

# GEMS Founders School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: Monday 22 April – Wednesday 24 April, 2019

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Age Group: 3 - 19 years

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) Schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. Education Development Trust is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Education Development Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally. Education Development Trust employs over 2,500 staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

**To be recognised by the Department for Education (DfE), a British School Overseas must have an inspection report which shows that their performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be registered on Edubase.**

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas. These were updated with effect from September 2017. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations. **A policy update was issued by the DfE in October 2018. The Department confirmed that 'our policy is now to accredit schools in countries where to meet certain standards would be in breach of the host country laws, as long as there is evidence to substantiate this, and all other standards are met'.**

The Standards are as follows:

1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.
5. The premises and accommodation.
6. The provision of information.
7. Manner in which complaints are handled.
8. Leadership and management of the school
9. The quality of provision for boarding

The purposes of the inspections are to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare

- provide rigorous and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and celebrate their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

### Key for inspection grades

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

### Proportions used in the report

90–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
75–90%	Very large majority, most
65–74%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none/very few

## Information about the school

GEMS Founders School is a large, independent, non-selective school for pupils aged from 3 to 19 years and is located in the Al Barsha South area of Dubai. It is owned by GEMS Educational Management Systems who operate a significant number of other schools in Dubai. It opened in September 2016 with 1800 pupils and has grown to 3742 pupils. There are 639 children in the foundation stage, 2237 in primary and 866 in secondary and post-16. The school has 128 classes and a maximum class size of 31 pupils. In 2019, the first pupils in Years 11 and 12 will take external examinations in IGCSE and AS/A levels. Pupils come from over 100 nationalities and less than 1% hold British passports. There are 213 teachers and retention is high at 93%. The school is non-selective and 505 pupils have an identified special educational need, or disability. Pupil mobility is high at 9% and approximately 50% is due to families leaving the UAE.

The school offers a broad and balanced English curriculum, with some modification for the local context and also complies with the UAE requirements for Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies. Consequently, pupils can enter schools in the UK without significant disruption.

## Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by five Education Development Trust inspectors who spent a total of thirteen inspector days in school. In addition, two inspectors met with school leaders and toured the school in the day before the inspection started. The school requested the inspection three weeks before the start date. The team examined the school's self-review document, the BSO compliance checklist and a range of other information before the inspection. They visited 55 lessons across the school covering a wide range of subjects; they

held 34 meetings with governors, senior leaders, staff, parents and pupils. Inspectors observed arrival and departure from the school, assemblies, breaks and reviewed samples of pupils' work including displays and artwork. They reviewed extensive documents including self-evaluation, other audits, staff records, safeguarding and other policies, development plans, assessment information, attendance records, behaviour, rewards and sanctions. They observed all phases of the school at work and followed up all issues with school leaders.

## Evaluation of the school

GEMS Founders School is a good school and provides a good quality of education for pupils from three to 19 years.

The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. These are explained later in the report. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

It is not possible to be definitive about attainment without external verification through public examination results. The school has confidence in the rigour, accuracy and consistency of its internal processes. This is based on complementary UK standards, for example, UK diagnostic tests, mathematical schemes, curriculum resources and other complementary measures. Moderation is established internally and through GEMS, providing a cohesive network of processes across all phases. Inspection evidence confirmed the accuracy of these assessment systems.

Through active participation in high-quality, continuous provision and tasks well matched to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and reflecting individual interests, most children make good progress across all learning areas. Formative data analysis for the current year shows most are on track to meet expected levels of attainment and the majority on track to exceed curriculum expectations by the end of the academic year.

Attainment in **English** is satisfactory in foundation stage and primary, and good in secondary and post-16. Progress is good in all phases.

Most children enter foundation stage with limited skills in **English** and few with experience of a child-focused approach to learning. Throughout the foundation stage, the emphasis is on developing a wide range of learning skills combined with the core skills of communication, mathematical understanding and an understanding of the world around them. Most children attain levels in reading, writing and speaking in line with English national averages. They demonstrate good awareness of phonics, which supports guided reading sessions. They make good progress in relation to their starting points, especially in writing.

In primary, Year 2 pupils use imperatives and adverbs of time with growing confidence in speech and writing. Year 3 pupils understand the features of language found in news reports and in their own writing use adjectives and adverbs imaginatively. Year 5 pupils show skill in using figurative language, such as '...the sun is rising like a cake in the oven...'.

