



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First **التعليم أولاً**



New School Inspection Report

GEMS Cambridge International School

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

GEMS Cambridge International School

Inspection Date	28 April – 1 May 2014
School ID#	232
Licensed Curriculum	English National Curriculum
Number of Students	1289
Age Range	3 to 18 years (currently 3 to 14 years)
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Rebecca Plaskitt
School Address	PO Box 56825 Baniyas, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 510 4343
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Official Email (ADEC)	Gems-cambridge.int@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.gemscambridgeinternationalschool-abudhabi.com
Date of opening	15 September 2013

The overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A High performing (overall effectiveness grade 1, 2 or 3)

Band B Satisfactory (overall effectiveness grade 4 or 5)

Band C In need of significant improvement (overall effectiveness grade 6, 7 or 8)

The School was judged to be:	BAND B;	GRADE 4
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The main strengths of the school are:

- its rapid establishment is already providing quality education for its fast-growing number of students
- senior leaders have provided the inspiration, energy and drive necessary to get the school off to a firm start and maintain the impetus
- well-planned and ample accommodation, with plentiful high-quality resources, a broad, balanced and flexible curriculum, a well-qualified staff, clear policies and efficient procedures
- the school's positive ethos that supports its key aims and values and students' care and personal development, including their good behaviour
- children make a brisk start in foundation stage and students' progress in grades 1-8 reflects the mostly effective teaching they receive
- systems for school improvement, particularly for raising standards and improving teaching, are already having a marked impact.

The main areas for improvement are:

- consistency in quality of teaching and assessment, including marking
- consistency in teaching and progress in Arabic-medium subjects
- the expectations of what children in foundation stage classes can achieve in mathematics
- the staffing, teaching and resources to support lower attaining students.

Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed lessons and some extra-curricular activities, breaks and assemblies, and the arrival and departure of students. They interviewed the Director of Gems Cambridge International and staff including senior leaders and teachers with specific responsibilities. They looked at the analysis of 538 questionnaires returned to the school by parents as well as having informal discussions with some parents. They scrutinised the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan and other key policy documents including assessment data.

Description of the School

The school opened in new purpose-built premises in September 2013, with accommodation for 3,400 students aged 3 to 18 years. The school shares the core values of GEMS schools, aiming for 'not only academic excellence, but also helping students develop their character, creativity, values, leadership and the spirit of enterprise necessary to achieve their potential as global citizens and leaders for the future'.

The Principal is supported by a senior leadership team consisting of the heads of middle and lower school. Other teachers form a middle tier of leadership including those with subject responsibilities.

There are currently 1289 students at the school. There are 753 boys and 536 girls, with 502 children in the foundation stage, 611 students in the primary school and 176 in the middle school. 75% of students are Muslim and 38% are of Arabic heritage. There are students of 62 nationalities, the largest proportions of which are Emirati (38%), Indian (12%), Pakistani (11%), Egyptian (6%) and British (5%). The school has identified 13 students with special educational needs (SEN) including moderate learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties and autism.

The school administers an admissions test on entry. The schools fees are in the medium to high range of AED 19,000 – AED 26,600.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

The school opened in September with a very diverse cohort of students and has been expanding rapidly since. Attainment levels on entry are very wide. There are as yet no data from international tests to enable comparisons with other schools to be made. The school carries out baseline assessments and uses a range of good quality tests throughout the school to assess standards and set targets for students' progress. Currently, there is some variation in overall attainment between grades, and clear trends have yet to emerge.

Standards in the kindergarten are below those expected for children of this age. Children's progress is rapid in most respects, particularly in English. In mathematics, children are familiar with numbers up to 10. Students' rates of progress are improving in most grades, with higher proportions of students now on track to meet their targets than was the case in the first term. Of the oldest students in the school, in grade 8, the proportion working at above the expected standards is 42%, a significant improvement on data from the first term.

Students make strong progress in their acquisition of the English language. They are keen to speak English, persevere with reading and make steady progress in the accuracy and presentation of their writing. Students in middle grades who started the school with little English achieve well in regular phonics sessions where they learn and apply letter sounds. Students in upper grades in reading, writing, and speaking reach high standards, including many who have English as an additional language. They demonstrate the ability to understand, discuss and write about classic plays such as Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', thinking about both character and plot. Scrutiny of these students' books shows they have made rapid progress over two terms. They write in different genres, sometimes at length and with imagination.

