

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Royal Dubai School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Royal Dubai School

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Location | Al Mizhar |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.royaldubaischool.com |
| Telephone | 04-2886499 |
| Address | P O Box 121310, Dubai |
| Principal | Kevin Murray Loft |
| Curriculum | UK |
| Gender of students | Boys and Girls |
| Age / Year Groups | 3-11 / Foundation Stage - Year 6 |
| Attendance | Good |
| Number of students on roll | 1051 |
| Largest nationality group of students | British |
| Number of Emirati students | 144 (14 %) |
| Date of the inspection | 11th to 14th November 2013 |

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The context of the school

GEMS Royal Dubai School is situated in Al Mizhar and opened in 2005. The school followed the English National Curriculum.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1051 students on roll, aged from three to 11 years. They represented over 70 nationalities. Around 70 per cent were non-native English speakers and 20 per cent of them received additional support to learn English. Approximately 27 per cent had special educational needs including learning delay, mild behaviour difficulties, dyslexia and dyscalculia.

There were 45 classes in the school: 14 in the Foundation Stage (3-5 year olds), 14 in Key Stage 1 (5-7 year olds) and 17 in Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds).

The school had a high rate of student turnover. Students often spend only two or three years at this school.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Children's outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage in all key subjects and students' outstanding progress in science throughout the school;
- Students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour that contributed strongly to their success in lessons;
- The development of students' outstanding learning skills which prepared them exceptionally well for future learning and success beyond this school;
- The good and often outstanding quality of teaching which inspired students to do well;
- The outstanding system of distributed leadership led exceptionally well by the headteacher that was helping realise the school's vision.

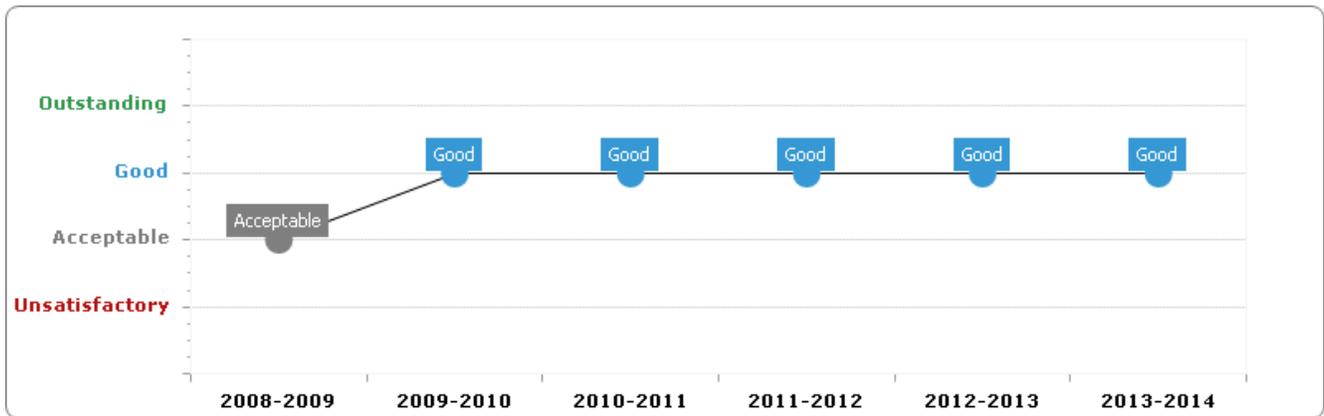
Recommendations

- Improve the curriculum in Arabic and the assessment arrangements in Arabic as an additional language.
- Refine the use of assessment information to track students' progress more closely and use the information effectively.
- Improve students' progress, particularly in writing, by ensuring that higher expectations are followed through in lessons.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had acted promptly and successfully on the recommendations in the previous report.
- The school had made changes to the Islamic Education and Arabic curricula and sharpened the focus of lesson monitoring in these subjects.
- Senior leaders and teachers had become more focused on the impact of teaching on students' learning.
- The quality of students' learning skills had risen from good to outstanding overall.