In secondary and post-16, attainment is above average. The school encourages reading so that strong writing skills develop. Pupils in Year 9 used an excellent range of vocabulary to describe Lady Macbeth and described her with appropriate adjectives, 'manipulative' and 'egocentric'.

Pupils in Year 10 establish priorities and write effective summaries. In Year 12 pupils use accurate literary terms and understand how language, form and structure shape the meaning of texts.

Attainment in **mathematics** is satisfactory across the foundation stage, primary and secondary, and good at post-16. Progress is good in all phases.

Children in foundation stage gain an understanding of number, shape and measures through an imaginative blend of play, exploration and structured tasks. Assessments on entry to Year 1 show that the majority are working slightly below expected standards. By the end of primary most make progress expected by the school and a minority make better than expected progress. The school's assessment information confirms that pupils who joined the school from the start, and have therefore been there longer, make better progress than those who join later. Primary pupils are confident to apply mathematical knowledge and skills in cross-curricular work and problem-solving. The inclusion of a problem or investigation in all lessons enables them to gain the confidence to tackle complex tasks, analysing content before identifying the methods to apply.

They build on this in secondary with problems and mathematical literacy key features of lessons. In Year 8 they form algebraic equations to solve problems about real-life situations. They are well prepared for external examinations and tests as they gain mastery of the subject content required for the curriculum. Pupils are confident to share their mathematical knowledge with their peers, using complex vocabulary and supporting this with clear diagrams and structured calculations. They acknowledge that this also helps them to reinforce and even extend their own knowledge.

Attainment in **science** is satisfactory in foundation stage and primary and good in secondary and post-16. Progress is good in all phases as pupils develop scientific knowledge, skills and understanding.

Children use the resources of science stations to acquire early scientific skills in foundation stage. In one lesson, they applied a scientific approach to extend the length of a bridge using construction kits and completed the bridge with minimal adult support. Children learn about controls by using different ways to turn equipment on and off, operate old and new machines and floor-based drones.

Most pupils in Year 1 set up controlled experiments and recorded the growth of seedlings accurately. By Year 4 they record their detailed observations of chemicals changing from solids to liquids using structured scientific methods. Year 5 pupils use scientific language logically to describe the properties of materials, processes and equipment when carrying out practical tasks and recording. By Year 6, they classify living things as vertebrate or invertebrate, giving a rationale for their decisions.

Older pupils in secondary and post-16 study biology, physics and chemistry. They make good progress in all three subjects and use their knowledge and skills to test hypotheses. They present investigation findings clearly using text, diagrams and graphics. They use digital equipment to measure, record and analyse investigations. No external examinations have yet been taken, but pupils in Year 12 make good progress in practical and written work. For example, in chemistry they use empirical formulae to calculate the number of sulfite, carbonate and chloride salts in samples of zinc to determine the purity of the metal.

Pupils attain high standards and make excellent progress in technology. Children in foundation stage are confident to use a range of devices, quickly learning how to operate and control these and acquiring the correct technical language. In primary they become skilled in using different applications and technology is an integral part of the broader curriculum. Examples include Year 3 pupils designing and making a model of Dubai using 3-D printers and Year 4 programming drones. They understand the principles of programming and in Year 6 use tablet computers to code a moving toy, showing how coding changes the toy's behaviour. In secondary and post-16, pupils make excellent use of the school's technology resources for programming, modelling, media projects, presenting work and research. They continue to build their computing knowledge and skills in computing in focused lessons as well as applying these across the curriculum.

Pupils attain high standards and generally make good progress in **other subjects**. Classroom teachers and subject specialists share their enthusiasm and skills using age-appropriate techniques to deliver the broad curriculum. Standards in creative and performing arts subjects are exceptionally high and encourage pupils of all ages to express themselves through a range of media and genres. In music pupils are confident to compose, perform and evaluate their own work, both vocal and instrumental. The high profile of creative arts inspires pupils to contribute their work to enhance the school environment either through displays or permanent murals. Pupils enjoy imaginative and challenging indoor and outdoor physical education and sporting activities. Specialist teachers plan activities to build skills, stamina, teamwork and integrate these with initiatives to promote staying healthy.

