

# INSPECTION REPORT

## GEMS Our Own English High School

Report issued in February 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Our Own English High School

Location	Al Warqa'a
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsoo-dubai.com
Telephone	04-2361335
Address	P.O. Box 3004, Al Warqa'a 3, Dubai.
Principal	Mr. Aziz Akhtar
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	4-17 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	10,024
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	29th September to 3rd October 2013

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## The context of the school

GEMS Our Own English High School is situated in Al Warqa'a. The school had a total enrolment of 10,024 students aged four to 17 years at the time of the inspection. Classes from Kindergarten to Grade 4 were for boys and girls together and those from Grades 5 to 12 were for girls only. The school followed the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum, and a self developed curriculum in the Kindergarten. Including the Principal, Headmistress and other members of the senior leadership team, there were 455 teachers, almost all of whom had appropriate teaching qualifications. Almost all of the students were of Indian heritage. The school welcomed students with special educational needs, and at the time of the inspection had 58 such students on the roll.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Outstanding attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in the secondary stage, and outstanding progress in English in the primary and middle stages.
- The students' positive responses to the opportunities they were given to take personal responsibility, for example in assemblies and in community and environmental projects.
- Students' highly developed understanding of Islamic values and awareness of local and global cultures, particularly in the primary, middle and secondary stages.
- The highly effective care and attention given to ensuring students' safety and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- The strong lead given by the Principal, aided by the Headmistress, and the effective management and running of the school.

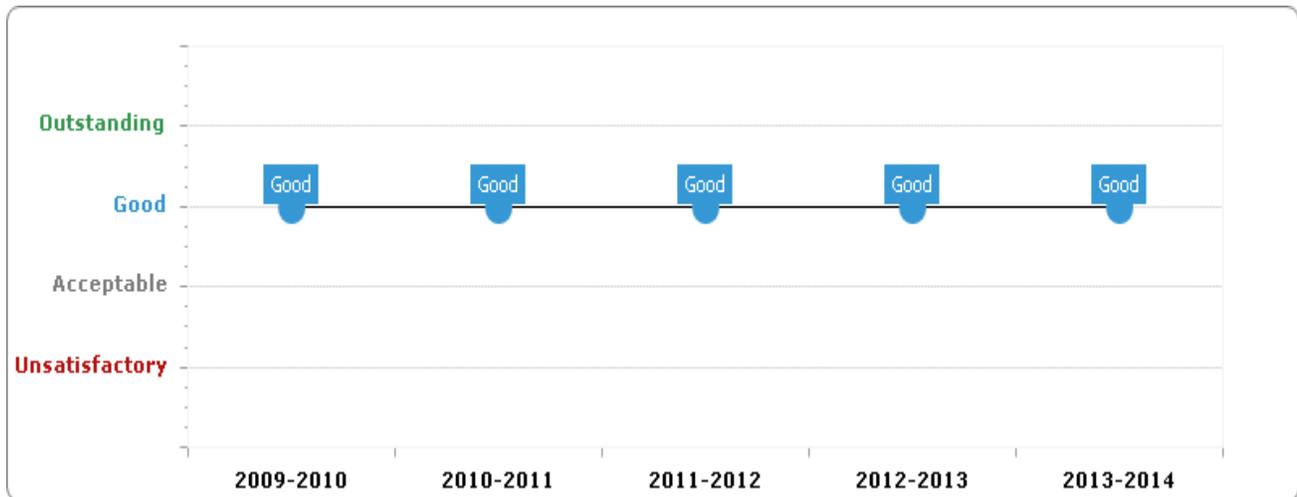
### Recommendations

- Ensure that teachers learn from their colleagues' best practice, to make the quality of teaching and progress more consistent across the school, particularly in Arabic as an additional language.
- By training and professional development activities, develop a better understanding among Kindergarten teachers of how young children learn, so that the children benefit from more active and child-centred exploration of the world around them.
- Further refine the good assessment procedures to ensure that individual students receive better advice on how to improve their work and that teachers plan lessons to meet the learning needs of different groups more effectively.
- Improve self-evaluation by using assessment data to guide review of the curriculum and teaching more effectively.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Little progress had been made in improving the quality of lessons in Arabic as an additional language. As a result, students' attainment and progress in the language remained broadly acceptable.
- The school had made some progress in increasing the number of opportunities for students to learn independently and to think critically. As a result, attainment had improved in some subjects.
- Some successful steps had been taken to develop the expertise of staff members to ensure that students with special educational needs received better support.
- Staff now evaluated the quality of lessons more accurately to identify areas for improvement. Some leaders continued to have an overly optimistic view of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of governance had improved. The governing body now had better links with parents and was increasingly monitoring school performance more robustly.
- The governing body had reduced class sizes in the Kindergarten, but the numbers of children in each class still are still above requirements.

## Trend of overall performance



## How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	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
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

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## How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?

