

# INSPECTION REPORT

## GEMS Wellington International School

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Wellington International School

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.wellingtoninternationalschool.com">www.wellingtoninternationalschool.com</a>
Telephone	04-3484999
Address	PO Box 37486, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Mr Keith Miller
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS1-Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2376
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	46 (2%)
Date of the inspection	20th to 23rd January 2014

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## The context of the school

GEMS Wellington International School is situated in the Al Sufouh district. There were 2376 students on roll. The highest proportion was from British backgrounds with others from a range of backgrounds including Indian, Pakistani and the USA.

The youngest children followed the English Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum while older students studied the English National Curriculum. At the end of Year 11, students sat the English IGCSE examinations. The sixth form students followed the International Baccalaureate Programme and were examined in this at the end of Year 13. Islamic Education and Arabic followed Ministry of Education guidelines.

Children aged from three to five were taught in the Foundation Stage classes. Students from five to seven were in Key Stage 1. Those aged from seven to eleven were in Key Stage 2. Eleven to fourteen year olds were taught in Key Stage 3. Students aged from fourteen to sixteen were in Key Stage 4. The oldest students were in the sixth form.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

### Outstanding

#### Key strengths

- The school had maintained its established record of students' outstanding academic progress, attainment and learning skills in English, mathematics and science;
- Students' personal and social development was outstanding, especially their understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness;
- Confident, high quality teaching was supported by accurate assessments;
- Curriculum quality and design were outstanding;
- The school's protection and support for its students were outstanding;
- Outstanding leadership and management had guided this highly effective school to continued success.

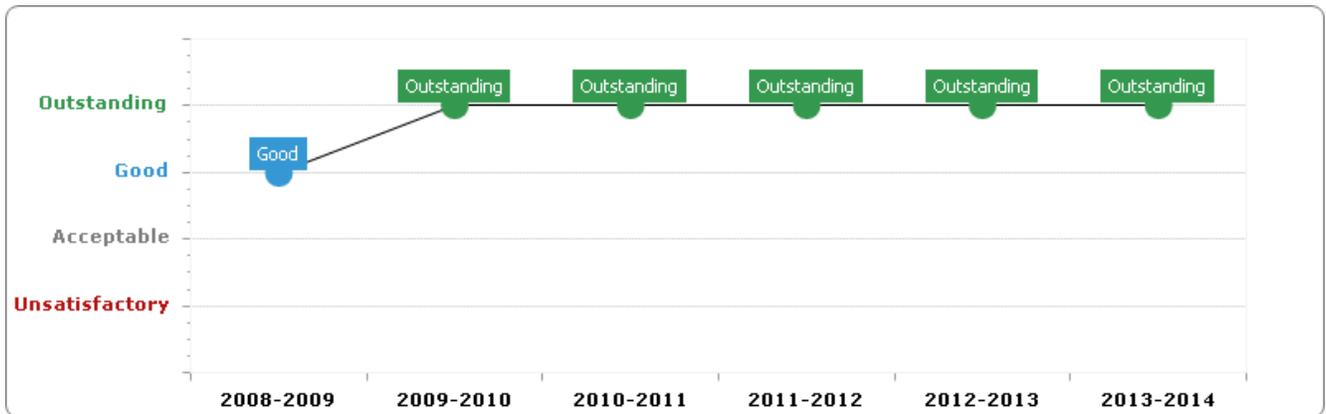
#### Recommendations

- Improve further students' attainment, progress and learning skills in Islamic Education and Arabic by ensuring higher quality teaching, learning and assessment;
- Complete the work to refine assessment in the Foundation Stage and so smooth the children's transition to Key Stage 1 and further improve progress in Year 1.

## Progress since the last inspection

The school had progressed well since the previous inspection. The curricula for Islamic Education and Arabic had been revised and efforts to improve teaching quality had resulted in some improvement. Students have been interacting much more closely with the local community to mutual benefit. The school had implemented its plans to enliven the curriculum throughout the school to noticeable effect. It had refurbished its play areas for younger students and increased the proportion of Islamic Education and Arabic books in the library. It had significantly improved the way that it involved parents in school decisions.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
<b>Quality of students' learning skills</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