Pupils who have **special educational needs and/or disabilities** receive exceptional levels of carefully planned support from teachers, support staff and therapists. As a result, they make excellent progress against their academic, social, communication and physical targets. The inclusion department carry out diagnostic assessments of each pupil's needs and use this to plan appropriate support and intervention. The inclusion team works closely with class teachers to plan support, participation in class lessons, at breaks and on class visits making the provision fully inclusive and flexible.

#### **Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:**

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment are good overall (see Standard 1 below). The school should maintain its drive to raise teachers' questioning skills and consistent use of assessment information so that the needs of all pupils are met.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Standard 3 below).
- The Standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Standard 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the Standard. (see Standard 5 below).
- The provision of Information for parents meets the requirements of this Standard (see Standard 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the Standard (see Standard 7 below).

- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Standard 8 below).

### **Brief references to any key strengths and weaknesses**

The leadership and management have successfully established a large school in less than three years and are committed to further improvements as the school continues to grow. Leaders are innovative and have created a unified structure for management including professional development. This conveys a powerful example of lifelong learning for pupils, showing that everyone is a learner forever.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during April 2019, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas (2017 updated). This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and is valid for a period of three years.**

## **Standard 1. The quality of education provided by the school**

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met but the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii) is not met because of the requirements of the host country. This relates to the provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

**The curriculum is outstanding.** It is imaginative, forward-thinking and kept under regular review. It meets the needs of all pupils, enabling them to make good progress and achieve excellent personal development. It is based on the English national curriculum and ensures that pupils are readily able to transfer to the UK educational system. It is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the equivalency requirements of pupils planning to progress, for example, to the UAE higher education system.

The school deploys staff and resources highly effectively to support different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils who need extra help are identified and supported in catch-up sessions. The highest achievers are given extension tasks in lessons to stretch and challenge them.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum uses assessment information effectively to match topics to individuals' interests. Hence, a topic on superheroes was introduced to address concerns about boys' writing standards. Parents and children are consulted routinely at the planning stage. Emphasis is placed on independent choices, especially in the indoor and outdoor play areas, which are well used to support learning. The curriculum is underpinned by references to community responsibility. A carefully planned transition process enables children to access the Year 1 curriculum with ease.

In primary and secondary, the curriculum includes a balanced range of subjects, emphasising the acquisition of knowledge and skills equally. Progression is often based on topics which successfully engage and enthuse pupils, from 'Paws, Claws and Whiskers' in Year 1 to the

second world war in Year 6. This facilitates fruitful cross-curricular links, for example, making pupils aware of the historical background to Wilfred Owen's poetry.

The outstanding activities programme is well supported by the pupils and extends the school's provision with a broad range of athletic, artistic and technological activities. It makes highly effective use of the school's immediate environment and locally available resources. In primary, for example, sustainability projects are based around native trees and plants. The school has seized the opportunity from Expo 2020, being held in Dubai, to expand the annual science fair into technology and innovation which are at the heart of the school's ethos. Suitable careers guidance is provided.

The curriculum is comprehensive in its development of pupils' understanding of British values, which accord fully with the values of the school. Democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom and respect for all are embraced by the school community, for example, in history and moral education lessons, and displays around the school give prominence to the UAE's Year of Tolerance. These values are also embodied in the inclusive way pupils behave towards one another and in displays with words of the founder of the UAE, recognising all humans as 'special souls' being a mark of Islam.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good overall.** The school meets the requirements of this standard. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress as a result of effective teaching.

Pupils are very keen to learn and clearly enjoy the different ways that the curriculum is taught. They gain impressive knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, as well as acquiring skills for learning. They work diligently to achieve challenging targets based on their starting points or recent assessment information. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress in academic subjects, as well as their communication and social skills. They are exceptionally well-supported and work is carefully matched to their needs.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, secure understanding of how to teach an English curriculum successfully and the ways in which young children and older pupils learn. In the foundation stage teaching provides challenge by, for example, use of sophisticated questioning techniques and allowing children time to think and reflect before answering. While this level of challenge is evident in some higher classes, it is not consistent across all subjects and phases. Where questioning is successful, teachers challenge pupils to think, for example in Year 10, "Was Mandela a hero?" Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is infectious and inspires pupils to have a positive view of themselves as authors, scientists, musicians, linguists and imagine themselves in their chosen career. In the foundation stage, teachers organise teaching so that pupils enjoy a blend of indoor and outdoor learning, where they explore and create as they have fun.

