دائـرة الـتـعـلـيـم والـمـعـرفـة
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND KNOWLEDGE

Inspection Report of

GEMS Cambridge International School

Overall Effectiveness: Good

Academic Year 2017 – 2018

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School Information

General Information	Inspection date:	from	12th Jumada Al-Awwal, 1439h	to	15th Jumada Al-Awwal, 1439h
		from	29-Jan-18	to	01-Feb-18
	School name	GEMS Cambridge International School			
	School ID	232			
	School address	Baniyas East Abu Dhabi			
	School telephone	02 5104343			
	School official email	Gems-cambridge.int@adec.ac.ae			
	School website	www.gemscambridgeinternationalschool-abudhabi.com			
	School curriculum	English National Curriculum			
	School phases	Foundation Stage, Primary, Middle and High			
	Fee range and category	20,500 – 34,900 AED medium			
	Number of lessons observed	185			
	Number of joint lessons observed	15			
Staff Information	Total number of teachers	204			
	Turnover rate	9%			
	Number of teaching assistants	34			
	Teacher- student ratio	1 : 17			
Student Information	Total number of students	3451			
	% of Emirati Students	29%			
	% of Largest nationality groups	1. Pakistan 12%			
		2. Egypt 12%			
		3. India 11%			
	% of SEN students	1%			
	% of students per phase	KG: 18%	Middle: 21%		
		Primary: 49%	High: 12%		
	Gender	Boys and girls			

The Performance of the School

Performance Standard 1

Students' Achievement

Good

Performance Standard 2

Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Very Good

Performance Standard 3

Teaching and Assessment

Good

Performance Standard 4

Curriculum

Good

Performance Standard 5

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

Very Good

Performance Standard 6

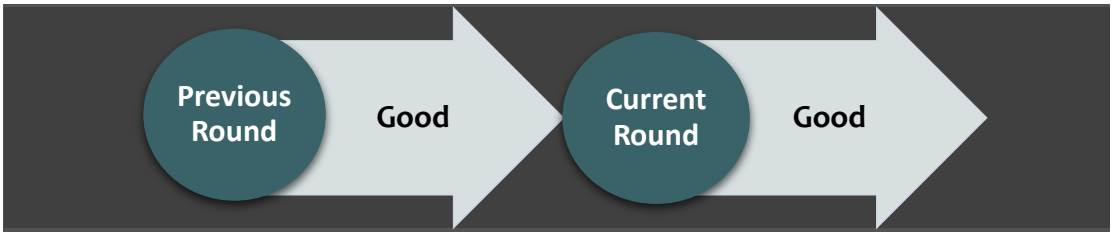
Leadership and management

Very Good

Evaluation of the school's overall performance

- The overall performance of the school is good. The school has grown significantly in size and has had almost one third of its teachers new within the last two years. The school has successfully integrated these incoming students while maintaining a good standard of achievement.
- Students' overall achievement is good across all phases and for most subjects. Students' achievements are acceptable in Islamic education and Arabic as a first language. Students' achievements in mathematics in the Primary phase are also acceptable. Achievement is very good in science at the High phase. In mathematics, most students achieve above age-related expectations in Foundation Stage, the Middle and High phases. Overall, learning skills are good.
- Students personal development is very good. They behave very well and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are developing a sound understanding of Emirati culture. They fully understand the need to live a healthy lifestyle.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is good. High quality teaching and assessment practice exists but is not always being applied consistently across the school. Teachers do not always use assessment information to suitably modify lessons to meet students' needs.
- Curriculum design and its implementation and adaption are good. Cross-curricular planning promotes students' effective transference of life skills across the curriculum. Islamic values, UAE culture and heritage are integrated well across all subjects.
- The overall quality of protection, care, guidance and support is very good. The school informs staff, parents and students of the procedures for safeguarding students. Students' very good behaviour is secured through a very successful behaviour policy. The school supports students with special educational needs (SEN) very well.
- Leadership and management are very good. The inspirational principal and his leadership team have established an aspirational vision which is shared by all. Partnerships with parents are very strong. The Governing Board is both supportive and appropriately challenging to ensure the school continues to improve.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve



