



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



Summary Inspection Report

GEMS World Academy - Abu Dhabi

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Iqraa

GEMS World Academy – Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	5 th – 8 th November, 2012
School ID#	086
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	American
Number of Students	326
Age Range	3 – 10 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Jay Roy
School Address	6 th Street, Najda Street, P.O. Box 110273, Abu Dhabi
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Introduction

The school was inspected by four inspectors. They observed 52 lessons, interviewed staff, students, the Executive Principal and a parent. They scrutinised the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, key policy documents, data and other electronic storage systems. Observations were also made at the beginning and end of the day and during breaks and assemblies.

Description of the School

The school is owned by Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) and was formed in 2011 in the centre of Abu Dhabi in the premises of the former Gems American Academy. A new Principal/Chief Executive Officer was appointed from another GEMS school in Dubai. There are 326 students at the school, of which 220 are in the kindergarten (KG). The remaining 106 students span grades 1 – 5. It is expected to reach full capacity of 400 students within the next year or so. There are 188 boys and 138 girls at the school. Students come from approximately 51 nationalities. The largest proportion (16%) is from the United States of America, 13% are UAE Nationals and 8% are from Canada. There are 36 students (11%) identified as having special educational needs. 53% of students are Muslim and 33% Arab. The students' socio-economic backgrounds are generally above average. The admissions policy clearly identifies the criteria for entry into Grade 1, which includes an assessment in literacy and numeracy. Fees range from AED 25,000 per year in kindergarten up to AED 55,650 by Grade 5. Teachers' annual salaries range from to AED 110,880 to AED 214,668. Eighty five per cent of teachers earn between AED 10,000 and AED 15,000 per month.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 3

Inspectors judged Gems World Academy to be in Band A, that is High Performing school.

This is the first time the school has been inspected. GEMS World Academy demonstrates good overall effectiveness. In a short period of time, the school has been successful in winning the confidence of parents, resulting in rapid growth in student numbers. This is because the school's child-centre approach to learning is making a significant impact on students' personal and social development. Parents value this feature. Students are already achieving broadly average standards compared with similar students internationally. Some students can achieve more, but they make mostly good progress in all subjects including Arabic, Islamic studies and UAE Social Studies. Teaching is good overall. The curriculum is a real strength. It promotes students' engagement well. Protection, care, guidance and support for students are all very good. Premises are well

established and offer a clean, bright and welcoming environment. Resources to support learning are very good. The concerns raised about the need for kindergarten children to use the first floor for specialised lessons have been addressed. The principal and his team provide effective leadership and a very good start has been made in establishing this new school. GEMS World Academy offers very good value for money.

Children enter kindergarten with abilities expected for their age. They make very good progress in all areas of their learning and, in particular, in basic skills. They learn letter sounds, enabling them to begin to read words phonically and they write simple words. By KG2 children write in sentences independently. In mathematics, they use numbers to count, and begin to understand estimating and measures. Both Arabic and non-Arabic children are developing good listening and reading skills. The focus on development of basic skills continues through to grades 4 and 5, by which time they have good skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). ICT skills are acquired in specialist lessons and, for example, students gain a firm understanding of data handling. Students show well-developed thinking skills which they use when answering questions. Attainment in Arabic and Islamic studies is satisfactory with signs of improvement by Grade 4, where Arabic students in particular make good progress. For example, they develop their views and opinions about the Islamic faith. Non-Arabic students make slower progress and, because they lack confidence, they are hesitant in the use of the Arabic language. Attainment and progress in English, mathematics, social studies and science are good. Almost all students acquire skills and knowledge appropriate for their age. Progress in lessons in music, dance, physical education and ICT is at least good. Results from recognised and reliable standardised tests show that students are achieving well and performing in line with the best of international standards. There is room for further improvement in standards achieved, especially for more-able students. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs and those receiving support in their use of English make good progress.

Students' personal development is very good. There is a focus on developing respect for others. Teaching methods promote very good behaviour, reflection, confidence, enjoyment and thinking skills. Students of all nationalities work and play very well together. There is a very high level of understanding and respect for the different cultures living in the UAE. This is reinforced through a strong emphasis on celebrating festivals such as Eid, Abu Dhabi National Day and Christmas, all highly supported by parents. The UAE National Anthem is enthusiastically and respectfully played each morning. Assemblies promote

values, beliefs and feelings and are often led by students themselves. This encourages personal and collective responsibility. Lessons in music, dance and movement also play an important role in enhancing these qualities. Students have a good understand about healthy lifestyles.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Expertise in early childhood education, especially in the kindergarten, is very good. Teachers of grades 1-5 have a sophisticated understanding of the Primary Years Program. Accordingly, they ensure that students have good opportunities to explore themes for themselves. Plenty of time is given to discussions and questions. In most lessons, students are encouraged to be independent thinkers and take responsibility for their own learning. So, for example, students are encouraged to ask perceptive questions to clarify their understanding. At the beginning of lessons teachers tell students what they are expected to achieve. In planning their lessons, some teachers are very effective in making sure that activities are well suited to students' different ability levels. Others do this less well because they do not use assessment to identify students' prior attainment. In particular they do not provide sufficient challenge for those of higher ability.

