

GEMS Royal Dubai School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Primary

Report published May 2011

Contents

Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report.....	3
Basic information about the school	3
How well does the school perform overall?	4
Key features of the school.....	4
Recommendations	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	6
How good are the teaching and learning?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?.....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	9
Summary of inspection judgements	10
Next steps.....	14
How to contact us	14

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 Royal Dubai School was inspected in October 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 Al Mezhar, GEMS Royal Dubai School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to the end of primary, aged three to 11 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. Since the previous inspection, the school had become a primary school. The secondary students had been transferred to other schools and the facilities of this school had been modified to suit the changed age range. The management structure had also been altered in line with the school's changed needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 680 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

As part of the inspection process, Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau analysed responses to on-line questionnaires issued to parents. Parents were firm supporters and were very pleased with what the school did for their children. They were very satisfied with the quality of education. They were more satisfied with their children's achievement in English and mathematics than they were with that in Islamic Education and Arabic. Most thought that teaching and learning were good and that their children enjoyed their lessons. They were satisfied with the extra activities offered by the school and were positive about the children's behaviour. The level of resourcing in the school was praised and care for their children was appreciated. They were less certain about how the school helped their children make future choices and about incidents of bullying. Almost all thought that the school helped the children live healthy lifestyles and that their children were safe in school. They thought that

communication with the school was good, that parents were involved well and that the amount of homework was right. About a quarter did not know enough about the last inspection and how the school had responded.

How well does the school perform overall?

GEMS Royal Dubai provided a good quality of education and had an excellent capacity to continue to improve. It had maintained its strengths from the previous inspection and had added several outstanding features to its performance. This marked its good progress over the last year in addressing the last recommendations from the last inspection. It had improved the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic by appointing more teaching staff; providing more resources, increasing the amount of teaching time and providing well equipped facilities. In addition, the school had arranged for staff training both in the subjects and in pedagogy. As a result, the school complied with Ministry requirements. The analysis and tracking of students' progress had improved and this information was being used by the teachers, for example, to group students in mathematics and to set work according to students' abilities in other subjects. In particular, higher attaining students were receiving more challenging work and students with special educational needs were identified at an early stage and provided with effective support.

Students made acceptable but improved progress in Islamic Education and Arabic and their attainment was acceptable. Their progress and attainment in English were good; progress and attainment in mathematics were outstanding and progress and attainment in science were acceptable. Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Their civic and Islamic understanding and appreciation of local traditions and culture were good. Their economic and environmental understanding was also good. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good. The curriculum was good with outstanding features. Health and safety arrangements and the quality of student support were both outstanding. The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were good although its self-evaluation judgments did not give an accurate view of its performance in all respects. The governance of the school was good. The partnership with parents and the community and the school's staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding as was the quality of leadership. It was principally this latter quality which enabled the school to remain a good school and significantly increase its proportion of outstanding features.

Key features of the school

- The school had improved well since the previous inspection and had an excellent capacity to improve further;
- Students made outstanding progress in mathematics;
- Students showed outstanding behaviour, attitudes to learning and environmental awareness;
- The curriculum was of good quality and had outstanding features;
- The school provided students with outstanding care and support;

- The quality of leadership was outstanding;
- There was an outstanding partnership with parents and the community;
- The school had outstanding facilities and resources.

Recommendations

- Increase further students' improving progress in Islamic Education and Arabic and so raise standards;
- Improve progress and raise standards in science, especially in investigative work;
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation judgements accurately reflect its performance.

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

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education were acceptable although there were signs of recent improvement in students' progress, for instance in their knowledge of the Prophet's life. Most younger students had a good general knowledge about Islam such as the five Pillars, the prayers and the names of Prophets and Messengers. Most older students were able to recite and memorise The Holy Qur'an with few errors. Also, they could recite the Prophet's sayings. However, only a few students had well-developed recitation rules. Across the school, a few students demonstrated sufficient understanding of how they could apply what they learned to real life situations. A minority of students understood clearly their responsibilities and duties as a Muslim.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were acceptable although there were signs of better progress in speaking. Most younger students had acceptable listening skills; they understood instructions and followed them well. They were able to read with acceptable confidence. The majority of older students used standard Arabic and they had a rich range of vocabulary. Most students had a basic knowledge of grammar but only a few could apply the rules in new situations. Across the school the majority of students' skills in extended and free writing were underdeveloped and were limited to a few words or sentences.

Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were acceptable although students were making faster progress in their understanding of grammatical rules. Across the school, a minority of students' listening skills were below expectations and they used English too often in responses. Most older students used a good range of vocabulary in their spoken responses. However, these were only single word answers or short sentences. They knew most letters of the alphabet and were able to read single words or short phrases. The majority of younger students developed their fine motor writing skills well. The skills of the majority of students in extended and free writing were underdeveloped and limited to a few words or sentences.

