

# INSPECTION REPORT

## GEMS Modern Academy

Report published in February 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Modern Academy

Location	Nad Al Sheba
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsmhs.com
Telephone	04-3263339
Address	P.O. BOX 53663, DUBAI
Principal	MrDarryl Bloud
Curriculum	CISCE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 - Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3289
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	22nd to 26th September 2103

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## The context of the school

At the time of the inspection, there were 3,289 students on roll. This was an increase of 486 students since the last inspection. Almost all of the students are Indian. Just under ten per cent of the students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need.

The school follows the Indian ICSE/ISC curricula, and ISCE examinations are taken in Grades 10 and 12. Arrangements are in place for the school to implement the IB curriculum soon. There were 198 appropriately qualified teachers, including the Principal and the 14 other members of the senior leadership team. A quarter of teachers had joined the school since the previous inspection. Teachers were ably supported by a team of 56 teaching assistants, 24 of whom were also relatively new to the school. The Principal had been in post for 13 years.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

### Outstanding

#### Key strengths

- Outstanding progress and attainment of students in most key subjects and the involvement of parents as partners in their children's learning;
- Students' excellent behaviour, confidence, personal and social development and work ethic;
- The overall high quality of teaching across almost all the school leading to very effective students' learning;
- Outstanding support for students with special educational needs, the care and welfare of all students and the rich curriculum provided, including pre- and after-school activities and community service;
- The commitment and passion of the leadership of the school, including the roles of responsibility readily accepted by many teachers, the engagement of all staff in school improvement and in supporting students' learning, and the high quality learning environment.

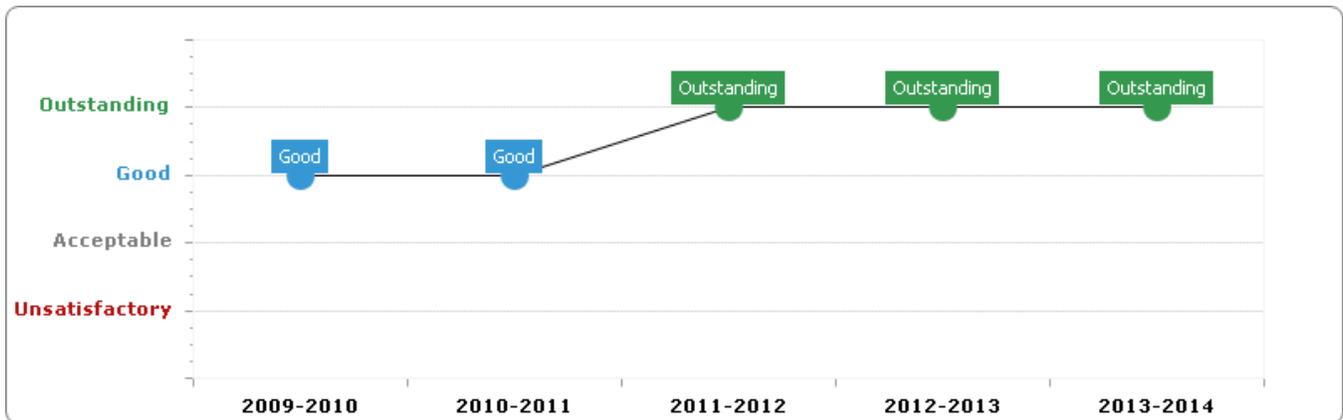
#### Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in Arabic as an additional language in the secondary grades.
- Seek further ways to use the rich assessment data gathered to impact on students' next steps in learning and to challenge students to realise their full potential.
- Review the timetabling arrangements to ensure students can arrive at lessons on time and have optimum opportunity to be ready to learn.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Overall, the school had continued to strive to improve already strong outcomes for students.
- Staffing had been significantly increased for supporting students with additional learning needs.
- Good attention had been given to ensuring children in Kindergarten classes experience a greater focus on being active in their learning, including workshops for parents to help them understand new approaches being used.
- Steps taken across the primary and middle phases to improve aspects of teaching and learning.
- Considerable steps taken to support teachers' continuing professional development, particularly in supporting them to plan for students' differing levels of ability and in preparation for the implementation of the IB programme.
- The school's focus on students' learning styles.
- Good steps taken to create new co-ordinator posts, including Academic Co-ordinators in each phase of the school and a Transition Co-ordinator to ensure continuity in students' learning across Grades 8 and 9.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
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
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In almost all key subjects and phases, students' attainment was good or better. In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts, values and history. They showed good understanding of how to apply what they had learned to their daily lives. Boys had better recitation and memorisation skills of the Holy Qur'an than girls. In Arabic as an additional language, students' extended writing skills remained underdeveloped, particularly in the secondary phase. In English, most students developed all four language skills, had a wide range of vocabulary and could express their views. Senior students were confident and could engage in mature and evaluative discussions, knew how to build an argument and were able to take a stand and present their views, choosing appropriate evidence. In mathematics, Kindergarten children were able to work at a high level solving problems, reading and writing numbers with accuracy. Throughout the primary and middle years, students were highly knowledgeable about mathematical application in the real world. Senior students were independent thinkers who recognised how fundamental mathematics was to all aspects of life. In science, the majority of Kindergarten children were independent learners. In science across the school, students were able to make discoveries for themselves and could communicate and provide good reasons for their conclusions. They explored, observed and recorded outcomes which they often applied to real-life situations.

