

INSPECTION REPORT

The Westminster School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Westminster School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsws-ghusais.com
Telephone	04-298-8333
Address	P.O. Box 27016 Dubai
Principal	Neville Sherman
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	4,966
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	151 (3%)
Date of the inspection	18th to 22nd November 2012

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The context of the school

The Westminster School has a multi-cultural community represented by more than 70 nations including Pakistan, Egypt, India, UAE, other Arabs, and other Asians. About three per cent of students were Emiratis. The current year saw an intake of 713 new students for various reasons including graduation and replacement of students who had left the school.

The school offered the English National Curriculum. Students in Year 10 took two International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations in English and a foreign language. In Year 11 students took five IGCSE examinations. The school offered Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level courses in the post-16 phase.

A total of 424 students had been identified as having special educational needs. Provision for them included one full-time counsellor. At the time of the inspection, 17 per cent of the 297 teachers were new to the school. A majority held a first degree, and about half held a recognised teaching qualification.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of students;
- Good teaching and learning in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- Improvements in the curriculum in the Foundation Stage;
- Well implemented procedures for the health and safety of students.

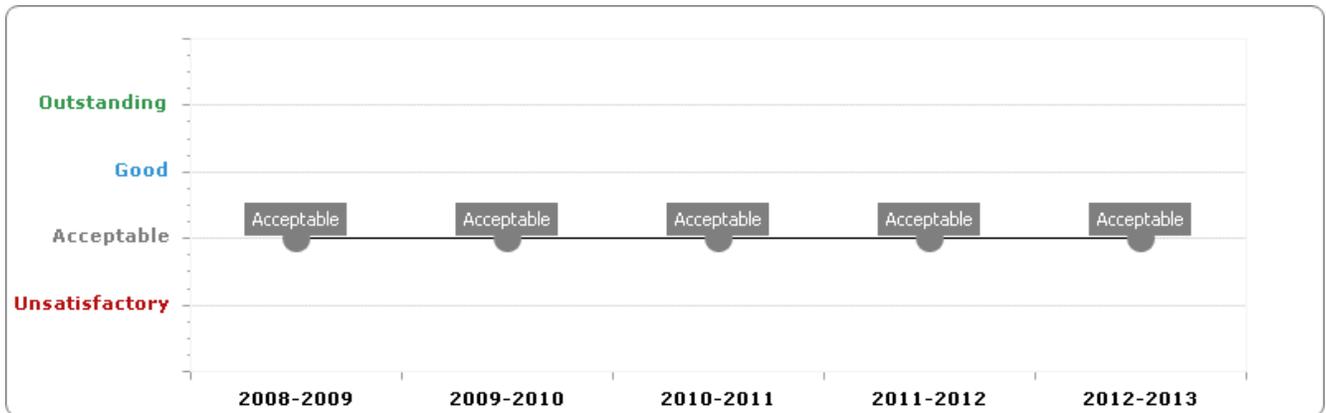
Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language;
- Improve consistency in teaching, learning and assessment across all phases, particularly in Foundation Stage and primary phase;
- Train teachers in the English National Curriculum standards for teachers to improve their curriculum delivery and assessment of learning;
- Ensure that teachers' professional development has measurable outcomes.

Progress since the last inspection

- Attainment and progress in primary science had improved;
- Teaching and learning was good in the secondary phase;
- There was an improved curriculum in Foundation Stage;
- There were improvements in health and safety provision for students;
- Refurbishment of classrooms had taken place.

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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding

[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	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects was at least acceptable. Students had the expected knowledge of Islamic rules and could explain the meaning of verses, but few could infer values or form conclusions. Attainment in Arabic varied. In the primary years it was acceptable because of weaknesses in speaking and writing. Students of Arabic as an additional language lacked confidence and accuracy when speaking. Listening and speaking skills were strongest in Arabic as a first language in the secondary and post-16 years. In Foundation Stage English, speaking and listening skills were under-developed. In the primary and lower secondary phases, all skills were strong, except writing. In the secondary and post-16 phases, students showed very strong ability in all English skills. In mathematics, students acquired increased competence in number and algebraic skills, but data analysis and their confidence in presenting data were not strong. Students in the post-16 years achieved highly. Attainment was outstanding in science in the post-16 phase, with students able to explain scientific concepts in detail. Their understanding of the investigative nature of science and their experimental skills were improved compared to the upper primary years.