Attainment and progress in English were good. English National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that attainment in reading was above average and writing was below

average. Initiatives to improve writing had resulted in higher attainment at the end of the primary phase. Progress was most rapid in Year 6 as a result of outstanding teaching of English in that age range. Students made very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Foundation Stage students made good progress in reading and could recognise some individual letter sounds at the beginning of words. Year 1 students distinguished between fiction and non-fiction texts, recording information independently. The oldest students were applying the skills of reasoning, deduction and inference when exploring the detective genre.

Attainment and progress in mathematics were outstanding. English National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that attainment was well above average. In all classes, students successfully mastered accurate mathematical language and they made outstanding progress in all aspects of number. In the Foundation Stage, older students could recognise numerals up to ten and sort by colour, size and shape. Year 2 students successfully measured a range of objects in centimetres and in Year 3 all students correctly identified a wide range of 2D and 3D shapes. By Year 6, students could confidently complete number operations and recognise relationships and patterns within number. Understanding of shape and space was well developed and students could estimate and measure angles accurately. Problem solving skills were very well developed.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable across the school. Students' attainment was in line with the English National Curriculum average. Students in Year 6 carried out investigations on the effect of balanced and unbalanced forces on an object and made good progress in developing investigative skills. Most other students in the primary phase made slower progress in investigative skills, such as hypothesising, planning, observing, predicting, deducing and recording. These skills were underdeveloped except where the quality of teaching was good. The majority of the students in the Foundation Stage could distinguish between living and non-living things. Year 1 students could identify, name and draw the different parts of a plant. Most Year 2 students understood the concept of a habitat and how different animals required different habitats for survival.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding and their attendance was good. Students were self-disciplined and responded well to adults. Almost all students made good progress in the development of self-regard and self-confidence. Students felt valued and supported by the staff which led to effective relationships amongst students. There was an ethos of caring in the school. Students had a strong commitment to following a healthy lifestyle.

Students' civic and Islamic understanding was good. Their awareness of the economy and culture of Dubai was enhanced through visits to businesses and places of interest. Students contributed to the life of the school and the wider community through planned activities. Often, these were initiated through the student council which was very active in the school. Students showed care and consideration for others and took responsibility in school. They participated actively in fund-raising for charities and had a good sense of responsibility to

others less fortunate than themselves. A majority of students had a basic understanding of Islam and a few were able to talk about how Islam had shaped Dubai.

Students' economic understanding was good. Students could talk about the impact of some recent projects such as the metro and the reasons for the slowdown in building. Students' environmental understanding was outstanding. Students were very active in conservation issues and had initiated a blog where eco-initiatives were published. Students showed respect for the school and wider environment through their daily actions and activities. Most students readily understood the need to protect natural resources and had a good appreciation of the need for conservation.

How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was good. Almost all teachers displayed a good knowledge of their subjects. All teachers planned well and made good use of resources, especially interactive whiteboards. In all classes a sufficiently wide range of tasks and worksheets were provided. Teachers gave students positive feedback. Very good cross-curricular teaching and learning was achieved within topics. However, in a few classes, time was wasted because explanations of tasks took too long. In the Foundation Stage, teachers managed time well and assessed students' progress accurately. In contrast, they did not make enough use of additional adult support so that students were sometimes without short adult input to move learning on. In Islamic Education, only a few teachers used good oral questioning to check students' understanding. In a minority of science lessons, the pace was too fast and the activities were poorly planned.

The quality of students' learning was good. Students had positive attitudes to learning. They engaged well in lessons and made connections between new learning and what they already knew. Students worked well collaboratively in pairs and in small groups as well as working independently. Very good learning was achieved using topics. Enquiry and research skills were also developed well, as in the project to construct lava lamps. In most lessons, there was an element of higher-order thinking, and critical thinking skills were also promoted. Year 6 constructed comic strips on the "Grecian Murder" using music, film, pictures and text creatively while integrating a wide variety of Information and information and communications technology (ICT) programs. This has assisted students' development of good independent learning skills. However, investigative skills were not promoted sufficiently in science lessons.

The quality of assessment was good. In the Foundation Stage, baseline assessments were compiled well using initial in-school assessments, settings and parental insights. Across the school, teachers provided constructive oral and written feedback. Students' progress was reviewed weekly by the subject heads and class teachers. There were effective gathering and interpretation of assessment data which was used to track each student's progress. Expected levels were set for each student at the start of each year and they were reviewed as the year progressed. Students were also involved in self and peer assessment. In contrast, in Arabic only a few teachers monitored students' work during lessons and gave guidance as needed. In English, not all class teachers followed the school criteria on assessment.