Across all phases, students made outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science. They made good progress in most phases in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language. In Islamic Education, most students made good progress in understanding Islamic concepts. In Arabic as an additional language, students made good progress in listening and in reading. In English, students made excellent progress in speaking articulately and confidently, and writing effectively for a range of purposes. In mathematics, students across the school made progress at a rapid rate, culminating in impressive external examination results in the secondary phase. A greater focus on investigative science had led to students now making excellent progress in all phases in learning scientific skills. By the secondary phase, students demonstrated strong practical skills and an outstanding knowledge of scientific methodology and terminology.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were outstanding except in primary where they were good. Kindergarten children had very quickly developed impressive levels of self-discipline and co-operation in their approach to both classwork and exploratory play activity. Most students were highly motivated learners and demonstrated a commitment to their own development. Older students became increasingly skilled in ways to research

new information, including the ready use of information and communication technology (ICT) during lessons to enhance their understanding. By the secondary phase, students had become confident, independent and self-sustaining learners. In most lessons, students were able to collaborate successfully to solve problems or undertake practical investigations; the quality of discussion and debate was very high. They showed great maturity in reaching group conclusions, and self-assurance in sharing their ideas and findings with their peers. Students responded well to new learning challenges and to invitations to think critically, although these were sometimes inconsistent, particularly in Arabic and Islamic Education.

[View judgements](#)

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

Attitudes and behaviour were exemplary. Students had very positive and responsible attitudes. They were self-disciplined and responded very well to adults and others. They demonstrated strong self-reliance and thrived on critical feedback. Relationships with other students and with staff were very respectful and considerate. Students were sensitive to the needs of others and led by example. Older students assumed their roles and responsibilities seriously, as was evident, for example in the success and popularity of the student mentoring and buddy initiatives. Students of all ages, both boys and girls, interacted extremely well; older students took particular care to look after younger students and those in need of support. Students demonstrated excellent understanding of healthy living. They made wise choices about their own health and fitness. They initiated or took part in various activities which promoted healthy living. Attendance rates were good and students were punctual in arriving at school. Students demonstrated excellent understanding of Islamic values and their influence on life in Dubai and valued Islamic tradition in modern society in Dubai. They showed appreciation for the heritage and local traditions of the UAE and could explain their relevance to people in Dubai. They valued and appreciated the cultural diversity in the Dubai society. Most students demonstrated an active role in taking care for their school and local environment. They initiated and took part in many projects to promote sustainability and conservation in the local community. They showed enthusiasm, initiation and a good work ethic across the school.

[View judgements](#)

### How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was outstanding in the Kindergarten, the middle and secondary phases, and good in the primary phase. Teachers had excellent knowledge of their subjects, and most used this to plan varied and interesting lessons which engaged students. Kindergarten staff skilfully organised their teaching to provide a successful balance of instruction and exploratory learning. In older classes, most teachers had regular

expectations that students would take a measure of responsibility as active participants in their learning, enabling teachers to direct learning rather than just provide it. The majority of teachers created excellent environments for learning in which respect and mutual trust was clearly apparent. As a result, students gained more confidence to attempt new challenges, seek clarification or develop new skills. In most lessons, teachers set precise learning objectives, helping them to plan activities to match the learning needs of the students. Occasionally, teachers ascribed more importance to completing activities than to achieving learning objectives, thus missing opportunities to extend learning when students found tasks too easy. This was sometimes the case in Arabic and Islamic Education teaching.

Teaching in other subjects, such as music, ICT, physical education and social studies, was of high quality. Lessons were well paced, students were challenged to think for themselves and rapid progress was evident.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was outstanding across all the four phases of the school. There was a good balance of curricular and extra-curricular activities which were provided through the many varied activities offered during and after school. Interventions like 'flip lessons', 'ACE' and 'AERO' provided enrichment opportunities and enabled students to research and work independently. The school provided some choice in subjects at Grades 10 (science and commerce) and 12 (science, commerce and humanities). The curriculum was reviewed annually and suitable modifications made to ensure that it was high quality and matched to the needs of students. Progression was planned well through regular departmental meetings in all phases. Students were well supported in their transition from the middle to the secondary phase, and beyond. Career counselling was an integral part of transitions. The Student Support Unit identified students with special educational needs and provided excellent support to them through orientations, a buddy system and individualised educational programmes. Inclusion of subjects like art, cookery and physical education in the secondary phase offered wider curricular options for students. Extended links with the parents and the community provided opportunities for students to work with different groups. Students' participation in activities like Global Young Leaders' Conference, Model United Nations and the Young Entrepreneur's Conference provided scope for students to become independent, collaborate with others and link their learning to real life.

