

GEMS Jumeirah Primary School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Primary.

Report published May 2011

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

GEMS Jumeirah Primary School was inspected in November 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Jumeirah, GEMS Jumeirah Primary School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Primary, aged three to eleven years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 1332 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

As part of the process, inspectors analysed responses from parent questionnaires. Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and were satisfied with the quality of education overall. Most believed the school had responded positively to the last inspection. Almost all believed the school was well led and that leadership and the quality of teaching were strengths of the school, although a few parents were concerned about the variation in the quality of teachers. Almost half of the respondents said that the school population had grown and were concerned about overcrowding in some classes. The provision for Islamic Education and Arabic was also a concern. A majority felt that their children needed a lot of additional help at home and there were a few concerns about homework.

How well does the school perform overall?

Jumeirah Primary School was a school of outstanding quality with high standards in most areas of the curriculum. Students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were outstanding. There had been significant improvements in Islamic Education and Arabic since the last inspection. Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable and in Arabic as a first language they were good. Whilst attainment in Arabic as a second language was acceptable, progress was good.

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They were respectful and welcoming. Relationships were excellent and students enjoyed learning both independently and alongside others. They had high aspirations for themselves and increasingly grew in confidence as they moved through the school. They made choices to keep themselves healthy and enjoyed exercise both in and outside of school. Attendance was acceptable and punctuality was good. All students displayed a strong sense of personal responsibility. Older students had an excellent understanding of community and what it meant to be a good citizen. They enjoyed the school's diverse cultural mix and many had friends of a different nationality. Most students demonstrated an acceptable level of understanding of Islam. Students' economic and environmental understanding was of a very high standard. They knew about Dubai's place in the United Arab Emirates and its relationship with Abu Dhabi. They were aware of the need to care for the environment and took their responsibilities in this area seriously. Older students were aware of the global economic situation and could suggest ways in which Dubai's economy might improve. The quality of learning and teaching was outstanding. Teachers often acted as facilitators, capitalising on students' enthusiasm and curiosity and enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students understood how best to learn and how to learn in a variety of ways. Assessment arrangements were also outstanding. Students received sensitive and constructive feedback on their work and they responded well to guidance on how to improve. Additional support was provided as soon as it was needed to ensure students did not fall behind. The curriculum provided a wide range of memorable experiences for students to learn and experience personal success. It was kept under constant review and evolved to reflect the ever-changing needs of students. A rich array of extra-curricular activities further enhanced students' learning beyond the school and at the end of the school day. The school took its duty of care very seriously and all members of the school community were safe and secure. The excellent premises and facilities were well maintained and provided an attractive learning environment. Students were treated with care and respect creating an atmosphere where the needs of every individual were met and their successes celebrated.

The school was led with vision and purpose with a strong commitment to ever higher standards. School leaders had created a reflective organisation with effective systems for self-evaluation and development planning. Whilst the Management Board held the school leaders to account and consulted parents, staff and students, it was not representative of the school community. The school delivered well on its ambitious promises to parents.

Key features of the school

- The recent improvements in provision for Arabic Studies brought about by the high quality professional development of staff;
- The progress in developing provision for Islamic Education;
- The high quality teaching and assessment which produced outstanding attainment and progress for almost all groups of students;
- Students' excellent behaviour, attitudes and desire to learn;
- The outstanding curriculum which provided a wide range of opportunities and memorable experiences to ensure almost all students make outstanding progress;
- The high quality care and support for students offered by teaching and non-teaching staff and especially those students with dyslexia, additional learning needs and special educational needs;
- The clear vision of school leaders and their creative and resolute approach to school improvement;
- The strong and effective partnerships with parents and the opportunities provided for parents to continue learning in order to support their children's learning;
- The excellent facilities and resources and the flexible way in which all areas were utilised to enhance learning.

Recommendations

- Maintain and extend the progress made in the development of speaking, reading and writing for second language Arabic students;
- Raise attainment in the knowledge and understanding of Islamic Education and in reciting The Holy Qur'an;
- As planned, empower middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of Learning to Learn on attainment and progress in their subject areas.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable in the primary phase. Most students demonstrated an acceptable level of understanding of the basic facts and concepts of Islam, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and Islamic beliefs. Students in lower grades could list the five Pillars of Islam. In upper primary classes most students could discuss the Pillars of Islam and made links between the Pillars and their daily lives. Most students were aware of the importance of prayer in a Muslim's life. Most students were also able to recite short chapters of The Holy Qur'an, but struggled to recite longer or new chapters from the Holy Qur'an.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good throughout the school. In the lower stages, most students demonstrated good listening, speaking and reading skills and listened well to teachers' instructions in standard Arabic. Older students developed good listening, speaking and reading skills but made less progress in expressing themselves creatively in writing. Most students listened and spoke with confidence in an increasing range of contexts and most of the time they spoke standard Arabic. They developed good decoding skills which allowed them to improve their spelling. When reading, they located and used ideas and information effectively both in text and in poetry. Most students' handwriting was legible.