Curriculum provision is very good. It makes a positive impact on students' learning and skills development. The school has carefully designed its curriculum to ensure that in the kindergarten teachers adopt creative approaches to learning that are appropriate to the social and academic needs of children. Children learn through play and experimenting. The Primary Years Program provides a good framework to ensure that students learn through a broad and balanced range of real-life topics. Students are encouraged to develop 'lines of inquiry' to deepen their understanding. The school assures progress in academic subjects by supplementing this programme with the Commonwealth of Virginia standards and the use of recognised textbooks from the U.S.A. Although teachers use information and communications technology well in support of the curriculum, not enough opportunities are made available for students to use their well-developed ICT skills in lessons or to use computers as a resource for learning. The curriculum is imaginative and stimulating for all students and meets requirements. It clearly promotes the pluralistic nature of society in Abu Dhabi. A range of visitors to the school, for example, authors and a leading violinist, enrich the curriculum further. Students participate in projects, such as an international mathematics competition. There is a rich range of extracurricular activities, charitable and other community experiences. Overall, the curriculum prepares students extremely well for future studies.

Procedures to protect, care, guide and support students are very good. Students say they are well cared for. Provision for learning support and language teaching

for students new to English is effective and is supplemented, where necessary, by a trained counsellor. The school provides a safe environment and the vetting of all staff is of high quality. Good systems are in place to help protect students from bullying and intimidation. Admissions are carefully recorded and attendance is monitored efficiently, including the use of first-day absence calls to parents. Sanctions are applied fairly and understood by students. Systems for rewarding students are sometimes inconsistently applied. The school makes good use of its own mosque at prayer time and during Islamic Studies lessons. The school has been asked to ensure that safety concerns, identified during the inspection, are addressed. Action includes the use of the staircase by kindergarten children to access the first floor for some specialist lessons.

The quality of the school buildings and premises is good. The environment, internally and externally, is clean, welcoming and fit for purpose. Classrooms are of appropriate size relative to student numbers. Lighting, ventilation and air-conditioning are all good. Classrooms for kindergarten are adequate to allow children to move and play during lessons. There are a number of specialist rooms to support the curriculum including a dance studio, art room, music room, ICT laboratory, library and spacious gymnasium. Site security is very good. Security guards check and record visitors to the school. Health and safety within the premises is satisfactory. Kindergarten children visiting first floor rooms for specialist provision, including Arabic lessons, have had to use a staircase which could pose a safety risk. A solution to this has been identified and implemented. Arrangements for fire drills are in place, but signage to indicate exit routes is in need of improvement.

Resources are very good. Teachers are well qualified and appropriately paid. The ratio of teachers to students is high and teaching assistants are also present in good number. The school has a well stocked resource centre. The main library holds over 10,000 books, all electronically catalogued. The librarian is a very helpful source of advice to students. There is a good range of picture books for younger students. Specialist teaching is provided in PE, dance, music, Arabic, Islamic studies and ICT. There are good numbers of computers and laptops to support learning. The outdoor courtyard area for breaks and PE offers shading and a good range of fixed equipment for climbing. The artificial grass area and soft surface are welcoming, especially for younger students. The smaller play area for KG1 requires upgrading to improve the outdoor learning environment.

The leadership and management of the school are good. They are supported by senior personnel at Global Education Management (GEMS), who keep a close eye on performance, parental perceptions and the budget. The Executive Principal, who is also a principal at another GEMS school in Abu Dhabi, provides good

mentoring and support. Regular surveys amongst parents help the school to keep in touch with views and opinions. Parents value the 'open-door' policy. The strategic vision for the school is to promote effective child-centred learning. The growing popularity of the school and parental feedback demonstrates the value that parents place on this vision. The school as a community is still relatively new and is developing. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and provides a good example of staff team working. Increasingly, school leaders are becoming more aware of emerging strengths and weaknesses. Standards compare favourably with those internationally, but given the fast rates of progress that students show they are capable of, they could be even higher. However, there is scope for developing leadership roles amongst the staff. For example, there is no identified leader in the school for English or mathematics to support teaching and learning in these areas and no coordinator in the kindergarten to act as a point of reference. The school manages its budget efficiently but it is not yet formally linked to approved priorities and related costs. The quality of staff at the school is very good. They are rewarded fairly and attention is paid to their welfare. The GEMS Learning Gateway and student progress reports forge good and valued links with parents. The principal and his team have made an excellent start. A small number of safety issues raised during the inspection have been fully addressed.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the progress made by students, particularly the more able, to raise standards to a level that exceed those recognised internationally by:
 - i. making better use of assessment data to identify challenging targets for students;
 - ii. identifying leaders in English, mathematics and the Kindergarten to take responsibility for these areas and to drive up standards further; and
 - iii. developing record keeping to provide a system that makes teachers more accountable for the progress that students are making.
2. Use information and communications technology more effectively to support independent learning across the curriculum.
3. Ensure that all health and safety regulations are regularly monitored for compliance and adhered to at all times.