

INSPECTION REPORT

GEMS Wellington Primary School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GEMS Wellington Primary School

Location	Al Sofouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemswps.com
Telephone	04-3433266
Address	PO Box 114652 Dubai
Principal	Leo Spaans
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Kindergarten to Grade 6
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	894
Number of Emirati students	17 (3%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 17th to Wednesday 19th October 2011

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The context of the school

Gems Wellington Primary School is a private school situated in Al Satwa. The school provided education for students from the Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged from three to 11 years. The school followed the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 894 students on roll, including 17 Emirati students. The other students had origins in 72 different countries. Attendance levels in the last academic session were outstanding.

There were 77 teachers on staff, almost all of whom had a teaching qualification. They were supported by 45 teaching assistants and a leadership team.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The school provided a good quality of education. Among its many strengths was the outstanding leadership of the principal and other senior staff. The school's ethos was underpinned by a focus on promoting all aspects of students' development within a caring and purposeful environment. Children's attainment and progress was outstanding in English, mathematics and science in the Foundation Stage due to highly effective teaching and a rich curriculum. Behaviour across the school was outstanding. Students had extremely positive attitudes to learning and were developing a high degree of independence. Those with special educational needs were extremely well supported, reflecting the outstanding support provided for all students.

The school had made good progress since the last inspection. It had sustained its effectiveness in almost all areas and had improved from good to outstanding in several respects. Assessment had been sharpened, which enabled students' progress through each year to be closely monitored. Good efforts had been made to improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, although students' progress in these subjects was not as good as in other key subjects.

Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage were outstanding;
- Attainment and progress in primary English and mathematics were good;
- The outstanding curriculum engaged students and contributed to their highly positive attitudes toward learning and their exemplary behaviour;
- The school's inclusive approach underpinned the outstanding level of protection and support provided for students;
- Outstanding leadership by the principal and senior staff had ensured a shared vision and drive for improvement, particularly in self-evaluation, assessment, and the care and support provided for students.

Recommendations

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in Islamic education and Arabic;
- Further enhance teaching and learning in the key subjects to ensure that students make the best possible progress.

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

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

At Foundation Stage attainment was outstanding in English, mathematics and science. By Foundation Stage 2, early literacy and numeracy skills were above expected levels. Children were inquisitive and

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gained a very good understanding of the world outside their immediate home and school. In the primary section, attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic. Older students' recitation skills and knowledge of Islam were acceptable, but their understanding of concepts was weak. Students spoke Arabic confidently and made simple oral presentations; however their writing skills were less developed. The attainment of students learning Arabic as an additional language was unsatisfactory as they had a limited vocabulary and lacked confidence in speaking. Attainment in English and mathematics was good. By Year 6, the majority of students read confidently. They wrote imaginatively, using vocabulary and linguistic devices to engage the reader. Students' rapid recall of number facts helped them solve mathematical problems. The oldest students showed a good grasp of mathematical principles. Attainment in science was acceptable. Students were good at planning, carrying out investigations, drawing conclusions and understood fair-testing. Although acceptable, their factual scientific knowledge was less secure.

Children in the Foundation Stage made excellent progress in English, mathematics and science. Children made rapid gains linking sounds and letters. They quickly learned the names of regular shapes and identified these in their classroom environment. Children quickly acquired inquiry skills through practical investigations. Children learning English as an additional language made good progress in speaking. Primary students made acceptable progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Students in Years 1 and 2 progressed more quickly than those in older classes.. Progress was good in English, mathematics and science. Students with special educational needs, including those with speech and communication difficulties, made at least good progress towards their individual goals.

The school had seven Emirati students in the Foundation Stage and nine in the primary phase. Five of the students had been in the school for at least one year. Across the school, the attainment and progress of Emirati students were generally good, in line with the outcomes for other students.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Outstanding

Behavior across the school was outstanding. Students had extremely positive attitudes and were self-disciplined. They enjoyed good relationships with adults. Students were sensitive to the needs of others. They also showed excellent outstanding of healthy living. Attendance throughout school was outstanding. Students had a clear understanding of Islam. Links with the local community successfully promoted students' awareness and understanding of local values and culture. Students appreciated living in Dubai and were very positive about its multi-cultural nature. They enthusiastically celebrated the festivals associated with a wide range of countries and cultures. The student council was effective and its members were vibrant and proactive. The eco-group had been successful in introducing energy-saving ideas, monitoring the school's use of electricity and recycling. It was organising an Eco-week to act as a focus for both the school and the wider community. Students had a good grasp of the impact of tourism on the economy of Dubai. Moreover, they had a secure understanding of economic recession. They understood the importance of environmental sustainability and they kept school clean and tidy.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

Teachers planned their lessons well. Learning objectives of almost all lessons were shared and explained to students in an age-appropriate format. Most lessons concluded with an effective summary. Throughout the school, teachers' subject knowledge was strong. Teachers created very successful working relationships with their students. Almost all teachers used questioning which encouraged students to think critically. Teachers had high expectations for their students and continually challenged them to think and find out for themselves. Most lessons provided well for students of different abilities. Students with special educational needs were well integrated into classes and worked at an appropriate level.

The quality of students' learning was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary years. Students expressed their satisfaction with almost all lessons. They were motivated, demonstrated high levels of engagement and wanted to learn. When working in pairs or groups they collaborated well. They shared their ideas, helped others, listened carefully and were able to work independently for sustained periods of time. In most lessons they gained new knowledge, skills or understanding by building on previously learned concepts. They often asked questions to clarify their understanding and linked their learning to real world examples. Critical thinking skills were a feature of many lessons.