In mathematics, standards are a little below international expectations. Progress is appropriate overall and better in some grades. For example, in grade 4, students made rapid progress in calculating the areas of regular and irregular shapes following the teacher's clear explanation and effective teaching. In grade 8, higher attaining students confidently solve linear equations. On occasion, progress is slow because not enough is expected of higher attainers, and teachers do not ensure that lower attainers understand the mathematical concepts that they have to apply. In general, the expectations of what children in pre-school should achieve in mathematics are too low.

Students' attainment and progress in Arabic generally meet ADEC expectations. Higher attaining students display skills in reading, writing and using language accurately and confidently in speech. Students learning Arabic as a new language, show a quick grasp of letters and vocabulary and enjoy speaking. Progress is slower in some classes, reflecting weaker teaching.

Standards in social sciences are also average overall. Younger children acquire factual knowledge of the UAE. Older students were observed researching using information and communication technology (ICT) to explore the history or features of the UAE today.

In Islamic education standards are a little below average. Although students display reasonable knowledge and skills in recitation of Qur'an, progress is slower than it should be because of the lack of challenge or of opportunities for deeper learning in lessons.

In science, students are making better than expected progress and their attainment is broadly meeting international standards. In one science lesson, for example, students carefully dissected flowers in order to identify and label the parts. They worked both independently and as a class to apply this knowledge, for example discussing plant reproduction.

Effective learning was observed in some ICT lessons. For example, students were expected to predict a programme's effect, or to select the best software for a particular task, such as making a brochure. Across lessons in other subjects ICT is used mostly as a research tool, with insufficient focus on development of ICT capability. On occasion students were already familiar with the skills being taught.

Students' personal development

Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They have settled quickly to the expectations set by the school. For example, children in the foundation stage have swiftly become used to classroom routines and rules for orderly movement around the school. Some boys in lower grades lose concentration when they are unclear as to what they have to do, or are uninterested by the lesson. Effective provision, backed by the system of rewards and sanctions, supports positive attitudes to learning. Students' successes are celebrated by all in assemblies. In class, they listen carefully to the teacher and to each other, work effectively together and on their own, and show respect for their teachers and their peers. Students are increasingly taking on leadership roles and the school's plans show that a school council will be established in the summer term. A good example of students taking action was seen in the research, planning and presentation of an anti-smoking campaign. Students' attendance is above average at 94.4% and reflects their enjoyment in coming to school.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teachers from a range of backgrounds and previous experience have quickly adapted to working in this new school and are already following common procedures towards shared goals. There is some variability in the quality of teaching. The great majority of teaching effectively supports students' progress. This helps students to make up for previous underachievement and accelerate towards higher attainment. Most lessons are well planned taking into account students' different attainment levels, and proceed through well-sequenced stages at a good pace. In many lessons, teachers give students the opportunity to discuss, explain and evaluate to help deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Examples of high quality teaching were seen in the foundation stage. Children were supported in making choices that enabled them to work independently and with others on well-matched tasks that engaged them and extended their learning. In the upper school, effective teaching was seen in English where students were motivated to overcome language difficulties in tackling challenging work. The best examples of the written work that followed were of a standard above that normally expected.

Weaknesses were observed in teaching in a minority of lessons. There was no pattern to this, with weaker teaching found across grades and subjects. Given that the school is only in its third term, some inconsistency in the quality of teaching is not surprising. Features of the weaker lessons included less clear teacher explanations. This meant that lower attainers and those students who were lacking confidence in the language of the lesson did not always know what was expected of them. In a few lessons, especially for subjects delivered in Arabic, the problem lay in didactic teaching or over-reliance on the textbook. In a few classes, teachers were less effective than most in ensuring that students adhere to the basic expectations of behaviour and conduct. For example boys (and some girls) in some lower grades wasted time and were inconsiderate of others in seeking the attention of the teacher.

Inconsistency was also found in assessment. There is wide variation in the skills of teachers in checking students' understanding. Some use very effective questioning and assessment for learning methods through the use of, for example, mini-whiteboards. This gives them an accurate knowledge of what students have understood. Other teachers continue teaching when some students have not understood. Marking and feedback also vary in regularity and quality. There is some very effective practice in subjects such as English. All teachers have diagnostic records of the attainment and progress of students in

their class. Not all teachers make effective use of the information from these assessments.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The curriculum provides clear programmes of study which lead to defined learning outcomes. The curriculum gives due weight to learning about the UAE culture and traditions. It also celebrates the school's internationalism, with 62 nationalities represented. The foundation stage curriculum is well planned and aligned to the UK Early Years Foundation Stage entitlement. From grade 1, students learn the required subjects and additionally French, topic (leading to world studies) art, music, physical education (PE) and personal and social education, with food technology to be added in September. Arabic and Islamic education are not taught in foundation stage 1 classes.