The overall quality of attainment was good, apart from Arabic as an additional language, where it was acceptable. However, attainment in English, mathematics and science in the secondary stage was outstanding. Students' understanding of what they learnt about Fiqh law and Islamic concepts and its relevance to real life was well developed. Their recitation of Qur'an, reading of Hadith and ability to explain their meanings was less well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, most students could understand and use simple spoken standard Arabic. Reading skills were acceptable but only a few students demonstrated the ability to write independently. In English, almost all children were able to attain good levels of skills in the Kindergarten, primary and middle stages. Skills at the secondary stage were strong in the four aspects of language, particularly in oral presentations and in external examinations. Almost all children in Kindergarten could count and recognise mathematical shapes. In the primary and middle stages students' mathematical skills included multiplication and calculating the area of shapes. In secondary students responded very well in projects requiring critical thinking. Students' scientific knowledge and understanding were well developed throughout the school. They developed skills in prediction, observation and recording, but they were less skilled in scientific enquiry and critical thinking. The ability of Kindergarten children to discover and explore was underdeveloped. Grade 12 students performed very well in external examinations.

Progress was, on the whole, good. The exceptions were acceptable progress in Islamic Education in secondary and in Arabic as an additional language in primary and middle, outstanding progress in English in primary, middle and secondary, and outstanding progress in mathematics and science at secondary. In Islamic Education, students' progress in using Tajweed rules in Qur'an recitation was slow. Most students made appropriate progress in learning Arabic in primary and middle, and a majority made better than expected progress in secondary in listening, speaking and reading. Kindergarten children were learning to listen attentively in English and write simple sentences. In the other stages, most students made better than expected progress, for example in writing and speaking confidently and in debating. In mathematics, the majority of students made better than expected progress in acquiring calculation skills, and in secondary, most performed above expectation in problems requiring critical thinking. Students made good progress through activity-based learning in science, including field trips and undertaking experiments. Progress was better when students were given time to think things out for themselves and discuss their ideas.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good in all stages. Kindergarten children exhibited age-appropriate learning skills in key subjects and play activities. Throughout the school, students displayed enthusiasm for learning, and their attitudes were highly positive in almost all lessons. Middle and secondary stage students assumed responsibility for their own learning, and worked well collaboratively when given the opportunity. They were confident and skillful public speakers who welcomed opportunities to share their reading skills with students from lower grades. They applied their skills to the real world, and made connections between other areas of learning, such as cross-curricular links between psychology, history and English while studying the characters and plays by William Shakespeare. Middle and primary students advanced their skills in science when given the opportunity to work on experiments in small groups. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by students for research and enquiry was not well developed.

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

Students' personal responsibility was good in the Kindergarten and primary stages, and outstanding in the other stages. Almost all students managed their own behaviour effectively in classrooms, corridors and recreation areas. Younger students had to be reminded to slow down and walk in the corridors at times. Senior students' contribution to monitoring the safety and security of the younger ones was outstanding. Student leadership could be seen in many aspects of the school, including in discussions, projects and particularly in assemblies, which they led in an exemplary fashion. Students responded well to the opportunities they were given to adopt healthy lifestyles. Attendance was good. Students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai, particularly in the primary, middle and secondary stages. Understanding of the heritage of Dubai and the UAE was strong. Almost all students understood the importance of respecting each other and they had a strong appreciation of their Indian culture and other cultures. Community and environmental responsibility was good in the first two stages and outstanding at the later stages. Students had a strong work ethic. Many demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the local and wider community. Understanding of the challenges facing the world community in developing a sustainable future was better among the older students than the younger.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in all stages. Most teachers had a sound knowledge of the subjects they taught. A minority of staff, particularly in the younger grades, did not fully understand how students learn best. For example, some teachers spent too much time speaking or questioning the whole class, rather than targeting questioning on individual students or giving students opportunities to discover things for themselves. Teachers used lesson plans for each grade, allowing consistency of access to the curriculum and progress in learning. Teachers did not always adapt these plans to meet the needs of different groups of students. The strong emphasis on language development in the Kindergarten helped children to learn in all curriculum areas. Teachers made good use of resources, and lessons often included a good variety of activities to engage students. The majority of teachers had high expectations of their students' capacity to develop enquiry and higher-order thinking skills. This aspect was not consistent across stages or subjects.