The quality of assessment was outstanding across the school. The school had well-developed policies and systems to assess student learning and to communicate results to students and parents. Across most subjects, teachers used a range of assessments to check progress. Work was marked regularly. Most teachers incorporated constructive feedback to guide students on their next learning steps. Students regularly self-assessed their own and one another's work. In classrooms many teachers used student's responses to check their immediate progress. Many also reviewed learning at the end of each lesson. In Islamic Education and Arabic assessment information was not used as effectively.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

The curriculum was outstanding in both the Foundation and Primary phases. A clear rationale supported the school's aims. Recent changes had increased and strengthened the already broad and balanced curriculum. The review process was well established and ensured that the views of all stakeholders were heard. Core competencies were central to the students' academic and personal development. Cohesive planning across all years ensured that there was progression for students in key subjects. Effective transition arrangements ensured students moved seamlessly between different stages of the school. Cross-curricular planning was in place and implemented well in lessons. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) was successfully integrated into most subjects. An outstanding extra-curricular programme included many opportunities for students to experience activities beyond the academic curriculum. Students benefitted from the excellent links with the wider community. However, there was scope for some improvement to the curriculum for Arabic as an additional language, which did not fully engage nor meet the needs of students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding

Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students were outstanding. A comprehensive set of detailed policies, were underpinned by a strongly inclusive school ethos and leadership by example. This led to open communication throughout the school, and prompt and effective responses from staff and external professionals. Regular and thorough safety checks provided a very well-maintained environment that was respected and valued by students. Fire drills were effective and frequent. Personal information about students, including their medical needs, was kept securely, detailed and regularly updated. It was used effectively and supported by regular communication between parents and the school. Close supervision by staff ensured that students were safe during any movement around the school and particularly at the start and end of the day. Health and safety was well integrated into the curriculum and encouraged students to become advocates for healthy living. Students took their learning home, for

example, to contribute to improving the health of their families. They actively promoted the use of child-seats in cars and persuaded a neighbouring company to reduce traffic fumes around the school. Child protection training effectively helped all staff and students understand the policies in the school and helped them become confident to raise issues.

The quality of support was outstanding. Relationships across the school between staff and students were excellent. Behaviour management was seamless and highly effective. An overriding ethos of mutual respect between staff and students was evident. Provision for students with special educational needs was outstanding, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring that all students had equal opportunities to succeed. As a result, students, including those with physical, social and communication difficulties progressed very well towards their individual targets. Comprehensive and detailed records were kept to track their progress over time and evaluate the effectiveness of the additional support provided. Students themselves were involved in assessing how well they were doing. Strong partnership with outside agencies provided additional support, such as speech therapy, when appropriate. The most able students and those with particular gifts and talents benefitted from additional activities designed to promote their skills in thinking logically and creatively through problem solving and investigations. The school successfully managed attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was outstanding. The Principal inspired staff and students and played a pivotal role in embedding ambition and driving improvement. Senior staff shared a common determination to ensure the best possible outcomes for students' academic achievement and personal development. Distributed leadership ensured they were empowered offer ideas and implement initiatives. This, together with the school's track record, indicated an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation was outstanding. There was a common framework for self-review across all subjects and phases. This was based on the recommendations of the last report and other emerging issues. Leaders kept a close eye on students' progress and this meant any anomalies were quickly identified. The quality of teaching and learning was monitored effectively. Effective methods were shared and a comprehensive programme of staff development successfully addressed any relative weaknesses. Development plans were sharply focused on key priorities and high quality strategic planning had contributed significantly to the school's very good progress

The school's partnership with parents was outstanding. Parents across the school were successfully encouraged to be partners in their children's education. They were kept extremely well informed about how their children were getting on and provided with excellent guidance about how they might support learning at home. In addition to day-to-day informal contact, the school kept in touch with parents in numerous ways. These included text messaging, e-mails, the school's website and on-line portal and blogs, plus informative newsletters. Detailed reports were written in accessible language and included the next steps for students' learning. Effective links with the local community enhanced learning. Guest speakers from local services and businesses provided insights for students into the world of work and the importance of developing skills and competencies they would need in the future.

Governance was good. The leadership team received good support from the management board and associated network. This had been pivotal in helping to ensure the school's on-going development. Regular monitoring by the board provided useful feedback and helped school leaders identify strengths and areas for development. Parents' were able to express their views through frequent questionnaires and through their class representatives, although they did not have formal representation at corporate level.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school ran smoothly because day-to-day administration was highly effective. The ratio of staff to students was very good. Staff were well qualified and deployed effectively according to expertise and experience. The premises were used to full advantage and high quality resources and displays provided a welcoming, informative and purposeful learning environment. Improvements since the last inspection, including an additional swimming pool, music room, climbing apparatus and library had enhanced the facilities. Funds had been allocated for new resources for Islamic Education and Arabic but at the time of the inspection there was a paucity of books and other learning material for these subjects.

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	212	46%
	Last year	145	23%
Teachers	55		71%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

Almost half of the parents responded to the survey, double the response from last year. About two-thirds of the teachers responded to their survey. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, but only a majority believed that progress was good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first or additional language. Almost all parents believed that their children were safe at school and enjoyed their lessons. Parents' views were very positive across the different aspects of school provision. A majority of parents believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, but about one quarter indicated that they did not know. Teachers were also very positive in their views of the school across a range of aspects and agreed that inspection had helped the school improve. A few teachers indicated that they did not have sufficient resources to support their teaching.

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

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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