Attainment in Arabic as a second language was acceptable and progress was good. Although most of the younger students demonstrated good listening, speaking and reading skills, students in the upper years demonstrated acceptable levels. Most students in Years 1 to 3 were able to recognise and correctly pronounce letters of the Arabic alphabet and were able to read and write a few words. The majority were able to listen to, converse, read and comprehend up to ten sentences. Whilst most of the older students demonstrated good listening skills, only a minority were able to demonstrate good speaking, reading and writing skills.

Attainment and progress in English were outstanding throughout the school. By the end of Foundation Stage, children could read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently. They listened attentively to their teachers and responded enthusiastically to their questioning. Children could write their names and recognisable letters, which were correctly formed. As they progressed through the primary phase, students developed advanced reading skills which allowed them to enjoy a wide range of books. Year 4 students used appropriate grammatical rules, accurate punctuation and a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. By Year 6, students talked and listened with confidence and were able to convey their opinions and respond to others' ideas and views. They made mini-presentations and described books they had read, identifying genres and justifying why they liked a particular book.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding throughout the school. In the Foundation Stage children were confident in their mathematical understanding. They demonstrated a very good awareness of shape, numeracy and sequencing and could use mathematical language appropriately. By the end of Foundation Stage, most students attained higher than the UK national average. In the primary phase students extended their use of specialist mathematical language to a high standard and were adept at work in 3-D shapes, fractions, measurement and square and cubic numbers. Progress in problem solving was now very well developed. By the end of the primary phase students reached levels in the National Curriculum tests which were well above UK standards.

Attainment and progress in science in all phases were outstanding, with the majority of students attaining in line with higher international benchmarks. Knowledge and understanding increased from year to year with independent learning allowing a minority of students to significantly exceed age-related expectations. Students consistently developed investigative skills using practical activities in classrooms, a specialist science room and the outdoor classroom. Almost all children in Foundation Stage 1 could investigate the world around them using a magnifying glass. All Year 4 pupils could observe and produce scientific drawings of seedlings and investigate the effect of light on plants growing in the quiet garden. All of Year 6 could design and carry out a scientific investigation.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They were courteous and welcoming and wore their uniform with pride. Relationships throughout the school were positive. Students enjoyed learning independently and in collaboration with others. They were inspired by their teachers and had high aspirations for themselves. Consequently, they grew in confidence. Almost all students knew the importance of a balanced diet and took regular exercise both in and outside of school. Attendance was acceptable and punctuality was good.

Students' civic understanding and understanding of Islam were good overall. Younger children helped to keep their classrooms tidy and older students had an excellent understanding of community and what it meant to be a good citizen and an ambassador for the school. They were involved in decision-making, for example, identifying which charities to support. Students enjoyed the school's diverse cultural mix and learned about traditional homes and costumes through topics and displays. Most students demonstrated an acceptable level of understanding of Islam, although their understanding of the impact of Islam on Dubai was limited.

Students' economic and environmental understanding was outstanding. They were aware that Dubai had grown rapidly and was part of the United Arab Emirates. They knew about the relative success of the retail trade and tourism and the importance of oil as a basis for trade with countries around the world. They took part in recycling initiatives and were conscious of the need to conserve energy and water. Older students were aware of the global economic situation and the need to be careful with money. They were involved in various projects to develop their understanding of enterprise and suggested exporting salt from desalination plants to boost Dubai's economy.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching was outstanding throughout the school. It was consistently effective in all year groups and was rarely less than satisfactory. Classrooms were exciting places. Lessons were animated, interactive and purposeful. Teachers ensured that activities were tightly timed to produce a rapid pace to learning. They set bold levels of challenge with open-ended activities that prompted students to extend and diversify their learning. Bar charts in Foundation Stage and photosynthesis studies in Year 4 were typical examples of high expectations. Lesson planning was deft and reflective, and allowed for the different learning needs of all students. Subject expertise enabled teachers to exude confidence and ask questions subtly to strengthen learning and assess understanding. Resources were plentiful, stimulating and freely used. Occasionally, teachers did not give students enough initial guidance with new concepts to ensure swift learning. In some lessons, especially in Islamic education, expectations were not always high enough and the learning was not sufficiently interactive.

Students' learning skills were excellent. They were very self-motivated and had impressive organisational skills for their age. For example, they routinely took notes to reinforce new learning. They developed a pleasure in learning, prompted by such exciting activities as Big Write. They were thoughtful and had very good investigative skills, especially but not exclusively in science. Much of students' learning was related to real-life situations; learning was rarely in isolation and often linked to practical experiences or visits. A visit to a dinosaur exhibition had certainly motivated and enhanced learning for Year 3 students. Students were used to making choices, individually or in groups; high levels of concentration showed how well they took responsibility for their own learning.