In the Foundation Stage, most children reached outstanding levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. In primary, students had a good knowledge of the key principles of faith and worship in Islam but older students had only a basic knowledge of Islamic practice. Across the school, the majority of students demonstrated acceptable understanding of Islamic values. In Arabic as a first language, most primary students had acceptable listening and speaking skills. The majority of secondary students had lower than expected reading skills and lacked confidence when communicating their ideas. Creative writing attainment was limited across the school. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had adequate listening, speaking reading skills; students could understand basic class instructions and could respond with simple sentence. Writing was less developed. In English, mathematics and science students reached mostly outstanding levels of attainment. They made articulate personal responses to what they had read and wrote for a range of purposes, including cogently analysed literary texts. They had a deep mathematical understanding appropriate to their age and applied their knowledge and understanding to solve increasingly complex problems. They had strong science investigational skills and attained highly in organic chemistry.

Children made outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science in the Foundation Stage., In Islamic Education students made good progress in Primary from making links to their prior learning. Older students' progress in memorisation and recitation was weaker than other skills. In Arabic as a first language, most students made acceptable progress which was better in listening and speaking than reading and writing. In Arabic as an additional language, most students made good progress in developing their listening and speaking skills; but their progress in independent reading and writing was slower. In English, mathematics and science, students' progress was outstanding. They engaged in rich talk and increasingly acquired the vocabulary of critical thinking, which they progressively applied in their writing. Mathematics progress in lower primary was less consistent than in other phases of the school. In the last year of the primary phase students had made outstanding progress for example in place value and inverse operation. Secondary students made outstanding progress in applying mathematical reasoning within new learning. In science they made best progress in designing increasingly complex investigations.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning was outstanding and students participated enthusiastically in a wide range of learning activities. They understood the importance of learning and were highly motivated by the curriculum. Highly articulate students confidently discussed their personal opinions in a respectful and safe learning environment. They enjoyed working together in pairs or small groups or worked independently in a focused and concentrated manner. Teachers enabled students to develop critical thinking, problem solving and investigation skills. As motivated learners, they were naturally inquisitive and generated challenging problems or questions for discussion. Students effectively accessed a range of sources including ICT to research topics and enhance their knowledge. They could reflect on their own performance and made valuable contributions to peer evaluations. The older students used criterion referenced judgements when reflecting on their achievements. In some Islamic Education and Arabic lessons however, students did not develop good attitudes to learning because they were not given enough opportunities to develop learning skills.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had created an extensive range of leadership roles and committees to create greater student involvement. Students took these responsibilities seriously and carried them out with a maturity often beyond their years. Attitudes to learning and behaviour were excellent. Students showed initiative when taking responsibility for their learning as, for example, in the curriculum enrichment programme. Their secure understanding of healthy lifestyles helped them to make informed decision about diet and exercise. Students' attendance and punctuality were good.

The appreciation and understanding of the Islamic influence on society in Dubai was embedded across the school. Most students understood the traditions and customs extremely well. They were very aware of cultural sensitivities such as dress code and commented that they dressed appropriately so as, "not to offend." Almost all students had an excellent knowledge of Dubai and how it has developed, noting cultural integration as a prominent feature along with the hospitality of the Emirati people.

Students' involvement in the local community was outstanding. Older students were involved in Community Action Service while younger ones visited centres for students with disabilities and worked with them. Their commitment to charity was exemplified by their response to international disasters such as those in the Philippines where students coordinated with the Red Cross. Students had an excellent knowledge of environmental and global issues and spoke passionately about their conviction to save the rainforests. To this end, students raised funds through the, "Dirham a month" initiative and had begun to

purchase areas of rainforest to protect them from development. It also displayed their enterprise skills and strong work ethic

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## How good are teaching and assessment?

In the many successful lessons, skilled teaching created a stimulating learning environment, where students were motivated to succeed. Teachers had excellent subject knowledge and knew the needs of individual students extremely well. This resulted in carefully planned lessons that provided students with a variety of challenging activities and investigations which extended the boundaries of their knowledge. However, on a few occasions, mostly in Islamic Education and Arabic lessons, these features were not present. Evidence of challenge throughout most lessons was seen in high quality questioning that encouraged students to think deeply. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, students had to make predictions, based on their prior knowledge and observations, about the waterproof qualities of different materials. Teachers made outstanding use of ICT to make learning relevant. For example, a secondary ICT class was challenged to write a program to develop a computer game for today's market. Excellent relationships between adults and students contributed significantly to the successful development of students' collaborative and independent learning skills.