The quality of assessment was good at all stages. The school's systems and process for collecting a range of evidence about the attainment of individual students were effective. The data was reliable and helped teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in a general way. Progress was being made in implementing student self-assessment. Oral feedback, particularly in the secondary phase, informed students on how to improve their work. Written feedback to students was not sufficiently evaluative or indicative of what students needed to do to improve. Teachers did not make enough use of assessment data to adapt their lessons or the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups of students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum and its design to meet the needs of all groups of students was good in all stages. The curriculum was broad and balanced, and students were prepared well for the Indian CBSE board examinations. Some choice was offered between and within each of the science, commerce and humanities streams. Additional subject options included physical education and marketing, following a review which included a survey on alumni admissions to universities. Curriculum modifications were made in English, mathematics and Arabic. There was an appropriate focus on application of learning to real-life experiences, particularly in the middle and secondary grades. Cross-curricular links were developing. Additional activities were provided for students with special educational needs and for gifted and talented students. A range of high quality curricular activities was offered to students, particularly at the middle and secondary phases. The transition of students from stage to stage and when leaving school was managed well. Many students participated in extra-curricular activities. Links with the community were varied, and

students participated in activities to promote conservation of the environment, water and energy. The curriculum design was planned and modified to suit the needs of most students, including students with SEN, who were supported through individualised programmes. A wider choice of subjects was offered to senior students in all streams so that they were well prepared for their career choice.

[View judgements](#)

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

Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students were outstanding. Clear expectations and well-established routines helped to ensure student and staff safety. The building and grounds were clean, well maintained and accessible to persons with disabilities. Fire drills and emergency evacuations were conducted regularly, with the assistance of local authorities. The arrangements for transportation of students to and from the school were outstanding. Student health records and medicines were locked and stored securely. Three mobile canteens and a permanent one served healthy food. Clinic staff, including ten full-time nurses and two doctors, looked after medical needs well. Healthy living was reflected in the curriculum and promoted throughout the school in assemblies, in the canteen and at the before-and after-school programmes. All staff members knew and had signed the child protection policy.

The quality of support was good in all stages. Relationships between staff and students were very positive and based on mutual respect. Students felt valued by their peers. Staff managed behaviour very effectively but there were sometimes instances of inattentiveness in Kindergarten classes when learning activities were not engaging the children. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality were rigorous, and absences were carefully followed up. Staff closely monitored the well-being and personal development of all students. Career guidance, which included visits by speakers from universities, one-to-one guidance and opportunities to visit career fairs and universities, was outstanding.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal gave a strong lead. He was ably assisted by the Headmistress. Leaders at other levels were increasingly taking responsibility for school improvement and were generally successful in this. Relationships among staff were cordial and professional, and communication was effective. The school's capacity to improve further was increasing, but the high number of teachers made rapid improvement difficult in some respects.

Self-evaluation and improvement were good. Staff employed a wide range of processes, including observation of lessons and analysis of data. The results of these activities and others such as surveys were being carried out more effectively than previously. Some staff were overly benign in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. All teachers were involved in drawing up the school improvement plan. Some improvements in outcomes for students had been achieved. A degree of progress had been made on most recommendations from the previous report. Little progress had been made in raising attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parental involvement was increasing, for example through the parent forum. Communication was done in a range of helpful ways. Reports to parents on their children's progress did not set out each student's next steps in learning clearly enough. Links with local business were improving.

Governance was good. The owner's representatives were working successfully to increase accountability by, among other things, more effective gathering of parents' views on the school. While the influence of corporate governance was positive overall, there remained a number of aspects of provision and resources which they had not addressed fully.

The management of the school was good. Day-to-day management of the large number of students and staff and the extensive building was done very effectively. Attendance had improved. Almost all staff were well qualified. Some needed to update their understanding of how students learn best, particularly in Kindergarten. The building and grounds were maintained well, and several improvements, including new activity laboratories, had been implemented. Class sizes had been reduced at Kindergarten but, on the whole, class sizes remained large. There was a need for more Islamic Education and Arabic books and more student-centred ICT. There were only 14 teaching assistants.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had a comprehensive policy for welcoming students with special educational needs to the school and supporting them once enrolled. The school provided regular in-service training for teachers. The procedures for identifying students' needs on entry to school were effective. Most students had specific learning needs. All students had individualised education plans that were shared with their parents. The progress of individual students was regularly monitored against these plans. However, the targets identified in the plans were not always sufficiently specific to allow progress to be measured accurately. Students made good progress in lessons with support from specialist educators. In most lessons, learning was well modified to support individual needs. Reinforcement of vocabulary and the practical activities in science supported students and enabled them to make good progress. The Buddy System provided good support them. In a minority of classes, where the teachers did not manage the behaviour well, students made insufficient progress. Gifted and talented students received good support, so they had many opportunities to excel.

## 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 judgments. 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	3527	43%
	Last year	3124	39%
Teachers	152		33%
Students	736		65%

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

Parents were positive about the school facilities, its leadership, the educational opportunities and the progress of their children. Almost all parents who responded felt that students enjoyed school life and that they were satisfied with the quality of education provided. Parents believed they were able to supervise and guide their children with homework. Almost all teachers felt they were supported by continuing professional development and that they treated students fairly. Almost all students felt safe on the buses and were well looked after at the school. Less than half of the students indicated that the curriculum was sufficiently modified to suit their learning needs.

## 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.

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## 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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