The curriculum has already been adjusted in the light of evaluation of students' prior attainment, for example by increasing the time for English in grade 5. There is a homework timetable and effective use of this was made in English, for instance, to extend the curriculum. More needs to be done to help lower attaining students and those with special educational needs to ensure that they can make the same rates of progress as other groups. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, ranging from academic, sporting and cultural focus. There are insufficient Arabic-medium clubs and activities.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school has very rapidly established a strong, positive ethos in which students feel safe and well cared for. They are well supported by both pastoral and academic guidance, though support for students with SEN is less well developed. The school already meets the requirements for safe recruitment and child protection. There are clearly understood rewards and sanctions which are effectively applied on most occasions. There are effective procedures for promoting attendance. Some classes begin late because of movement of students around this large building. Teachers set a good example by being prompt for lessons. Students say they are well supported and say that if, for example, any bullying were to occur, they are confident that staff would promptly address the problem. At the time of the inspection there was no counsellor. Personal education provides students with opportunities to discuss issues concerning health and welfare. Students are not yet of an age where guidance on course choices and careers normally take place.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school has been built to a high specification to accommodate its full capacity of students at the time of its opening. Classrooms are of good size and in the foundation stage include facilities for both outdoor and indoor play. The library provides an ample and attractive learning space. There are 9 science laboratories, 7 ICT suites, and additional specialist classrooms for ICT, music, art and food technology. The large sports hall, the swimming pool and outside areas including a football pitch provide well for physical education. The buildings include plentiful meeting rooms, offices, staff rooms and resource rooms. There is an SEN room for English medium subjects only. There are two large canteens. The central playground is only shaded around the perimeter and the pathways leading to the bus lines are unshaded.

The school's resources to support its aims

The school is equipped with a wide range of high quality resources that provide effective support for teaching and learning. The school has sufficient textbooks in most subject areas which are used selectively alongside other resources. There are insufficient bilingual and Arabic books. There are some of these in lower grade classrooms and a section has been reserved for them in the library. Overall this is insufficient both to support learning and to reflect the importance of Arabic in the school curriculum. The newly appointed librarian is cataloguing its book stock. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards, and laptops are available for use in classrooms. Foundation stage classrooms are well equipped and provide lively environments for learning and play. There are plentiful resources in other subjects including science and physical education.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

As the result of effective planning and implementation by the leadership, the school has got off to a flying start. The school has quickly established an ethos in which staff and students work together in an environment of respect. Students and teachers from many backgrounds now work to clearly established routines and expectations. Members of the small leadership team work very effectively together and provide the energy and drive to establish and improve the school. The school evaluates its performance accurately and has an appropriate development plan with key priority areas. Senior leaders have quickly put in place the necessary systems to assess and track students' attainment and progress and to monitor the quality of teaching. There is already evidence of the impact of these actions through the 'learning conversations' that establish targets for students, and an individual training programme for teachers. Senior leaders are well supported by phase and subject leaders. Teachers feel very well supported

and value the training opportunities and focused support they receive from the phase and subject leaders. The school provides an adequate training programme for classroom assistants as well. Good communications have been established with parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. GEMS monitors the work of the school through line management of the principal and an annual school review.

Capacity for further development

The school has come a long way in a short time. The key issue facing the school is expansion, with a significant jump in numbers registered for September 2014 and a major staff recruitment programme now in progress. The planning for this is already advanced, with an expanded leadership structure and material provision for the higher numbers. As well as planning for growth, school leaders have also demonstrated the capacity to improve quality, with sophisticated data analysis and the monitoring of teaching leading to action and improvement. The capacity for further development is therefore already strongly proven.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - i. continuing to develop and sustain consistently high quality teaching and assessment
 - ii. raising the expectations of the standards that children in foundation stage can achieve, especially in mathematics.
2. Increase provision for SEN students and lower attainers by:
 - i. increasing the numbers of specialist staff
 - ii. ensuring that teachers' explanations, resources and tasks are well matched to the capabilities of these students
 - iii. providing an SEN room for Arabic medium subjects.

Inspection Grades

	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
Performance Standard	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory & Improving	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Poor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Standard 1: Students' attainment and progress								
Standard 2: Students' personal development								
Standard 3: The quality of teaching and learning								
Standard 4: The meeting of students' needs through the curriculum								
Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students								
Standard 6: The quality of the school's buildings and premises								
Standard 7: The school's resources to support its aims								
Standard 8: The effectiveness of leadership and management								
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall effectiveness								