

# INSPECTION REPORT

## GEMS Royal Dubai School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Royal Dubai School

Location	Al Mezhar
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.royaldubaischool.com">www.royaldubaischool.com</a>
Telephone	04-2886499
Address	PO Box 121310
Principal	Jarlath Daniel Madine
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-11 / Foundation Stage to Grade 6
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	768
Number of Emirati students	63 (8%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 28th to Wednesday 30th November 2011

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## The context of the school

GEMS Royal Dubai School is situated in Al Mezhar. The school had opened in 2005. Secondary provision was closed in 2010, when the school reverted to primary status. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total roll of 768 students, aged from three to eleven years. The school followed the English National Curriculum.

There were 37 class teachers, plus the Principal and the senior leadership team of three. In addition, there were 20 teachers in specialist departments. All teachers from Foundation Stage 2 had appropriate teaching qualifications. Those in Foundation Stage 1 had appropriate qualifications in child care. Teachers were supported by 37 teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 13 classes at Foundation Stage, 10 at Key Stage 1 and 14 at Key Stage 2. Sixty three students, about eight per cent, were Emirati. Approximately 55 different nationalities were represented in the school population.

At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in his first year, having been appointed in September 2011. Thirteen teachers were also in their first year at the school.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

GEMS Royal Dubai School provided overall a good quality of education. It had a number of important strengths with outstanding progress being made in mathematics at the later stages. The quality of teaching for effective learning was good at both Foundation and primary stages. About two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better. However, there was too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Students worked collaboratively and gave one another mutual support. Their skills in research were not developing well enough. Assessment procedures were thorough, and innovative in the early years. Students' behaviour was outstanding. The school had worked very effectively to develop engaging activities for students after school. The facilities were outstanding.

The school had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous report. There had been an improvement in students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. In science, both attainment and progress had improved and were good. Self-evaluation, although backed by appropriate

procedures, had not yet become sufficiently rigorous or self-critical. The school's self-evaluation document in many areas was descriptive rather than evaluative.

## Key strengths

- Improvements in students' progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and science;
- The outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes shown by almost all students;
- The outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities that enhanced and enriched student experiences;
- The high quality of support for students with special educational needs which enabled them to make good progress;
- Effective partnerships with parents, and the outstanding facilities and resources.

## Recommendations

- Improve attainment and students' progress, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Ensure greater consistency in learning and teaching throughout the school;
- Ensure that educational initiatives are based on well-structured plans for improvement, and on a robust and evaluative analysis of the school's performance;
- Ensure that school leaders have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are accountable for improved student performance.

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

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable. Non-Arab Muslim students were weak in their application of the rules of recitation and in their knowledge about the historical background of Islam. In Arabic as first language attainment was acceptable. Most students in upper grades were able to read aloud fluently, however their skills in oral communication and grammar were not strong. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable. Most students were able to listen and respond effectively.

Attainment in English was good in Foundation Stage and primary. By the end of Key Stage 2, students showed well-developed skills in listening, speaking and reading. Attainment in writing was acceptable. Attainment in mathematics was good. Students applied their knowledge of number and mathematical concepts confidently in investigations and in problem-solving tasks. Attainment in science at all stages was good. Experiments enabled most students to improve their investigative skills. They recorded their observations with accuracy and analysed results critically. Recording skills were at an early stage of development.

Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was good. Most students made good progress in recitation and memorisation of The Holy Qur'an. In Arabic, students in upper grades made good progress in writing. Students in English made good progress throughout in listening, speaking and reading. Progress in writing was better by Year 6, where students wrote at length and edited their work. In mathematics, progress was good as focused programmes provided clear structure. In science, progress was good. Students increasingly made accurate predictions, with some beginning to make hypotheses. Students with special educational needs made good progress in all subjects.

Emirati students demonstrated good attainment and progress in Islamic Education, where attainment was better than non-Emiratis. In Arabic, their attainment was equal to other students, but progress was acceptable, rather than good. In English, the performance of Emirati students was similar to that of other students. They did as well as other students in all aspects of mathematics, including practical tasks and problem solving. In science, at Foundation Stage, their attainment and progress were outstanding, and at other stages good.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Not Applicable

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school. Both in class and in the playground, students worked, shared and played considerately together. They had considerable respect for all members of staff. Attendance was outstanding which reflected students' enjoyment of school life. They showed a high degree of responsibility. The student council contributed actively to improving the life of the school. Most students understood the significance of the 40th anniversary of the UAE. They knew Dubai had developed from a fishing and pearl-diving community to a global tourist city in a short period of time. Most appreciated the multi-cultural diversity of Dubai and valued the different languages, cultures and customs. They were very keen to protect the desert and valued the residential visits and clean-ups of beaches. They eagerly seized the opportunity to recycle paper, cans and plastics in school. They showed good awareness and understanding of the importance of sustainability and conservation.



## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Assessment	Good	Good	Not Applicable

Teaching was good across the school. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge. Most used good links to previous learning at the start of lessons, and effectively shared learning objectives with the class. They used information and communications technology (ICT) well. Detailed lesson planning tended to follow a formula; this encouraged a minority of teachers to focus on the completion of the plan rather than taking opportunities to extend learning. Some teachers did not have a high enough expectation of what students could achieve. Only a minority offered individual support. Teachers used open-ended questioning well in most lessons and ensured good interaction and exploration of the topic being taught. Teaching assistants worked well with teachers, but their effectiveness in advancing learning was variable. Most teachers provided appropriate opportunities for critical thinking. The quality of teaching in other subjects observed was generally good, with outstanding teaching observed in art.