- The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report with recommendations being fully addressed or inroads made.
- A well-established continuing professional development (CPD) programme supports effective teaching. Best practitioners now coach and mentor identified staff members. As yet, there is still inconsistent quality in teaching practice. High staff turnover in the last two years is a contributing factor in this lack of consistency.
- There have been improvements in students' attainment in social studies, Arabic as a second language and Arabic as a first language at the Primary phase. However, Arabic as a first language and Islamic Education are still underachieving compared with English medium subjects.
- Leadership capacity is apparent now throughout the school. Leaders and class teachers share responsibility for monitoring and improving learning. While gifted and talented (G&T) students have greater opportunities in extra-curricular classes there is still scope to support them better within lessons.
- Local accountability for the school's performance has been strengthened through a Local Advisory Board involving stakeholders. This consults and liaises with the Gems Professional Board of Governors.
- With the reduced staff turnover and a more settled school roll the school has a very good capacity to improve.

Key areas of strength and area for improvement

Key areas of strength

- Students' strong contribution to school life.
- The school's very effective promotion of wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.
- The inspirational leadership of the principal , well supported by the highly effective leadership of staff teams across the school.

Key areas for improvement

1. Teachers should raise achievement in Arabic and Islamic education by:
   i. providing active and interesting activities which will engage students
   ii. thoroughly recording the achievement of individual children in lessons
   iii. planning in an even more focused way to provide support and challenge for all students
   iv. adopting the practice within social studies and Arabic as a second language which has led to improved achievement.

2. Embed the best practice in teaching and assessment across the school by:
   i. continuing to identify and share best practice through leadership and peer lesson observations
   ii. further enhancing the CPD programme for identified teachers to provide support and challenge for all students and develop their creativity and innovation skills
   iii. in tandem with the coaching and mentoring programme, give clear individual targets for teachers to achieve to improve their practice.

Provision for Reading

- The school library is well stocked with 25,000 books, 14,000 of which are primary and 760 are Arabic. There are reference, fiction and non-fiction books in English and Arabic. There are comfortable reading corners in the library and classrooms. Primary students have a weekly time-tabled library lesson.
- Younger students' reading is promoted through the daily guided reading sessions. Older students learn to read for comprehension in English and Arabic, as well as scanning texts for specific information.
- The school has a detailed plan to encourage reading. It participates in reading events every year including SEWA Day, book fairs, Cambridge Book Race Challenge and other annual events. The plan includes national, local and school- wide Arabic reading competitions. The school participates in a range of ADEK reading competitions.
- Reading is integrated into all subjects and extra-curricular activities. Older 'buddy readers' support younger students as part of student leadership programme. There is an Arabic reading club.
- The school has programmes to promote reading skills in lessons. Parents and grandparent volunteers help students with reading in the library. Parents are encouraged to help their children read at home. The school provides guidelines to parents to develop a love of reading in their children. Strong assessment and tracking systems are in place to monitor reading in English and Arabic.

Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	**Attainment**	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic (as a First Language)	**Attainment**	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic (as additional Language)	**Attainment**	N/A	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	N/A	Good	Good	Good
Social Studies	**Attainment**	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
	Progress	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
English	**Attainment**	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Very Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	**Attainment**	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science	**Attainment**	Good	Good	Good	Very Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Very Good
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	**Attainment**	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Learning Skills		Good	Good	Good	Good

Overall achievement

- In Arabic medium subjects, internally administered MOE assessments, indicate that students' attainment is good. This was not reflected in inspection evidence. In English medium subjects, students' achievements are measured using common assessment tests (CAT) and IGCSE examinations. These show that achievements are above curriculum expectations in all phases and all subjects.
- In lessons, students' achievements were seen to be acceptable in Islamic education and Arabic as a first language. Students' achievements in mathematics in the Primary phase were also seen to be acceptable. In social studies, English, science and in other subjects, most students attain above curriculum standards. In mathematics, most students attain above age-related expectations in Foundation Stage, the Middle and High phases. Science achievement is very good in the High phase.