[View judgements](#)

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

Overall, the school's protection and support of students were outstanding. Safety measures in the school premises, on buses, in playgrounds and swimming pools were very diligently followed. Students felt very secure in the school. Fire drills and evacuation plans were managed very well. Monitoring for health was planned and executed well by a team of one doctor and four nurses. All staff were aware of the child protection procedures and anti-bullying policy in the school through regular training. The school provided ramps and other facilities for physically challenged students to move around the school easily.

Teacher-student relationships were positive, with students feeling very supported. There were clear guidelines regarding attendance and punctuality. The school's inclusive policy, along with a strong team of well-qualified counsellors and special education teachers, provided good support to students with special needs. Students were skilfully identified through formal and informal tests. Comprehensive career counselling provided support to students from Grade 7 onwards and carried forward to higher classes, including facilitating admissions for undergraduate courses in other countries. When required, the involvement of shadow teachers to support students with special needs was the responsibility of the parents.

[View judgements](#)

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

The leadership of the school at all levels was outstanding. The Principal and Vice-Principal inspired a large senior leadership team and together they provided strong leadership which gave direction to all staff. Almost all middle managers led their departments skilfully. The promotion of distributive leadership saw many teachers readily take on important roles. Non-teaching staff made a significant contribution to the success of the school. All staff had high ambitions for the school and sought constant improvement. Their attention to adding value to already excellent achievement and practices, and the involvement of stakeholders in this process, demonstrated a strong capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. School leaders carefully monitored the work of departments and teachers worked with others to evaluate and improve their own practices. When individuals required to develop their skills, a comprehensive and highly effective staff development programme was readily available. In planning future developments staff, parents and students had opportunities to express their views. Ambitious development targets were agreed as a result of a thorough analysis of the work of the school. The school had taken the recommendations of the previous inspection very seriously, although the impact of aspects of development work had yet to be fully realised.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Excellent procedures were in place to help parents support their children's learning, for example through well-planned workshops. Regular student reports and meetings with teachers ensured parents were kept informed through good two-way communication between home and school. There were good links with other schools through sports and other events. All students had their awareness raised of the needs of the local and wider communities through innovative charitable activities. These included senior students running adult literacy classes and supporting children with special needs.

Governance was outstanding. Parents were elected to represent each grade and sat on the parent council, Friends of Modern (FOM). They corresponded regularly with the wider parent body and brought any issues to the monthly FOM meeting. Regular surveys enabled parents to give their opinions on school life and the resulting Parent Satisfaction Index was taken very seriously by the school. Parents and students had effective communication channels which enabled any concerns to be discussed openly. The Principal held meetings with parents whenever necessary to respond to enquiries about school developments, for example the planned implementation of the IB curriculum. These many avenues ensured that school leaders were held to account by the parent body for the school's actions and outcomes.

The management of the school was outstanding. The day-to-day life of the school ran effectively and smoothly, aided by the skills of senior students. There were sufficient suitably qualified staff who were deployed very well. Impressive facilities and resources of a very high order provided an excellent and inclusive learning environment for all students.

[View judgements](#)

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

Qualified special educators and counsellors matched students' needs with appropriate support including remedial classes and instructional resources. The school included students with physical, sensory, mental, educational and psychological needs. Modification to the curriculum and learning environment and other concessions met the special needs of the students effectively. Individual education plans were shared with parents and provided strong support to students. Students' performance was tracked and evaluated regularly. Those with medical conditions were known and teachers were sensitive to their needs. The school maintained efficient records of the progress made by students with special needs which good was overall.

## 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	548	22%
	Last year	907	49%
Teachers	117		56%
Students	337		91%

\*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.

Almost all parents felt the school was well led, that their child found school work both interesting and challenging, and enjoyed life at school. Most were pleased with the quality of education the school provided. They felt their children benefited from a rich range of courses and subjects, and were well prepared for life after school. A quarter of parents who responded to the survey were concerned about the amount of homework their children had. Most students thought teachers were skilled and well qualified, that the school provided a good quality of education and that they received good guidance for future education and career choices. Almost all said they were making good progress in English and in science, and most felt the same way for mathematics; only a half of the students felt likewise for Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. A quarter of students did not feel sufficiently involved in the decision-making processes of the school and a fifth felt their opinions were not listened to. Almost all teachers felt they treated students fairly and that the behaviour of students was good. They said that the school was well led and that leaders listened to teachers' opinions.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

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

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