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

The curriculum was good with some outstanding features. It was based on the English National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, covered all the areas of learning and was broad and balanced. ICT was a very prominent feature that engaged students and enriched their learning but scientific investigation was underdeveloped. Core values permeated the curriculum. These were consistent with the school's aims of teaching students how to make a valuable contribution, economically and socially. The curriculum had been revised recently to provide a focus on the development of personalised learning skills and a strong emphasis on healthy lifestyles. Planning of this revision was undertaken collaboratively with the organisation of staff teams corresponding to the key areas of learning. Creativity was also promoted actively, with stimulating starting points and the encouragement of students to determine the direction of their learning. The detailed planning frameworks helped to secure consistency across year groups and progression through the school. An appropriate balance was maintained between separate subject teaching and a thematic approach, which involved Year 2 students dressing as animals to participate in an enquiry-based project on different habitats. The curriculum was enhanced by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Considerable emphasis was given to improving the environment and to raising awareness of sustainability together with the students' responsibilities in making decisions which could affect the future quality of people's lives. Parents were kept very well informed about the curriculum through weblogs and were given encouragement to support their children's learning at home. Extensive visits were made to places of interest in Dubai to extend learning about UAE culture.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were outstanding. The clinic was very well equipped and staffed by a qualified nurse who kept well-documented records. There were very effective policies and supervision to ensure students' safety; there was rigorous safety monitoring of arrival and departure of students by buses and cars. The school had organised two fire drills this year. The grounds and swimming pool were serviced by qualified personnel. Students with special educational needs were provided with excellent support. Healthy living was part of the school culture and integrated well into the curriculum. Students had safe access to physical activities. Child protection policies were in place and students felt safe in school.

The quality of support was outstanding. Relationships between staff and students reflected the confidence that the students had in the adults. Visitors and external visits gave students many insights into the world of work. These included experiences of catering and commerce: the latter involved a presentation to British business delegates from Dubai. Lower Key Stage 2 students led training sessions for teachers as part of the programme for developing leadership skills. Minor issues arising from students' behaviour were dealt with promptly. The school monitored students' well-being and academic progress systematically through a detailed tracking system. Staff identified specific needs promptly and made appropriate provision.

Students with special needs made accelerated progress due to the high quality support. Parents were contacted on the first day of their child's absence and electronic procedures were in place to monitor attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding. The Principal and Vice-Principal were a highly effective partnership that had led the school successfully through recent significant change and ensured that the school had a number of outstanding features. This partnership had high expectations and had built senior and middle management teams of quality, enthusiasm and a shared sense of purpose. There were clear lines of delegation with accountability and the school had established routines and organisational systems that enabled it to run smoothly.

The quality of self-evaluation and school improvement planning was good. The school had good systems for tracking students' progress and for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The analysis of this information enabled it set the right priorities for developing the school further in its improvement and action plans. However, these plans did not have clear means for judging the success of the school's actions in terms of students' progress. The school's self-evaluation rightly involved a range of staff in its completion but some of its judgments were too generous and did not give an accurate enough picture of the school's current effectiveness.

The school's partnership with its parents was outstanding. Parents played an extremely important part in the life of the school at different levels by helping in class, supporting meetings with parents and organising their own events such as workshops with the school. They received very good quality information about their children's progress and well-being and were very keen to help them at home. A growing suite of school blogs and twitter tweets kept parents up to date with what was going on in school and promoted a good two-way dialogue.

The quality of governance was good. The GEMS board was kept fully informed about the school's performance through regular monitoring visits, reports and meetings. In this way, the board understood the school's strengths and areas for improvement and provided support and challenge, for instance through its extensive programme of continuous professional development. It understood the views of its parents through meetings, information from the school and information gathered by sample questionnaires. On the other hand, parents did not have direct representation on the GEMS board. The school enjoyed regular and very productive links with other GEMS schools and with local businesses.

The school had outstanding staffing, facilities and resources. Well qualified staff worked well within a good adult-student ratio and this enabled the students to enjoy their work and make good progress. Staff had ample resources at their disposal, especially in ICT, to make lessons interesting. The students made regular use of the school's excellent facilities such as the swimming and wading pools, the shaded external areas in the Foundation Stage and the flexible internal learning areas, which added variety to the students' experiences.

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	Secondary
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?			
12% of students in the school studied Arabic as a first language.			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as a first language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Attainment in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress in Arabic as an additional language	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Good	Good	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

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

How good is the students' personal and social development?			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Not Applicable

How good are teaching and learning?			
Age group:	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

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Not Applicable

How well does the school protect and support students?			
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

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

How well does the school perform overall?
Good

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:
inspection@khda.gov.ae.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

Copyright 2011

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school. It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.