Technology is used well for teaching and learning in lessons and across the curriculum. The school's coaches encourage teachers to be innovative, for example, in Islamic and social studies teachers' now deliver lessons where pupils use tablet computers to research topics independently.

The school gathers extensive information about pupils' progress. Regular formative and observational assessments provide teachers with up-to-date information to plan and adapt the



curriculum so that pupils make at least good progress. However, this is not yet used consistently to match tasks to all pupils' needs. Assessment information is shared with parents regularly so that they can support and encourage pupils' learning at home. Technology is increasingly used to assess learning of all pupils in lessons by scanning Quick Recognition (QR) codes and using an application to download an analysis. These results are immediately displayed and the teacher uses this to identify parts of the learning objective where pupils struggled.

The structure for planning ensures continuity and coverage of the curriculum, from long-term plans through to individual lesson plans. The subject teams work closely providing consistency and opportunities to share strengths and good practice. Lesson planning uses a standard format and provides a solid platform for lessons with learning objectives and tasks at different levels and, as a result, pupils make good progress. The most able pupils extend their learning through extension tasks or higher expectations. Pupils needing more help to learn benefit from highly trained support staff who understand each individual's needs and skilfully guide and encourage, so allowing them to learn independently.

While pupils' behaviour is excellent, teachers manage any occasional lapses subtly and lessons are rarely disrupted. When lessons lack challenge pupils show high levels of self-control, which shows their understanding of expectations for behaviour.

The approach to teaching and learning gives pupils a solid foundation for successfully entering, or returning to schools in the UK.

## **Standard 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5 (b) (vi). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country, relating to the provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The school vision of 'Grow – Flourish – Succeed' permeates across the school. Pupils attend school regularly and their enjoyment of school life is reflected in high levels of attendance in line with UK averages, with certificates awarded for full attendance. They arrive punctually for the start of the day and are not late for lessons.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary; they are confident, enthusiastic learners who are excited by acquiring new knowledge and skills. This is also evident in high levels of participation in the diverse range of extra-curricular activities that extend or reinforce learning. The combination of these positive attitudes and learning skills helps pupils to become resilient and resourceful, and to make good uninterrupted progress.

The pupils have a very strong sense of moral codes and appreciation of right and wrong; this underpins their exemplary behaviour. The pastoral reward and conduct reporting system is robust and fair.

Personal, social, and health education provides pupils with a broad and balanced pastoral education with dedicated mindfulness and moral education lessons. They reflect and think deeply about moral issues. Collaboration and teamwork are strong features of these lessons.

One pupil described them, saying, “They make us think about each other, to ask questions about our different cultures, similarities and differences. We think our differences need to be celebrated.” Pupils are confident to ask probing questions, volunteer their ideas and acknowledge opposing views. They express their views clearly, think creatively, develop self-assurance and aspire to be lifelong learners who make a meaningful contribution to the world.

Pupils of all ages show initiative when learning and participate eagerly in tasks which involve enquiry and research. This was evident in foundation stage when the young learners were engrossed in a science and technology topic, ‘Can you turn it on?’ and learned by being curious and not afraid to make a mistake. Older pupils gain understanding of issues in contemporary society, for example, the impact of social media on eating-disorders.

The school offers pupils of all ages opportunities to take responsibility in meaningful and age-appropriate roles. They are supported in acquiring leadership skills and secondary pupils influence decisions through the weekly ‘Meet the Headteacher’ forum. More than 1000 pupils have been a part of this and are proud to express their views, be heard and bring about improvements. The school’s commitment to developing pupils as strategic leaders is reflected in the planned expansion of the Local Advisory Board to include pupil representatives.

Pupils involved in a leadership programme organise celebrations, sports events, talent competitions and a Model United Nations. Older pupils are excellent role models for younger pupils.

Pupils are well informed about their responsibility for the planet in terms of conservation and sustainability. They are confident to express creative options to address and improve environmental concerns.

The promotion of fundamental British Values and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths, cultures and lifestyles are strong features of the school. Pupils understand key aspects of Britain, including the parliamentary and legal systems. Equality for all is actively promoted and major world religious and cultural festivals are celebrated across the school, often organised by the older students.

### **Standard 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The school meets the requirements of the standard, the regulatory requirements and cultural obligations of the host country.

Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are outstanding and ensure that all pupils, staff and visitors are exceptionally well cared for. Pupils and parents value how this is achieved without compromising the warm, friendly atmosphere and the positive, supportive, nurturing learning environment. Leaders ensure that staff well-being is equally as important as that of pupils, adding to the harmonious atmosphere.