Subjects

- Students' achievement in **Islamic Education** is acceptable. It is acceptable for Arab and good for non-Arab students in all phases. For Arab students in all phases, most students understand the content of age- appropriate verses and are able to relate them to their practical life. However, most students require teacher support to recite verses from the Holy Qur'an with intonation.
- The overall attainment of students in **Arabic** language is acceptable. Most first language speakers attain levels that are in line with curriculum expectations other than in the Primary phase where their achievement is good.
- The overall achievement in Arabic as a second language is good. Overall, non-native speakers achieve well. They make above expected progress in relation to their starting point.
- Students' achievement in **social studies** is good. In the Primary phase students can name landmarks they like to visit in the UAE. They are aware of the steps taken by the government to develop agriculture in the UAE. In the Middle phase most students talk about many challenges facing UAE society. They can discuss many initiatives and electronic applications available and created in the UAE such as the Makani service which help people to find locations using GPS. Overall students in both phases make good progress.
- Students' achievement in **English** is good overall. Most students listen well,

speak fluently and read and write effectively. In KG, students' attainment is good and progress very good from their starting points. In the Primary and Middle students build on their vocabulary, punctuate, apply grammar rules and use poetic devices. The transition to the High phase is smooth where students learn to summarise and write persuasively.

- Students' achievement in **mathematics** is good overall. In the Foundation Stage, Middle and High phases, most students' attainment is above curriculum standards. Most make progress which exceeds age-related expectations. In the Primary school the majority of students achieve at levels which are in line with curriculum expectations. Students in the Primary phase make acceptable rather than good progress because they do not have sufficient opportunities for completing focused tasks which stretch or support them. Overall, students make good progress in handling numbers, algebra and geometry.
- Students' achievement in **science** is good overall. In the foundation, Middle and Primary phases, students develop their scientific thinking skills of enquiry and investigation through practical activities to above average standards. In the High school phase, students work rigorously to secure their knowledge to well above average standards. They are very well prepared for examinations and achieve very well overall.
- Students' achievement in **other subjects** is good. Across the phases, most students are developing creative skills in art and music. In physical education most students develop quality skills in netball and basketball. Throughout the school students interact effectively with modern technology. Students' innovative, enterprise and social skills are developed well.

Learning skills

- Students **learning skills** are broadly good. The large majority take responsibility for their own learning and work productively on their own and in groups. Students are generally resourceful at thinking about and solving problems, but creativity and innovation is underdeveloped in some lessons. Students confidently communicate their learning to others. Students use new technologies to good effect for research and enquiry.

Areas of Relative Strength:

1. Students' progress in Arabic as a second language, social studies, English, mathematics, science and other subjects
2. Students' confidence in communicating their learning to others.

Areas for Improvement:

1. Students' overall achievement in Arabic and Islamic Education.
2. Students' achievement in mathematics in the Primary phase.
3. Students' skills in creativity and innovation.

Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Students' personal and social development and their innovation skills are very good overall. The development of students' personal and social skills is very good across the school. Almost all students display positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy being at school. Relationships are very strong between students and staff. This is a happy school, that has students' well-being at its heart. Students' behaviour across the school is very good. They participate in an extensive range of sporting activities. They understand the need for healthy eating and the benefits of an active lifestyle.

Attendance and punctuality are very good. Attendance is at least 96%. Students have a clear appreciation and understanding of UAE culture and heritage and how Islamic values influence the UAE society. They are aware of their own culture and are developing an understanding and awareness of other cultures in the wider world.

Students are very actively involved in the life of the school, including being involved in the school council. The school works closely in the local community and supports less fortunate families through the Red Crescent. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities are provided for students after school. There are positive international links with schools and universities. Students care very well for their school and enthusiastically participate in recycling and cleanliness projects.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students' effective contribution to school life.
- The high attendance rate and students' punctuality.
- Participation in a wide range of cultural, sporting and aesthetic activities.
- Students' behaviour and very positive relationships.

Areas for Improvement:

- Students' awareness of other world cultures.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

- The overall quality of teaching and assessment is good. The large majority of teachers apply their strong subject knowledge effectively in lessons. Students' progress is promoted by good time management in stimulating classroom environments with the effective use of a wide variety of resources.
- Collaborative work is encouraged by teachers, and through good questioning they foster discussion and the sharing of ideas.
- Teacher-student interaction, including the use of effective questioning and dialogue, keeps students focused on learning activities. Interactions are particularly positive in activity-based learning. The large majority of teachers, though not all, develop critical thinking, problem solving and innovation effectively.
- Assessment processes are consistently applied throughout the school, including tracking individual of progress to help identify specific groups of students for more support. Teachers however do not always use this information to provide enough challenging work for high achieving students in lessons.
- Teachers are well aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses and use regular checklists to identify their level of understanding. However, teachers do not always support low attainers enough in Islamic Education lessons.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Teachers' strong subject knowledge.
- Teachers quality questioning skills and their positive interactions during activity-based learning.
- Consistently applied and accurate assessment processes.