Across the school, assessment arrangements remained outstanding. Staff carefully tracked and analysed assessment findings to ensure students made at least expected progress. They continued to compare actual attainment to predictions and international benchmarks. Updated recording procedures had enabled more frequent review of secondary students' progress and consequently earlier alerts to students' lack of progress or underachievement. Most staff had a very detailed understanding of their students' strengths and development needs, and provided them with helpful written and oral feedback on how to improve. This practice was particularly well developed in IB courses in post-16 Phase. Students contributed to this picture through their often perceptive peer- and self-assessment. Many staff made well-judged changes to the course of lessons, or planned future lessons, based on assessment findings and 'learning conversations' that identified students' needs. A few teachers did not yet match their use of assessment to increased expectations of students' attainment and progress.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was broad and balanced with a comprehensive, coherent curriculum in each subject from Foundation Stage to Year 13. There were direct links between the curriculum and student achievement through learning intentions in each lesson. Transition between phases in the school was facilitated by on-going meetings of teachers at the endpoints of each phase and through monitoring and review by middle management. Enrichment was embedded in the school culture: extra-curricular activities were offered from Year 1 upwards. The range of activities included academic enrichment, leadership opportunities, sports and arts and environmental activities. In addition, strong local links, residential trips, field trips, guest speakers and competitions enhanced the classroom experience.

All students could experience success through the use of learning intentions and success criteria across the school, which provided clear direction about how to improve learning. In addition, all teachers had extensive individual education plans for students with special needs in their class. Programmes such as the entrepreneurship activities in Secondary and Primary and SPARKLE in the lower years provided choice for students as well as extending their skills and knowledge. A structured careers programme helped students make wise subject choices from Year 8 onwards. There was a growing range of subject choices as students moved upwards through phases 2 and 3, culminating in the options of 25 subjects in Years 12 and 13.

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

Arrangements to assure staff and student health and safety were outstanding and reflected the school ethos of providing the best it could. This was demonstrated in the innovative approach to improve the security of access to the school by parents and other visitors and in the actions taken to address issues relating to the safe arrival and exit from the school by private transport. The premises were exceptionally well maintained and provided students with a stimulating, safe environment in which to learn. The health and welfare of students was given a high priority both through the outstanding promotion of healthy eating and in the rigorous implementation of the clearly defined roles and responsibilities for child protection, first aid and the keeping of meticulous medical records.

The quality of support was outstanding across all phases. Teachers were positive role-models and this resulted in exemplary behaviour and respectful relationships. The management of attendance and punctuality was systematic and thoroughly monitored. The school had an inclusive and transparent admissions policy for students with special education needs. The identification process was accurate and sensitive and involved parents from the earliest stage. The Achievement Centre coordinated a wide range of exceptionally well targeted support and was managed by a very committed multi-disciplinary team.

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Progress was often outstanding for a wide range of students and those with the most specific needs continued to make good progress. Students' careers, well-being and personal circumstances were closely monitored by all members of staff, including medical staff and school counsellors. Students received regular advice and guidance and had ready access to staff who they trusted.

[View judgements](#)

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

Leadership and management were outstanding in all respects. The principal and vice principals worked effectively with leaders at all levels to ensure the school made a good response to the previous report. They had maintained high standards in most subjects. They had improved what the school provided in other subjects and fostered innovation. They had developed the role of middle leaders so that they made a strong contribution. Together with the senior leaders, they provided the school with a strong capacity for further improvement. They were the key to communicating the school's vision of continuing development, and achieved this through what they did and said, how they listened, and by being accountable. All leaders were part of teams to support and challenge staff to play their parts in an overall school effort.

The school's strong process of self-evaluation gave senior leaders an accurate picture of school strengths and weaknesses. Senior staff successfully drew on a wide range of evidence of school performance to put together a firmly based improvement plan to set priorities and challenging targets. Subsequent action plans guided staff efforts, and team leaders were responsible for their achievement. Regular observations of lessons resulted in staff training to improve overall quality. The school's monitoring of assessment information provided updated information so that under-performance could be improved.

The principal's vision was to involve parents more fully in school life and improvement. As a result their views were regularly sought and acted on. Representative groups such as WISPA and the School Council influenced the school improvement agenda and monitored its progress. School/Parent communications were diverse and effective. Those who wished to have their voices heard were listened to. Regular meetings and reports involved parents in their children's education. Since the previous inspection, the school had revamped its house system and used it as a vehicle for enhancing beneficial links with the local community.