Students' progress in the majority of subjects was acceptable. Progress was enhanced when students had opportunities to develop skills. Progress in science in the primary years had improved. It was least satisfactory in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language in all phases, with writing skills being the weakest. There was good progress in Arabic as first language in listening, speaking and grammar in both the primary and secondary phases. Progress was outstanding in the secondary and post-16 years in English, but writing was the least developed skill. There was also outstanding progress in post-16 mathematics and science, although challenges for the most able students were inconsistently offered. Appropriate tasks to promote development were least evident throughout Foundation Stage, and mathematics in the primary years. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress, but were not given sufficient individual support. However, their progress in science was good.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emiratis in science and Arabic as a first language was good, while their attainment and progress in English, mathematics and Islamic Education were acceptable. Most Emiratis were engaged in their lessons. They demonstrated outstanding behaviour inside and outside their classrooms. The school ensured that the progress of Emiratis was monitored and recorded. The school used assessment data for Emirati students to provide them with sufficient support to ensure progress. However,

teaching and learning were not well tailored well to further their progress. A few Emiratis were late to school each morning.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across all phases. Excellent attitudes were evident in the very high levels of mutual respect and positive teacher-student interactions. Awareness of and attitudes towards healthy living were positive. Attendance over the last full term was acceptable. Late arrivals to school had not been successfully addressed. Students had a good understanding of, and respect for, Islamic values. Students' work indicated their depth of knowledge of local culture and of modern Dubai. Students across the school had built good relationships with peers from different cultures. In the upper secondary and post-16 phases, they could explain well how Islamic values influenced Dubai society. Older students could describe how local culture influenced modern Dubai. They were able to describe thoroughly how living in a multi-cultural society enriched their lives. Students' understanding of community and environmental responsibility was good across the school. Younger children were helpful to each other. Students understood their obligation to contribute to school life and that of the local community. Students' ideas were used to introduce new recycling and charitable activities. Visits to local industry and enterprise activities as part of learning helped students understand the value of work and enterprise. They took action to conserve and to recycle. However, there was still an over-reliance on adults to initiate and carry forward activities connected to community and environmental responsibility.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary phase and good in the secondary and post-16 phases. The majority of teachers had good subject knowledge, but their understanding of how children learn was inconsistent in Foundation Stage and primary. Teachers often made use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a range of ways that supported learning. They provided activities suited to the learning needs of the range of students in their classes. Teaching was most effective when teachers set suitably challenging tasks for their students. A significant number of teachers did not do this, particularly in the Foundation Stage, primary and lower secondary classes. Students did not have sufficient opportunities to develop independence in learning. Critical thinking and independent enquiry were more

consistently features of the upper grades. The quality of teaching in other subjects including physical education, geography, music, art, and information and communication studies was acceptable.

The quality of learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary years and was good in the secondary and post-16 years. When given opportunities, students enjoyed learning through teamwork and discussion. As students moved into middle secondary and upper grades, they showed much greater independence in learning. In the most productive learning, students listened well to others, offered both supportive and critical responses, and undertook suitably challenging investigative activities. However, children in Foundation Stage and primary phase did not consistently explore, analyse or create independently of their teachers. Opportunities for independent investigation and curiosity in learning were less evident for these children. Students were able to make links across areas of learning but not always to real life.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases. It was good in the post-16 phase because teachers' assessment was used effectively to improve students' learning. Assessment data, such as standardised tests, provided accurate assessment, but analysis of key data did not lead to targeted improvements for all learners. Teachers of older students used results of assessment in conversation with students about their progress. Older students were given opportunities to assess their own learning to identify strengths, areas for improvement and next steps in learning. Across all phases, teachers' marking of student work often did not consistently indicate achievements and what the students needed to do to improve. In Foundation Stage and primary years, assessment of learning did not always relate to the skills that required development.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in all phases except the primary, where it was acceptable. In the primary there were inconsistencies in interpreting and applying curriculum levels. The primary curriculum also lacked stimulating tasks and activities. Planning was well organised across the school and at transition to the next phase. It was regularly reviewed, leading to improvements such as those within the Early Years' Foundation Stage program. A few additional subjects in the secondary phase had added to the breadth of the curriculum. However, the absence of science, for a minority of secondary students in Year 9, reduced their available choices in transition to further education. In a few lessons the curriculum was modified for the less able students and challenge was increased for the more able students. This was not consistently done in curriculum provision across the whole school. Project-based learning had led to the development of students' research skills. An increased amount of the curriculum was organised around group work to

enhance students' collaborative skills. Enrichment activities added to students' engagement but they were not frequent enough. The post-16 curriculum provided more consistent challenge to students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were good. The arrangements for bus transport were exemplary. However, the safety arrangements around private car drop-offs and pick-ups required further improvement. The site was small for the number of students, but overall it was managed well. Better use was made of classroom space. Adaptations such as ramps for wheelchair access had been made. There were good maintenance and medical records. Healthy living was promoted, including healthy food from the canteen. Most staff members and students were aware of child protection arrangements. However, further staff training was required to ensure a consistent understanding of child protection.