The number of pupils has increased rapidly since the school opened in 2016. New pupils are accepted and settle quickly, which is a key factor in their academic progress and social development. The admissions register conforms with guidance and is held securely.

Pupils are confident to share any concerns with an adult, knowing that someone will listen and provide support with their issues. Pupils spoke of being taught how to keep themselves safe in school and they have good knowledge of issues related to e-safety.

They described behaviour as good and feeling very safe in school; parents agree and are confident that the school will keep their child safe. Incidents of bullying are very rare and dealt with quickly, appropriately and sensitively so they do not escalate.

The school is diligent in its approach to health and safety. All policies and procedures are available on the school's website, making them easily accessible to parents. Senior staff take their responsibilities for safety very seriously and check the site regularly. The school uses external specialists to monitor and maintain appropriate equipment and facilities. When hazards or risks are identified, these are reported and addressed immediately. Thorough risk assessments are carried out in line with the school's policy and appropriate action is taken to address issues and minimise risks.

Pupils are supervised when moving within the school, at breaks and on arrival and departure by security and senior staff deployed at appropriate locations. Pupils and adults are kept safe at the start and end of the day, with agreed traffic routes for vehicles and pedestrians and high levels of supervision on school buses.

Attendance and punctuality of pupils are recorded following local guidelines and the school works closely with parents to overcome absence and lateness. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and the reporting procedures meet corporate, national and British expectations. All staff complete an extensive training programme covering aspects of welfare, health and safety with regular updates. The school complies with fire regulations, holds emergency drills at least termly and fire equipment is routinely checked. These are as stringent as those in the UK and meet UAE regulations and legislation. First aid is administered promptly when needed and follows the first aid policy.

## **Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The rigorous procedures to verify the health, identity, employment history, qualifications and references of leaders and staff at all levels are applied before appointments are made. Vetting of applicants' suitability to work with children is exceptionally thorough. Volunteers and contractors are checked with equal rigour. Records also include official signed documents showing the right to live and work in the UAE. A single central record of all staff information is held in a secure office where computer records can only be accessed by the principal and two trained administrators. The school does not engage supply staff, preferring to use two employed cover teachers who are subject to the same checks as all other staff. This reflects the school's commitment to appoint high-quality staff.

Recruitment procedures reflect policies and procedures used in the UK and any staff involved in recruiting staff are trained in line with the UK safer recruitment guidance. The GEMS corporate team includes senior staff with specialist knowledge in safeguarding and they ensure that the

school meets local and British expectations. They inform the school of changes to keep safeguarding practice strong and pupils safe.

## **Standard 5. The premises and accommodation**

The requirements of this standard are met. Pupils enjoy an outstanding learning environment. The accommodation is scrupulously clean, tidy and maintained to a very high standard by the large team of support staff and external specialist contractors. Daily checks of equipment, facilities and premises mean that any concerns are resolved effectively and efficiently leading to a safe and secure learning environment. For pupils and visitors with physical needs, ramps and a lift allow access to all levels of the school.

Classrooms are spacious, well-ventilated and generously resourced. Specialist rooms and facilities for science, dance, art, music, technology and physical development are organised, equipped with high-quality materials and provide a high-quality learning environment. Corridors and communal spaces are enhanced by students' stunning artwork and academic displays that reflect the school's high expectations for pupil attainment. The focus on reading is well supported by an extensive range of fiction and non-fiction books in classrooms and the two libraries. The school has an impressive range of digital equipment. This includes 3-D printers, programmable drones, QR readers, digital measuring devices and multi-media equipment.

Specialist areas to support less able learners are well designed to provide a safe and calm learning environment. A great deal of thought is given to ensuring that learners with specific needs, including those with emotional and social needs, are well supported. Barriers to learning are reduced through the provision of additional adults who support learning in lessons or, as part of withdrawal classes. Learning support assistants and additional adults are well deployed to meet most students' needs.

The procedures for food hygiene are robust. Canteen staff are highly trained and the storage and serving facilities for food and water meet expected standards. Food options are healthy and varied. Medical facilities and support are provided by a team of three nurses and two doctors who deal with medical emergencies and provide advice and guidance for healthy eating and lifestyles, and medical concerns raised by pupils.

