

Excellence in Pupil Development Award

Verification Report

School name:	GEMS Cambridge International School, Abu Dhabi
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Award verifier:	Andy Taylor
Award adviser (if applicable):	School-led approach
Date of verification:	18 May 2021

Commentary on the evidence provided:

- The action plan is based on robust self-evaluation, supported by findings from a firm evidence base. Leaders within the school are very reflective and any areas identified as a need of development are addressed comprehensively.
- Personal development is an integral part of the school development plan. As a result, effective practices will continue to be developed and enhanced. Furthermore, opportunities are interwoven to the school's curriculum and subjects are used to enhance the provision.
- To complement the development of a knowledge-based curriculum, leaders have focussed on supporting students develop character traits and dispositions to support effective learning. The school's focus on developing as a "High Performance Learning" centre of excellence has greatly contributed to this.
- Students have real opportunities to make a difference at local, national and international level. For example, students have raised money for others to be able to undergo life-changing operations. Students have had the opportunity to travel to different continents and take part in community-based projects.
- The school has developed strong international links. Students have had the opportunity to work with Arizona State University.

- The school has well developed systems to celebrate behaviour. As they progress through the various phases of the school, students are supported and encouraged to develop their intrinsic motivation to achieve.
- Leaders have developed very effective induction systems and procedures. As a result of this, new staff quickly contribute to the school's overall provision.

Strengths identified during verification:

Leadership and management

- The drive of the school is underpinned by a clear moral purpose which is reflected at all levels. There is clear evidence of distributed leadership.
- Over time, leaders have developed the curriculum and extra-curricular experiences to ensure the school's vision is realised. All engagement activities for students, and work with other organisations, complement this.
- Leaders and staff are creative in their approach. Additional extra-curricular activities, sometimes based on individual staff's interests, encourage students to be creative, innovative and to achieve. Students have the opportunity to take part in enrichment opportunities, supporting their wide range of interests.
- Professional development is a real strength and leaders ensure staffs' skills are aligned to the ambitious curriculum which has been developed.

Staff

- All staff fully contribute to the wider life of the school. They are fully committed to developing the skills of students, preparing them for the next phase in their education. As a result of effective curriculum design, real and relevant links are made to life skills.
- Staff are very flexible in their approaches, in order that all students can contribute to the wider life of the school.
- Recognising and celebrating the successes of students across all areas of the academic and wider curriculum is of great importance to the staff. There are numerous events throughout the year to ensure this priority is realised.

Parents

- Parents appreciate and value the school's work. They feel that staff are instilling in their children a real sense of purpose, where helping and supporting others is of great importance. One parent stated that, "...CIA had given my child a real confidence for life."
- Parents feel they are actively involved in the continual development of the school. Through very effective communication channels, they are well informed how leaders strive to strengthen the school's provision through the curriculum and by other opportunities provided for their children.
- As their children move up through the school, parents feel that they are well supported in developing important skills and other interests which will help them once they leave.

Students

- Students understand that they can, and do, make a difference. They have a well-developed social conscience.
- Students are provided with many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Moreover, they feel that they contribute to the school's journey of improvement.
- Students are very proud of their school and were very keen to talk about all aspects of school life. They clearly enjoyed learning and were confident to talk about their favourite subjects and activities. All had aspirations and realised how important their education was in helping them achieve their goals.

Impact:

- The EPDA framework has been used as a diagnostic tool to reflect and develop current practices.
- Working towards the award has provided the opportunity for leaders to reflect on an already rich provision.
- Areas identified within the school's own self-evaluation as in need of development have been strengthened. As a result, the provision has been further enriched.
- Staff across all phases of the school have been given the opportunity to reflect and strengthen the ways by which they celebrate this aspect of the school's work with the wider community.
- Strengthening partnerships with external organisations, e.g. the Model United Nations and Camp International, have had a significant and long-lasting impact on students.

Areas for development:

There were no specific areas within the award which need to be strengthened. Leaders have identified the following:

- To further develop career guidance within Key Stage Four and Five.
- To ensure professional development continues to focus on personal development.
- To further develop the anti-bullying policies within the secondary phase and to support students' understanding of bullying.
- The Local Advisory Board to develop an even deeper understanding of the impact of the work carried out to support students' personal development.

Verifier recommendation:

- GEMS Cambridge International School, Abu Dhabi to be awarded the EPDA for a period of three years.



Head teacher comments:

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