



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



Inspection Report

GEMS World Academy – Abu Dhabi

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Gems World Academy – Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	19 – 22 May 2014
School ID#	210
Licensed Curriculum	American
Number of Students	438
Age Range	3 to 10 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Jay Roy
School Address	6 th Street and Najda Street, PO Box 110273, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (0)2 641 6333
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Official Email (ADEC)	gemsworldacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.gemsworldacademy-abudhabi.com
Date of last inspection	5 – 8 November 2012

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 A;	GRADE 3
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The main strengths of the school are:

- students reach high standards in their written and spoken English
- students manage their own behaviour in a mature manner, and they develop very good personal and social skills
- it is a welcoming and friendly community in which parents and children can feel at ease
- outstanding procedures to facilitate good communication with parents so that they feel well informed about their child's progress
- strong, visible leadership from the principal together with the involvement of staff in the decision making and review processes
- very good range, and use, of resources to support learning.

The main areas for improvement are:

- the development in the breadth and depth of skills for all students to access the richness of the Arabic language
 - standards and progress in Islamic education and social studies
 - the level of challenge for all students, particularly those who find learning easy
 - greater promotion of the culture, values and heritage of the UAE.
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Introduction

There were 3 inspectors who carried out the inspection over a period of four days. They observed 46 lessons, talked to the representative of GEMS corporate management, the school's leaders, subject coordinators and other staff, parents and groups of students. Inspectors analyzed data provided by the school and a range of documents about policies and procedures. They analysed the 261 responses to parents' questionnaire about the school. They scrutinized students' work and the broader scope of the school, including extra-curricular activities. The principal and leadership team were involved throughout the inspection process.

Description of the School

The school is owned by Global Education Management Systems (GEMS). It opened in 2011 in the center of Abu Dhabi in the premises of the former GEMS American Academy. The school's mission is to, '..... provide joyous and meaningful experiences while developing internationally minded students in a diverse world. Our aim is to inspire responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship.' The current principal/Chief Executive Officer has been in post since 2011. The school offers American Virginia State curriculum.

There are 443 students at the school, 58% are boys; 256 are in the Kindergarten (KG) and 187 students in Grades 1 – 5. It has now reached its full capacity and has no additional room to expand. Students represent over 50 nationalities. The largest proportion, 14%, is from the United States of America, 12% are UAE Nationals, 9% come from India, 6% from Canada and 6% from Jordan. Other countries are represented in smaller proportions of the student numbers enrolled. There are 36 students, 11%, identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Around half of students are Muslim and about a third speak Arabic as their first language.

The admission policy clearly identifies the criteria for entry into Grade 1, which includes an assessment in literacy and numeracy. Fees range from AED 38,000 per year in KG up to AED 55,600 by Grade 5, this is in the premium category.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

The overall standard of student work is good in all grades and in most subjects. In English and mathematics student attainment is measured against the internationally recognized Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests. Students perform well in these tests reaching, or slightly exceeding, the standards of their international peers. Attainment and progress are particularly good in English. Students throughout the school are confident speakers expressing their ideas with clarity and using interesting vocabulary. They develop good handwriting skills so that many use a neat cursive script by the time they leave Grade 3. This is also true of students for whom English is a second language.

Standards in Arabic are improving as students in the younger grades become more comfortable in listening and speaking. This good start is not sustained as they move in to grades 4 and 5. In these higher grades, some students struggle to express themselves clearly in Arabic. Standards in Islamic education and social studies taught in Arabic are satisfactory. Students do not show the same confidence in talking about their studies as is evident in other areas of the curriculum. Standards in science are good as students have a secure grounding in thinking in a scientific manner. They are encouraged to observe, predict and investigate the world in which they live and often surprise themselves with what they discover.

Students with SEN and those with identified language needs make good progress due to the efficiently directed support provided by dedicated specialist support staff. Students who learn more quickly than their peers make satisfactory progress in nearly all lessons. They could achieve more as activities provided for the class as a whole do not always challenge them sufficiently.

Students achieve very high standards in art and music and these are particular strengths of the school. Examples of these were seen in performances using body percussion which were very entertaining for the students and also provided insights into other areas of the curriculum. In many lessons, information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed through the use of digital technologies. Students use these as a natural extension of their learning activities and are skilled in knowing when such aids are appropriate.

Assessment strategies are satisfactory. Teachers use a range of informal assessments during lessons. In English, students become familiar with directing their own learning and this affords teachers time to undertake informal

assessments with individual students. The school designs tests that are rigorous and accurately monitor student progress.