Assessment was outstanding. Especially impressive were the range, depth and technical versatility of the assessment systems. These included not only extensive data on academic progress but also input from the school nurse, attendance records, parental contact and details from learning support. As a result, staff had a broad view of why students might be underachieving or, indeed, excelling. Teachers made full use of such data. They held weekly meetings in their year groups to discuss the progress of students and the quality of learning in topics. In this way, they could plan accurately for the following week's work and provide extra help for students whose learning was insecure. Assessment through marking was first-rate; teachers were insistent that students responded to their comments and suggestions. Self-assessment was very well established; students were skilled at assessing how well they had learned in lessons.

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

The curriculum throughout the school was outstanding. It was broad, balanced and innovative and provided a wide range of memorable and enjoyable experiences in which almost all students made excellent progress. It was regularly evaluated, reviewed and updated by the curriculum committee, which consulted with all stakeholders on key changes. Previous

weaknesses identified for Islamic Education and Arabic had been addressed so that the school was fully compliant with requirements. Cross-curricular themes were well-managed and extended students' learning. As well as developing knowledge, skills and understanding in each subject, students also developed key skills in how best to learn. Practical experiences were well-planned within the curriculum and further enriched it, for example through a programme of visits. These included a trip to for students in Year 3 and in Year 6. Boys and girls attended a residential camp for three days, an experience which they thoroughly enjoyed. Specialist teachers were employed appropriately to challenge and support students, for example in art, music, French, technology and sport. After-school activities were oversubscribed and students were entitled to choose two from a wide variety of options. Students developed a wide range of skills for the world of work such as team-work and preparing presentations, and older students had an excellent understanding of business and enterprise through initiatives such as the Stock Exchange project. Community links had significantly increased since the last inspection.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health, safety and security were outstanding. These were underpinned by clear policies which were understood and adhered to by all staff. The high quality premises and facilities were clean and well-maintained and provided a safe and stimulating learning environment for the students both inside and outside the classroom. School buses had seating plans and seat belts for all the children. Evacuation plans were displayed appropriately and records kept of regular fire drills. The school promoted healthy eating by inviting an expert to address staff and parents, having a healthy food audit, by displaying posters around the school and encouraging children to bring healthy food in their lunch boxes. Medical records were detailed and comprehensive. The school had wide-ranging systems and support to ensure the protection of children.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Relationships were excellent and teachers, classroom assistants and learning support assistants provided high quality support for all students. The quality of support for those with dyslexia, additional learning needs and special educational needs was exemplary. Arrangements for tracking and supporting students provided well-focused support for their academic progress, personal development, health and well-being. Arrangements were in place to ensure parents were fully involved in these processes. Reports to parents were expressed in positive language and set out clearly students' strengths and development needs. Attendance and punctuality were monitored effectively and parents were contacted promptly when absences occurred.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were outstanding. Investment in people underpinned the success of the school. Despite the existing high standards and high quality provision, leaders at all levels shared a vision for continuous improvement and were relentless in their pursuit of excellence in all areas. Senior Leaders used their highly developed emotional intelligence to create a learning community where staff and students were valued as individuals and so grew in confidence. Talents were identified and nurtured and added to the effectiveness of teams as they evolved and developed.

Procedures for self-evaluation were rigorous and included regular consultation with all stakeholders. Analysis of all aspects of the school's work, including monitoring of learning and teaching and the progress and outcomes for students, provided an accurate and honest picture of what the school did well and where improvements were needed. Priorities for further development were appropriate and ambitious and at the same time realistic. They focused not only on the recommendations from the last inspection for improving Islamic Education and Arabic, but also on the school's own identified priorities such as Learning to Learn and the role of middle leaders in monitoring its impact on progress and attainment in their subjects.

The school was a wonderful example of a learning community where parents and staff were committed to supporting students' learning. Students welcomed the range of opportunities offered to develop their own knowledge, skills and understanding. Almost all parents were overwhelmingly satisfied with what the school provided for their children, with the information they received on progress and with the outcomes achieved. Most communication was managed through technology and ensured clarity and speed of response. Excellent use was made of the community to enhance and extend learning. Students were prepared well for their secondary education.

The Management Board made a significant contribution to school leadership and to the school's successes. It appointed the Principal and held him to account. It carried out his annual appraisal and scrutinised the school's performance and processes. It provided an intensive induction programme for newly-appointed staff and opportunities for professional development at all levels. Whilst it consulted with stakeholders and listened to their views, the Management Board was not formally representative of the school community.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Staff were well-qualified, experienced and abundant and provided excellent support for all students from the most able, gifted and talented to those with additional learning needs. Consequently, most students achieved very well. Facilities and resources were of a high quality and well-maintained. Rooms and corridors were bright, airy and spacious and attractive displays contributed to the creation of an outstanding learning environment. Although parents had expressed concern about large class sizes, overcrowding was not found during the inspection. Instead, good use was made of all space to provide flexible learning areas for independent, challenging and motivational learning. Specialist rooms were available for students with additional needs.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?		
7% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Good
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good is the students' personal and social development?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

How well does the school protect and support students?		
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
	Overall
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

How well does the school perform overall?
Outstanding

Next steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. 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:
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More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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