students were able to seek advice and support on academic or personal issues, from a wide range of adults. Students felt confident that their concerns would be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. Advice on careers and university entrance was readily available.

[View judgements](#)

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

There were well established and very effective processes for identifying students with special educational needs. Highly experienced and professional staff members provided excellent levels of support both in the Achievement Centre and in the regular classes. This enabled students to make excellent progress. There was skilled additional support by specialists throughout the Foundation Stage, the primary and secondary phases.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The astute and highly skilled leaders at all levels were central to the school's continued success. Despite the many recent changes, there was a cohesive energy and sense of purpose. All leaders shared the same philosophy that championed students' academic and personal achievement, as well as a common desire to improve the school further. Communication at all levels of leadership was open and constructive. Problems were faced honestly. Stakeholders were routinely consulted. The school was far from complacent. The leaders of the school had not only maintained the existing high outcomes in most subjects; they had succeeded in strengthening some of the weaker elements. In so doing, leaders showed a strong capacity to improve.

The school knew itself thoroughly. Its extensive and rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate its own provision and outcomes were mostly very effective. Key priorities were few but very focused, and stemmed from the sharp analysis of data and attention to the issues this revealed. For example, the school was eager to strengthen its already outstanding curriculum. Teachers' professional development was a top priority and its high quality ensured excellent continuity and consistency in teaching. The school had maintained its outstanding aspects and improved the students' attainment and progress in some subjects. It had done well to address the recommendations from the previous inspection report, notably the vocational pathways for students.

Parents were an intrinsic part of school life. The school had successfully engaged them in their children's learning through numerous workshops and other activities including, for example, a Year 1 house-building session. The parents association was very active in fundraising and promoting the social aspect of the school. Home and school communication was frequent and informative. The school website was extensive and comprehensive. Parents appreciated the approachability of the staff and members' accessibility via e-mail. Parents had been instrumental in developing new academic reports; the new formats for primary and Foundation Stage were astutely designed and gave precise information about students' progress. Very strong links with other schools and organisations supported teachers' professional development.

The management board kept a thorough oversight of the school at all times and did not take its past success for granted. It was influential in the school's development and had enabled the school to undergo a substantial change of senior leaders and staff and continue to operate smoothly. Through regular support and interaction, the board was extremely well informed about the school and held it firmly to account for its actions. A parents' advisory body was active as part of the school's decision-making process, although a minority of parents believed that board did not value and respond to their opinions enough.

The school's day-to-day operations ran smoothly. All staff members knew what was required of them. Information was freely available around the school and liaison with parents was excellent. Staff members were judiciously appointed and had considerable skills, experience and qualifications. They were skillfully deployed. Comprehensive, sharply focused training helped to ensure that the recent high turnover of teachers had little impact on students' progress. Excellent facilities included extensive libraries, computer rooms, libraries, specialists' subject rooms and sports facilities. However, with the growth of the school, there had been pressure on the amount of outdoor space. The school's plans to upgrade the Years 1 and 2 play areas were well advanced. Resources abounded, although there was an insufficient number of Islamic Education and Arabic books in the libraries.

[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	279	17%
	Last year	91	6%
Teachers	80		46%
Students	125		46%

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

Although only a small minority of parents responded, those who did complete the on-line survey were generally happy with the school. They especially liked the quality of teaching, the capable and motivated staff, their children's progress in English, mathematics and science, and the safety and support for their children, including those with special educational needs. However, a few parents raised concerns that included their children's progress in Islamic Education, Arabic, the e-mailing of academic reports, the range of extra-curricular activities and the school's involvement in the local community. Students echoed most of these views. Teacher's responses were almost all positive. However, a sizeable minority of parents, teachers and students believed that they were not listened to enough or involved in decision-making. In their additional comments, a few parents expressed dissatisfaction with some management decisions. These included the large class sizes, high teacher turnover, the limited play areas for younger students, excessive fundraising and restricted investment in the building infrastructure.

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

Copyright © 2013

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.