Trend of overall performance



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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| Islamic Education | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Good |
| Arabic as a first language | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Good |
| Arabic as an additional language | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Acceptable |
| English | | |
| Attainment | Good | Good |
| Progress | Outstanding | Good |
| Mathematics | | |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Good |
| Progress | Outstanding | Good |
| Science | | |
| Attainment | Outstanding | Good |
| Progress | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Quality of students' learning skills | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Personal responsibility | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness | Good | Good |
| Community and environmental responsibility | Outstanding | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Outstanding | Good |
| Assessment | Outstanding | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Curriculum quality | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students | Outstanding | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

| | Foundation Stage | Primary |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Health and Safety | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Quality of Support | 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 | Good |
| Parents and the community | Outstanding |
| Governance | Good |
| Management, including staffing, facilities and resources | Outstanding |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable. Students' recitation of the Qur'an was weaker than their knowledge of Islamic etiquette. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable and in line with curriculum expectations. Students' listening and speaking skills were stronger than their writing skills. In Arabic as an additional language, students used an appropriate range of familiar vocabulary while their independent writing skills were less well developed. In English, attainment was good. There were clear strengths in speaking and listening throughout the school and in reading particularly by the end of primary, but writing skills lagged behind. In mathematics, attainment was outstanding in Foundation Stage and good in primary. Numeracy skills and students' ability to apply them were well developed. In science, attainment was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good elsewhere. Enquiry skills were strong throughout and by the end of primary, prediction skills based on scientific concepts were advanced.

Students made good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language and acceptable progress in Arabic as an additional language. In Islamic Education, students made the best progress in their understanding of the Fiqh law. In Arabic as a first language, better progress was made in the understanding of grammar while progress with independent writing was slow. In Arabic as an additional language, students generally made slower progress in relation to the lesson targets. In English, children made outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage in all aspects from low starting points. In primary, progress was good. Students made outstanding progress in reading but acceptable progress in writing. In mathematics, progress in the Foundation Stage was outstanding in counting and basic number operations. Students made good progress in primary with data handling and problem solving. In science, progress in the Foundation Stage was outstanding because most children acquired the appropriate vocabulary to help them describe what they had experienced. In primary, students made outstanding progress in the scientific enquiry process and in controlling variables when carrying out an investigation.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning was outstanding across the school. Teachers were successful in achieving the school mission of developing independent learners. Students clearly enjoyed learning; their engagement in and responsibility for their own learning were extremely high. Almost all students took full responsibility for learning and were engaged throughout the lessons. Students' collaboration and interactions were of a high quality in nearly all lessons. They worked effectively together to debate issues, solve problems, apply concepts, design and create experiments and help less able students. The application of learning to the real world was a common feature of lessons across the school in all key subjects. Students' enquiry, research

and critical thinking skills were highly developed in most lessons and extended beyond the classroom. They made choices about how they completed a task in order to discover the best solution.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Students were polite, friendly, courteous and respectful towards adults and each other. The excellent relationships between staff and students were characterised by mutual respect leading to high levels of trust and student confidence in staff. Students' ability to give and receive critical feedback was a key feature of their successful learning. Children and students of all ages demonstrated a positive approach to their responsibilities as members of the school community and for their own learning. Older students acted as excellent role models for younger children. Most students across both phases chose to eat healthy food and exercise regularly.

Students described in detail their countries of origin and enjoyed the benefits of living in a culturally diverse community. However, their awareness of the influence of a range of cultures on how people live their lives was more limited. Displays and school activities ensured that students' knowledge of the values of Islam and the history of the UAE was developing well. Although some students could discuss the influence of Islam in Dubai, this was not yet a strong feature of their personal development. Students were very aware of local and global environmental issues. Attendance levels were good.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in primary years. In the Foundation Stage, teachers' knowledge including how children learn, was an overall strength. Across the school, high quality lesson planning was the norm. Plans were detailed, based on assessment information and regularly updated. However, planning did not always include sufficient challenge, especially in Arabic and for the more able students. Lessons progressed at a good pace with excellent use of resources to match the needs of groups and individuals. Interactions between teachers and students were very positive, productive and respectful. The use of dialogue and questions was skilful and provided many opportunities for students to reflect and consider their responses. Teaching strategies were varied to meet individual needs and students were expected to take responsibility for their learning. Teaching promoted individual learning very well across year groups and subjects. Lessons were observed in non-key subjects including French, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT), music and art. The quality of teaching in these subjects was of a high standard.