Learning was good throughout the school. Almost all students were highly motivated and eager to learn. Most worked collaboratively, taking responsibility for their own learning. They supported each other effectively in partner and group work. Most could make links with what they had learned elsewhere and had begun to relate their learning to the real world. Almost all students knew how they could improve and were beginning to concentrate on their understanding more than their knowledge of new learning. Students realised that they needed to improve their handwriting and to extend their writing in different genre. Almost all used ICT well, with increasing confidence. Investigative skills were improving in science. However, research skills, especially through independent enquiry, were not promoted regularly enough.

Assessment was good. There were consistent and effective assessment practices for monitoring progress, such as the use of 'learning journeys' for younger children. Most students knew their learning targets and were effectively involved in assessing their own work. Internal assessment lacked external reference and

moderation. Teachers made good use of the student tracker to identify individual attainment and progress. Most knew the attainment and progress of students in each grade well. As a result, they understood what students needed to do next in order to improve. Planning for all groups of students was beginning to be more focused. Oral feedback was good, but marking was inconsistent, particularly in sharing with students how they could improve. Where it was good, parents were also informed about how they could help.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Not Applicable

The curriculum was good with outstanding features. It offered broad and stimulating experiences and provided well for progression. Adaptations to the curriculum in Islamic Education, Arabic and science had led to improved learning outcomes. Changes to the timetable had not benefited all students. Cross-curricular links were carefully planned but did not ensure appropriate coverage of geography or design technology. Students had good opportunities to learn through real-life contexts. Their use of ICT was integrated well across subjects. A strong feature of the curriculum was the very high quality and range of experience in art. Arrangements and exchange of information at transition points were good. The school offered high quality provision for students with special educational needs. However, the more able were often insufficiently challenged. A strong emphasis was placed on personal, social and emotional development. The curriculum was enriched by an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities and visiting speakers. There were many opportunities for students to take part in environmental, social and health-promoting activities.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

The provision for students' health and safety was outstanding. The buildings were clean and very well maintained, with appropriate security arrangements. Security personnel were on all gates and some doors, and monitored arrivals and departures carefully. Fire drills and evacuation procedures were practised regularly. Medical staff maintained comprehensive files on all students and kept detailed notes of

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treatments administered. They also supported the school's healthy lifestyle programme, resulting in nutritious students' snacks. Supervision on entering and leaving buses was thorough. Electronic identification, seating plans and compulsory seat belt use were evident. All staff members had received very thorough guidance and training on child protection procedures.

High levels of mutual respect between students and adults were evident throughout the school. Poor behaviour was rare. Staff received accurate, up-to-date information about students' academic and personal needs through highly effective screening and assessment by specialist staff. Systems to track progress from Foundation Stage through to Year 6 provided a clear picture. Students with special educational needs were welcomed as an integral part of the school community. They made good progress as a result of focused support from the achievement centre team and from external organisations. Arrangements to record and monitor attendance and lateness, including prompt communication with parents, reinforced the importance of high attendance and punctuality.

## 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	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

Leadership was good. The recently appointed Principal had a clear vision for the school, succinctly expressed as the pursuit of excellence. The school had a focus on collegiate working, but the outcomes of such working were not always as effective as they could have been. Not all subject leaders were fully aware of their roles or priorities. The senior leadership team had not conducted an effective critical review of the balance of the curriculum. Over the last few years there had been slow improvement in attainment and progress. However, under new direction, the school was well placed to improve and advance.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had a thorough programme of teacher observation. Some judgements were not objective enough. Regular surveys of parents gave valuable information. The parent-school liaison officer and the Arabic liaison officer acted as useful conduits of

information from parents. Regular student surveys and feedback from the school council gave appropriate expression to the student voice. The school's improvement plan had the recommendations of the previous inspection report as key areas of focus. The school had made good progress in addressing them.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents indicated that they were very satisfied with communications from the school. They were actively encouraged to be partners in their children's education. The school had a well-developed programme to involve parents in classroom activities. Reports about students' progress were regular and informative. Community links were very well developed. The art department had been particularly effective in developing such links. An ambitious programme of inviting high-profile speakers had enhanced students' knowledge of the outside world.

Governance was good. The school received good advice and support at a corporate level. Within this structure, the Principal still had a degree of autonomy. He was well supported both in the routine management of the school and in strategic planning. The organisation carefully analysed results and attainment and had meaningful discussion with the school on how to improve. Plans had been made to cater for the increasing number of students for whom English was not a first language. There was no direct representation of parents or of the local community.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. The day-to-day operation of the school was very efficient. Informative and attractive displays enhanced the learning environment. Displays of students' art work were very effectively used to celebrate success. External events were very well planned and organised. The very good provision of support staff and auxiliaries effectively complemented the well qualified teaching staff. Dedicated and efficient administrative and maintenance staff ensured the smooth operation of the school. Newly appointed teachers were very well supported. Staff development needs were very well met. The provision of ICT was outstanding.

## 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	146	26%
	Last year	176	35%
Teachers	31		54%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

About a quarter of the parents responded to the survey, down from about a third last year. About half of the teachers responded to their survey. Most parents were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school and believed that their children's progress was good in the key subjects. Parents were less confident that progress was good in Arabic as a first or additional language and a few indicated that progress was not good. On the school's provision across a range of aspects, parents held largely positive views and reported that they were involved in the life of the school. Parents believed that their children were safe at the school and while on school buses.

## 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)

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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