Students' personal development

Students in all grades make very good progress in acquiring the personal and social skills that are at least appropriate for their age. Starting in KG, they approach learning with enthusiasm and commitment. Students of all ages enjoy their day in school. They see the school as belonging to them and where their own learning agenda is important. This supports their growth in self-confidence and encourages their natural curiosity. They rejoice in the achievements of others and show empathy to those who may be experiencing difficulties. Students come from many different cultural backgrounds with often 12 to 15 different nationalities in each class. Students recognize the value of diversity and see this as a core value of living in the UAE. Many students are less clear about the culture and heritage of the UAE as they see insufficient promotion of these aspects in their learning environment.

Student behavior is very good. The youngest children demonstrate the importance of showing respect to their peers as well as adults. Older students behave in a very responsible and mature manner often showing an impressive ability to manage their own behavior, especially when not closely supervised.

The quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is good in most subjects. Nearly all teachers approach their role inside and outside the classroom with energy and skill. They are well qualified for their roles and most are able to match their subject knowledge to modern teaching techniques.

Teachers develop very good relationships with their students that enable them to look forward to school and enjoy their time in class. Most teachers have a sound understanding of the 'Unit of Inquiry' approach that characterizes the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP). In most subjects, they construct projects and investigations that engage the interest of their students; this approach is less well developed in mathematics.

Improvements to the teaching of Arabic are seen in the more active learning strategies that teachers now adopt. This approach is not reflected in the teaching of Islamic education or social studies. A more authoritarian and didactic approach does not gain the enthusiasm of the students and lessons often lack relevance to their everyday lives. Teaching in art, music, performance arts and PE is well planned to provide relevance and continuity. The youngest children in the school

learn about teamwork and empathy through their activities in music and movement, reinforcing what they learn elsewhere in the school.

Teachers assess the progress of students effectively and often use their teaching assistants effectively to undertake informal assessments during lessons. This, together with the results from MAP tests, provides teachers with useful information about student progress as well as their individual strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge leads to carefully timed intervention and support programmes for students with additional learning needs. This information is not used sufficiently well to challenge the more able students.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The implementation of the curriculum is good. The school has very effectively integrated the Virginia State curriculum with the principles of the PYP International Baccalaureate curriculum. It complies with ADEC requirements for the teaching of Arabic, Islamic education, and social studies to both native and non-native speakers of Arabic. The integration of PYP approach into curriculum delivery is very successful in engaging students' interest and motivation. It encourages them to examine what they know and focus on new facts and ideas that challenge their preconceptions and help them refine their view of the world. They are beginning to build the skills that will serve them well as they move into a middle school curriculum at different schools. This successful approach to curriculum planning and delivery is less apparent in the teaching of Islamic education and social studies taught in Arabic.

The school extends and enriches the curriculum with interesting and informative field trips. During the week of the inspection, several classes of younger students visited the exhibition of 'The History of the World in 100 Objects' being held at the exhibition center on Saadiyat Island. Carefully planned, the visit provided students with a broader view of the world than was possible by remaining in the classroom. There are plentiful sporting, cultural and academic activities planned after the normal school day ends. Among the many activities provided by staff, students can go ice-skating, learn Spanish or attend activities designed to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills. These activities are very popular and many students stay after school each day of the week.

Students with SEN and those who need additional help accessing the English curriculum receive good support so that they make similar progress as their peers. Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) are well constructed and provide classroom teachers and support staff with clear and helpful guidance. The school does not provide similar attention to identifying and meeting the needs of the more able students.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school makes very good provision for the care, guidance and support of its students. The school's ethos is very evident from the calm, ordered and friendly behavior of students. This is successfully encouraged by the relaxed, caring nature of the relationships staff create with each other and with their students. At the start of the school day, the principal stands at the main gate to welcome students and their parents. Another member of staff provides a crossing patrol to ensure parents and children can cross an adjacent busy road in safety. These small but important actions help set a positive and welcoming tone.

The school has effective policies and processes for ensuring the care and protection of all students. The many parents spoken to during the inspection were clear that any hint of bullying and harassment were absent from the school and none was observed by the inspection team. The principal and senior staff lead by example in ensuring that staff deal with students with courtesy despite any negative situations that may occur. There is a spacious and comprehensively resourced clinic and the school provides a range of healthy food in the middle of the day.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The school buildings provide a very good physical environment for the number of students enrolled. The buildings are bright, clean and hygienic and kept in a very good state of repair. The outside areas for KG and primary age students provide very attractive and well-equipped recreational areas. Teachers give careful thought as to how these areas can provide an extension to the classroom for some learning activities.