The quality of assessment was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in primary. Teachers used tests and ongoing assessment very thoroughly to plan lessons that met students' needs. There were many opportunities for self- and peer-assessment through initiatives such as Race to Success and Learning Journey. Teachers used Target Tracker records well to focus lesson plans on meeting learning needs. Assessment included regular moderation of standards, including external moderation against local and international schools. As a result, teachers had an accurate knowledge of students' individual strengths and weaknesses. Regular and thorough marking often gave students good advice on how to improve their performance. Despite improved assessment systems, there was still some inconsistency in teachers' understanding of the use of data to compare students' progress over time against benchmarks and starting points. Assessment in Islamic Education and Arabic was mainly based on test results and did not consistently provide helpful feedback.

[View judgements](#)

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

Curriculum quality was outstanding in both phases, with a very clear rationale based on all elements of the Foundation Stage and National Curriculum through core subjects and cross-curricular topics. Thorough planning ensured that the curriculum was broad and balanced, meeting students' needs very well. School leaders closely monitored the planning and delivery of cross-curricular themes, ensuring that pupils had a rounded experience. Phase leaders worked closely together to ensure continuity, progression and a smooth transition between phases. Students had many opportunities to work independently and co-operatively, and to develop key skills, such as the use of ICT, which prepared them very well for the next phases of education. A very wide range of extra-curricular and community activities enriched students' learning, providing for a broad range of academic, sporting and artistic interests.

Curriculum design was outstanding in Foundation Stage and good in primary. Teachers ensured that curriculum development reflected students' individual needs by regularly reviewing resources and curriculum plans. This had resulted in the use of new reading schemes, online learning resources and assessment processes. A very clear focus on enriching and personalising learning for English language learners, gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs enabled them to make very good progress. Students were given elements of choice, for example through project work and different learning styles to meet their varying needs. The school had made improvements to the curriculum in Arabic

to align to MoE requirements but the programmes for Arabic did not extend to a high enough level to enable pupils to experience the full curriculum appropriate to their age.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were outstanding including on arrival and on leaving the school. Continuous reviews ensured that the school was a safe place for students and staff. Staff understood their duty of care and acted accordingly. Safeguarding policies were a model of outstanding practice. Training was up-to-date and the policy rigorously adhered to. Transport arrangements were exceptionally well managed. Support staff received first aid training and meticulous records were maintained. Fire drills were successfully carried out. The school was exceptionally well maintained. However, the premises were unsuitable for students with limited mobility. The creative curriculum developed students' understanding of healthy eating choices.

The quality of support was outstanding. The management of behaviour was very good. Students' well-being and personal development were closely monitored with high quality individual support. The checking of attendance and punctuality was effective, resulting in increasingly good levels of attendance. The school's comprehensive inclusion policy led to thorough processes to identify and meet children's needs. Individual learning plans gave clear personal targets and specified the intervention necessary to help students with special educational needs make outstanding progress. Outstanding relationships between teachers and students inspired confidence and trust as a strong base for learning. The few students with a high level of need benefited greatly from having personal support assistants in the classroom, to give them access to the curriculum.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding and gave the school a good capacity for improvement. The headteacher had driven forward the previous report's recommendations and put them at the centre of the school's improvement. His vision for the school was being realised through the senior leadership team and middle leaders. Leadership was progressively well delegated and innovative. Leaders listened to one another to the school's ultimate benefit. Leaders coached others on the staff, set targets and supported their realisation. Leaders at all levels had a clear understanding of what their individual and collective responsibilities were.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. Planning included contributions from students, parents, governors and staff. There was a good system for reviewing school effectiveness which included contributions from middle leaders. Their action plans contributed to the school improvement plan priorities. The new method of evaluating lesson quality had improved the impact of teaching on learning. The school's use of information on students' progress had improved but was not refined enough to chart individual students' progress to show what value had been added during their time at the school.