Areas for Improvement:

- Ensuring the best practice within the school in teaching and assessment is embedded across the school, including for developing students' innovation skills.
- Support for lower attainers in Islamic Education.
- More challenge for the high achievers in lessons.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum adaptation	Good	Good	Good	Good

- The overall quality of curriculum is good. The planned curriculum is broad and balanced, and supported by a range of enrichment activities. It provides for continuity and progression in students' learning across all phases.
- The curriculum provides a good range of subject choices for all students, particularly those in the higher phase. Cross-curricular planning promotes students' effective transference of skills across subjects.
- Regular review of the curriculum ensures good depth of learning in subjects and that topics are modified to match the interests of the students across all phases. However while most teachers plan work for higher-achieving students, it is not always challenging enough.
- Opportunities for enterprise, innovation and creativity are provided through dedicated innovation lessons across all phases. Additional activities involve the students in developing their digital competences. However, lessons in the High phase offer insufficient opportunities for the development of these skills or for independent research.
- Islamic values, UAE culture and heritage are integrated well across all subjects.
- Moral education is being implemented effectively. Moral values are promoted in assemblies, lessons and displays around the school. Students consider moral issues through research and discussions. Students link learning to their own lives and with other subjects across the curriculum.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Regular review and development of the curriculum.
- Curriculum breadth and balance.
- Links between subjects that promote the transference of skills.

Areas for Improvement:

- More consistent provision for meeting the needs of higher-achieving students.
- Increase opportunities for innovation skills in lessons particularly in the High phase.

Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/ safeguarding	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Care and support	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

The protection, care, guidance and support of students are very good. Staff, parents and students know the child protection policy very well. Students know who to report to if they feel unhappy. There is very little bullying and behaviour is very good.

The school is kept very clean and hygienic. Safety checks are regular and systematically documented. The building is exceptionally well maintained. The premises are purpose built and provide a very stimulating environment. The school promotes healthy living very well. Relationships are very positive.

School systems are promoting very good attendance and punctuality. The school has rigorous systems to identify G&T students and those with SEN. Students with SEN are supported very well. There is scope to challenge G&T students further in lessons. Guidance and support provided to older students is very good and they are well supported to make their choice of universities in the UAE or abroad.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Support to students with SEN.
- Very effective learning environment in a purpose-built building
- Promotion of attendance and punctuality.
- Very good relationship between staff and students.
- Caring ethos which permeates the school.

Areas for Improvement:

- Support and challenge for G&T students, particularly in lessons.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Very Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Very Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Very Good
Governance	Very Good
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Very Good

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The inspirational principal and leadership team have established an aspirational vision which is shared by all. A comprehensive CPD programme is developing best practice in teaching, but this now needs to be consistently applied across the school. Morale is very high.
- The school's approaches to self-evaluation are systematic and rigorous. The development plan drives improvement successfully within the school.
- Partnership with parents is very strong. Parents receive accurate and informative reports which profile what their children need to do to improve. Very positive links with other schools and local hospitals enrich learning.
- The Professional Board of Governors has a comprehensive and accurate view of the school. The views of parents and other stakeholders are expressed through the Local Advisory Board. The board is supportive while setting demanding targets for the school.
- The school is managed very efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The building is highly conducive to learning. Modern technology is very well used to support learning.
- The school is making very good progress in preparing parents and students for its involvement in international assessments, including TIMSS and PISA. They have prepared guidance to help students and parents understand what is required to participate in these tests. There have been a range of presentations to parents and support for students, including active engagement in the 'question a day' initiative. This is improving knowledge and skills in key subjects.

Areas of Relative Strength:

- Leadership of the principal and impact of teamwork.
- Systems of coaching and mentoring for staff.
- Rigorous self-evaluation.
- Communication with parents

Areas for Improvement:

- Extending the school's CPD programme to secure more consistently high quality teaching and learning.