Specialist areas such as the library and ICT suite are spacious and used effectively to bring variety to the students' day. The canteen is particularly spacious and presents students with an excellent space to meet their friends and eat their lunchtime meal. Access to upper floors in each of the three main buildings is limited for those who might have mobility problems. Exit routes from upstairs classrooms remain limited with only one staircase. This shortcoming has been recognised and the school has secured ADEC's approval to build four new external staircases, two on each block and upgrade the corridors for the first floor classrooms.

The school's resources to support its aims

The level of resourcing in the school is very good. The availability and use of classroom technologies is good. Teachers and occasionally students, make very effective use of interactive whiteboards technology to engage learners and peers and ensure that lessons proceed at a quick pace. Practical resources to support literacy in both Arabic and English are plentiful, as are resources to support numeracy. There is an extensive range of practical, digital and textual resources to support the curriculum. This rich bank is used very effectively by teachers to support learning in the classroom. This is particularly the case in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies taught in Arabic.

There is a plentiful supply of books in the library including fiction books in the ten most represented languages in the school. The provision of books in Arabic is relatively weak and does not inspire a love of reading in the Arabic language. The ICT suite is well used to provide a resource centre for all subjects. The school has several banks of laptop and tablet computers that can also be accessed by teachers as the need arises. In addition, students are encouraged to bring their own digital devices to school, and use them responsibly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school is good. The principal maintains a visible and accessible presence. The procedures for completing the school evaluation form (SEF) were consultative and involved all the teaching staff. Working in teams to review each of the performance standards they produced a realistic and rigorous evaluation. This formed the basis for the school development plan (SDP) that contains relevant and challenging targets for improvement. Parts of the school's budget for resources is devolved to individual class teachers. This greatly improves their ability to provide the resources needed for the curriculum implementation in a timely manner. GEMS corporate management team provide efficient, but not intrusive, support to the principal and senior leaders. Accountabilities are clear and wherever possible authority has been delegated to the principal.

Processes for the observation of teaching and learning are rigorous and use criteria that provide a balanced view of learning as well as teaching. Senior staff are clear about how to promote good practice in teaching and learning. Teachers' development needs are identified and good quality support is provided. This has produced some positive results in the teaching of Arabic, it has not had a similar impact in Islamic education.

The school has outstanding processes for communicating with parents. An interactive website (GEMS Learning Gateway) and regular newsletters from the

school and individual class teachers ensure parents know what their child is doing in class and the progress they are making. Parents feel part of the school and often meet informally with their child's teacher as they escort their child into the classroom. There is no formal parents' council, the school takes careful note of their views and meets their requests when appropriate. Parents' views are gathered on a regular basis so that their views are known and understood. The work of the parent executive coordinator plays an important role in ensuring that parents who need to talk to the school urgently are dealt with in a timely manner. Parents take an active interest in school activities providing much of the inspiration for National Day, international and other celebrations.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Where recommendations could be speedily implemented appropriate action was been taken and improvements completed. Those health and safety issues mentioned in the body of the previous report have been dealt with properly. Signage is now clear and positioned prominently, and the small KG play area has been upgraded. The major issue of effective emergency exit from upper floors has taken longer than envisaged due to the lengthy process to acquire the necessary approvals. These are now in place and work is due to start at the beginning of the summer break and within weeks of this inspection.

The three year trends show that student progress is steadily accelerating. The school now uses assessment data more effectively. It still needs to use the available information to provide more targeted challenges for more able students. Posts of responsibility provide for effective leadership in most key areas of the school. The oversight of Islamic education and social studies taught in Arabic still needs to be strengthened.

Information and communication technologies now support the curriculum more effectively. This is at its best when students themselves make decisions about applying these digital technologies to their own learning.

Senior leaders and managers have clearly demonstrated that they have good capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the standards reached by students in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies taught in Arabic by:
 - i. providing a greater focus on understanding the skills students learn
 - ii. providing real and everyday contexts in which classroom learning can take place
 - iii. providing opportunities for peer observation so that teachers of Islamic and social studies can see good practice of challenging and contextualized learning modelled effectively
 - iv. providing more effective oversight of teaching in Islamic studies and social studies taught in Arabic.
2. Increase the level of challenge for all students but particularly those who find learning easy by:
 - i. earlier and more reliable identification of students who are gifted in their academic studies
 - ii. planning curriculum extension for students who find learning easy to enable them to progress at a quicker rate.
3. Ensure the values, culture and heritage of the UAE are better recognised and understood by all students in the school by:
 - i. ensuring that the culture and heritage of the UAE is more visibly displayed in the classrooms and shared areas of the school
 - ii. providing a greater focus on Emirati culture and values in lessons and other activities.

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								