Links with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents were very satisfied with the school and a high standard of communication gave parents confidence that concerns would be promptly handled. This process was made much smoother by the parental liaison arrangements. Parents actively supported their children in several ways including helping in class. Consultation arrangements ensured that parents' views helped the school improve. Links with other GEMS schools were beneficial. Links with the local and wider community were reflected in the school's broad curriculum.

The quality of governance was good. Governors played an influential role in the school's development and regularly monitored the school's activities. Their checking of school self-evaluation was not sharp enough and improvements had been planned. Governors had provided an outstanding range of resources. Governance did not include a wide representation of stakeholders but parental views were regularly used to inform improvement plans. The governors were widening the school's strategic links with schools in different parts of the world.

School management was outstanding. Roles were explicit and procedures well established. Rigorous staff selection ensured that capable staff were appointed and supported well through performance review and training. Staff, such as the year group leaders, were very well deployed for maximum impact on important areas. The school had excellent premises with scope for further expansion. The school's vibrant learning atmosphere was supported by extensive displays of students' work. All subjects drew on a wide range of high quality resources including up to date ICT equipment.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The school provided well for Emirati students and their attainment, progress, learning and personal development matched those of other students. They had a more developed understanding of the UAE and of Islamic values than other students. They were well integrated into the life of the school. This was because the school had a successful inclusion policy which ensured that all pupils had full and equal access to what the school provided. Emirati students mixed easily with others in class and at break times. They were elected

on to the school council as all students had this opportunity. They enjoyed taking part in the extra activities that the school provided.

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

The school had a clear and comprehensive inclusion policy based on its vision and aim to include and provide for all students, including those with additional learning needs. There were very effective systems and processes to identify, support and assess these needs. The school's outstanding and reflective provision resulted in clear targets for progression for each student and a modified curriculum to support learning. Teachers knew these students well and used assessments effectively to ensure that tasks and support enabled them to make good progress in lessons. Intervention teachers were extremely skilled in matching the curriculum to students' needs so that support and learning was personalised and highly successful. Outstanding relationships between teachers and students resulted in empathy which inspired confidence and trust as a strong base for learning. The few students with a high level of need benefited greatly from having personal support assistants in the classroom, to enable them to access the curriculum and to make good progress.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

In most of the lessons, teaching was effective. Teachers' subject knowledge was secure, lessons were well planned with clear objectives and good use of resources. Most teachers' questions to students were direct and varied, lesson activities were differentiated for the different levels of ability. Teachers concentrated mainly on listening and reading skill activities in lessons and fewer opportunities were given to students to practise extended speaking and writing. Teachers did not always concentrate on individual students when working in groups to ensure that most of them were understanding and solving these activities to move to the next step of learning. In most of the lessons, students were given opportunities for group discussions although, in some cases, these were dominated by the more able students. The school curriculum was based on the MoE standards although the level of challenge was not always high enough. Transition between years was adequate. While the curriculum was reviewed every year to meet the needs of all students, the process did not result in raising expectations enough to ensure that students met the standards set by MoE in writing and speaking.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgments. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

| Responses to the surveys | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----|------------|
| Responses received | Number | | Percentage |
| Parents | This year | 217 | 29% |
| | Last year | 250 | 36% |
| Teachers | 68 | | 93% |
| Students | There were no senior students in the school | | |

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

Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school and thought it provided a good quality education. Among the aspects that pleased them most were the fact that their children enjoyed school and quickly felt safe and valued there. They appreciated the opportunity for their children to mix with others from a wide range of backgrounds. Parents were generally pleased with their children's progress and the wide opportunities for children. They liked being kept up-to-date with how their children were progressing. They had noticed an improvement in school leadership and appreciated the access arrangements to teachers and managers. They had confidence that their concerns would be dealt with. They expressed a few concerns about children's safety when leaving school and crossing to get into poorly parked or moving cars. Teachers expressed satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school and highlighted the quality of care, the provision for students with special educational needs and the leadership as particular strengths.

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

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