Governors maintained a supportive and challenging relationship with the school to ensure its continuing improvement. They put a full range of additional expertise at the school's disposal to add value. There were good communications between the board, parents and staff, and all views were taken into account. The board's representatives regularly monitored key aspects of the school, evaluated its impact and

reviewed staff performance in the light of its findings. Besides making sure that the school acted within the law, governance played an active role in agreeing the school's finances.

All staff did their part through tried and tested routines to ensure that the school ran smoothly to the students' benefit. Teaching staff turnover had reduced significantly ensuring that well qualified staff worked together productively. The premises were of a high standard. They offered students the full range of learning opportunities. Displays of students' work celebrated high achievement. Students had access to a large number of resources to help them learn, including an expanding range of digital technology equipment.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students were reaching at least good levels of attainment and made often outstanding progress in the majority of key subjects. Emirati students had slightly better attainment in Arabic as a first language than their peers, particularly in Post-16. In English, Emirati students' attainment and progress were good, and were outstanding in mathematics. Emirati students had outstanding attitudes and behaviour and enjoyed excellent relationships with their teachers and peers. Their attendance was slightly less than other students. However, the school had very good procedures to address this and was working with both students and parents to improve attendance. Emirati parents had good relationships with the school leaders and staff, and had a leading role in cultural events especially the National Day celebrations. Emirati culture and traditions were celebrated and promoted well across the school. The number of Emirati students enrolling in the school was increasing.

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

The progress of students with specific special educational needs was good overall. Some outstanding progress was observed in a number of lessons in the key subjects. The progress in Arabic was unsatisfactory due to poor teacher planning and low-expectations of students. Progress was evident in the data, individual plans and learning objectives set in the other key subjects. Students were highly active in their own learning and developed a wide range of skills which pointed the way to future success. Best progress was seen in the primary phase where intervention was exceptionally well targeted. There was a clear tradition of inclusion which was an outstanding feature of the school. The identification procedures reflected inclusivity and enabled the school to gain an accurate picture of needs and provision requirements. The Inclusion Leader was highly effective in her role, and alongside other specialist staff, was highly organised and creative. There was a dynamic range of provision available to all students and

facilitated through the school's Achievement Centre. Parents were fully involved in the work of the school and in the support of the education of their children. Parent training was provided according to need and context and was well attended. The school was creative and innovative in its curriculum provision. Setting work to meet the needs of different students was discrete and students were supported to engage and achieve to the best of their ability.

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

Teaching in Arabic as a first language was inconsistent. In most lessons, teachers prepared organised plans for their lessons. However, planning was not always tailored skilfully to address the needs of all students. The quality of questions and interactions were adequate overall but students were rarely challenged to extend their speaking skills to communicate and express their ideas clearly. Teaching in Arabic as a first language was not always interesting. Although teachers planned for different abilities, activities and teaching strategies did not always lead to language development. Teachers' dominance of lessons hindered the opportunities for students to engage actively and learn in lessons.

The curriculum was based on the Ministry of Education text books and was compliant with the lesson coverage requirement. The school had recently updated the Arabic curriculum in order to align it to the Ministry and national document guidelines. Curriculum planning was not always based on the current attainment level of the students and did not always focus on how to ensure that students' language skills across the four skills develop gradually, particularly in extended speaking and writing.

## 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	122	3%
	Last year	350	22%
Teachers	50		28%
Students	141		89%

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

Only a small percentage of the parents responded to the survey. About a quarter of the teachers and most of the students responded. Parents were very supportive of the school in general but a small number had concerns about standards in Arabic. Parents believed that the curriculum helped students appreciate their own and other cultures. Most parents believed that their children could re-enter the UK system without disruption to their education. The majority of post-16 students felt confident in the school's ability to guide them well in their educational and future career choices. The majority of parents expressed confidence in the teachers' abilities to provide a good quality education. Similarly, most students believed that teachers provided opportunities for them to participate in stimulating activities that promoted critical thinking, problem solving and research skills and independence. Almost all the students believed that they were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, although a high proportion was uncertain about their progress in Arabic. Almost all teachers agreed that the school offered students a good quality education. Almost all said that the school had effective assessment systems, regularly reviewed the curriculum and prepared students well for the future.

## What happens next?

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

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

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

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:  
[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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