The quality of support was acceptable. There were positive relationships between staff and students with staff mindful of students' personal well-being. Behaviour was managed well. However, the school did not address student absences in a timely manner. Parents were not contacted until the second day of absence. Punctuality remained a significant problem at the start of the school day. Older students were not provided with enough guidance and support for future education choices.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were identified on admission to the school. There was a system for categorising their needs and most teachers were aware of this. Provision for these students had improved. Progress was good for the very few students who worked with the SEN co-ordinator by withdrawal from class. However, for most students, curriculum modifications in lessons, and monitoring and tracking by teachers were not sufficient to ensure good progress. Modifications to the curriculum and teaching methods, a more systematic approach to tracking progress and target-setting was needed for good student progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good overall. The leadership team had a shared vision and strong commitment to school improvement. Responsibilities were distributed effectively. Leaders had an understanding of what needed to improve. They communicated well with each other and were highly active in their roles. However, the focus was on teaching improvements without clearly linking this to measurable learning outcomes. The school had achieved a few improvements in the last year, such as curriculum in the Foundation Stage and teaching and learning in the secondary. However, not all challenges had been sufficiently addressed. The attainment and progress of students in a few key subjects had not sufficiently improved. Attendance and punctuality remained an issue, as well as quality learning experiences for the large number of students. Leaders demonstrated the capacity to develop the school further.

Self-evaluation was accurate and good. Leaders were aware of the school's strengths and a few weaknesses, such as the quality of teaching and attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. The evaluation of teaching was mostly systematic and focused but not explicitly linked to learning. Development plans had brought a few changes but did not sufficiently link success indicators directly to learning outcomes. The school had made some progress in addressing the recommendations from the last report, for example in curriculum in the Foundation Stage and teaching and learning in one phase. Health and safety provision had also improved. Links with parents and the community were good. There had recently been a parents' forum instituted and it had met twice. However, not all parents were aware of this parents' group. Parents supported the school in a variety of ways, such as fund-raising and special functions. They felt they were well informed about their children's progress through school reports and that communication between the school and their homes was effective. There were good community links with local and overseas charities. However, links with local businesses and other schools were underdeveloped. Governance of the school was acceptable. The board of governors exerted a positive influence on the school and provided direction for the school. However, the board had not held the school sufficiently accountable for further improvements. Although classrooms had been refurbished, the school premises remained inadequate for the numbers of students in classrooms. The Board did not routinely seek the views of a broad range of stakeholders. Board representation did not include parents. The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The school had invested more in improving the existing premises. A new administrator had strengthened the day-to-day running of the school. Approximately 50 per cent of teachers had a teaching qualification.

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Subject knowledge amongst teachers was variable, as was an understanding of how young children and students learn best. Although resources such as information and communications technology had improved, there were insufficient facilities and resources to meet the learning needs of all students.

[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	184	8%
	Last year	250	9%
Teachers	111		38%
Students	219		27%

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey. The majority of parents thought their children made good progress in most key subjects. There were a number of concerns about Islamic Education but most concerns related to Arabic. Most thought that their children enjoyed school and were safe. A majority but not all parents thought behaviour was good. This concern was often expressed alongside the issue of overcrowding. They felt communication with the school, including how well their child was doing, was good. More than a few parents indicated that the school was well led but a majority felt that they were not involved enough in school decision-making. Thirty-eight percent of teachers responded to their survey. They believed that the school was well led and that there were good opportunities for professional development. A few expressed concerns about class sizes and the sizes of classrooms. Most reported that the previous inspection had led to school improvements. Twenty-seven per cent of senior students replied to their survey. Most agreed that they were making good progress, except in Arabic, where the quality of teaching was a concern. Students also expressed dissatisfaction about the facilities provided by the school for their education. A minority reported that overall the school had improved since last year.

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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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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