## **Standard 6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others**

The school meets the requirements of this standard. The provision of information to parents, carers and others is good.

Recent surveys of parents give very positive views of the school and this was confirmed at a meeting with parents and a member of the inspection team. They spoke of how easy it is to contact leaders about any concerns and to give compliments or make complaints. Information about GEMS, the principal, governors, the Local Advisory Board, the school vision, curriculum and policies about pupils with additional needs is easily accessed.

Parents are welcomed into school and comply with rigorous security checks whenever they enter the school site. A ground floor café alongside the main entrance foyer is a focal point for parents to meet and talk to staff informally. The school recognises that local access to bookshops is not always easy for parents and regularly arranges for a bookseller to create a 'bookshop in school' for two days. This coincided with the inspection visit. Pupils and parents were visibly excited by the range of fiction and non-fiction books for children of all ages. Parents spoke of the school listening to parents' views and addressing their concerns, giving the example of the bookshop.

The impressive range and content of information for parents includes the use of technology to share information promptly. Information is also easy to locate and access on the website.

In foundation stage, teachers use technology to share information about the curriculum and each child's achievements with their parents fortnightly using a pupil profile application '2Simple'. This provides parents with detailed feedback on their child's attainment and progress across key areas of learning and identifies ways they can support their child's learning at home. Parents add to this information by sharing their observations of the child's achievements at home as 'wow' moments. These profile records, based on detailed observations of children in the classroom and at home, help to build a comprehensive and ongoing learner profile. Two detailed formal reports are sent twice a year providing information on children's attainment and progress in the seven areas of learning.

In primary and secondary, reports give factual information about the pupil's behaviour, attendance, academic progress and attainment in line with age-related expectations for each subject and the next steps for learning. Reports for secondary pupils also include information about learning skills and predicted outcomes in external examinations. During the inspection, parents' spoke about the clarity and usefulness of these reports and how they form the basis of meaningful discussions at conferences with teachers.

## **Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints**

The procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of this standard. A comprehensive policy gives parents clear guidance about how to raise any concern. This supplements the feedback section of the website and the official contract between the school and parents. Well-established procedures for referrals to the appropriate senior leader mean that almost all concerns are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Allegations of staff misconduct are investigated by the principal. In the first two years of the school, all critical comments have been recorded as formal complaints to ensure that every concern was addressed and overcome. More serious complaints are dealt with by a panel of external members including the GEMS corporate team. No serious complaints have been referred to this panel during this academic year. Parents and pupils were positive about leaders' responsiveness to any concerns.

## **Standard 8. Leadership and management**

The school meets the requirements of this standard. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding.

The principal provides inspiring leadership and has successfully set and achieved high expectations for staff and pupils. These cover teaching, learning, behaviour, culture, ethos, professional development, resources and accommodation. He shares a clear vision for the school, to achieve those high standards without an extravagant budget at the same time as pupil numbers rise rapidly. He ensures that the school meets or exceeds the expectations of BSO. The principal leads an innovative framework for academic, pastoral, strategic and operational leadership at different levels. He trusts his staff and leaders, empowering them and genuinely devolving responsibility. He welcomes the ideas of others, their suggestions and encourages staff and pupils to develop their leadership skills. Even though the school is young, leadership is established and stable. It provides a solid basis to identify and implement sustainable improvements at the same time as supporting the planned expansion of the school.

Governance is highly effective, providing strong support, focussed challenge and holding leaders to account. Corporate governance through GEMS and local governance through the Local Advisory Board are complimentary with clearly distinct and defined roles and both adding value to the school. The principal was a powerful advocate for such a board as soon as the school opened. Each board member is actively involved in school with specific responsibilities, making them sufficiently well-informed to take strategic decisions. Recruitment to the board is rigorous regardless of an applicant's professional or personal position. Corporate governance is very responsive in providing support and challenge to the school as it grows and develops, including professional development for leaders. They work closely with the leaders aligning spending with priorities to allow the school to expand. The corporate procedures for the principal's appraisal are followed. Particular attention is given to ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are up-to-date, shared and followed, so keeping pupils safe.

Pupils are set challenging targets and make at least good progress in almost all subjects. Those with special educational needs or a disability are valued members of the school community and with appropriate support thrive and develop. The high-quality resources are used very effectively by adults and pupils. The importance of reading books is reflected in the extensive library stock to encourage pupils not only to learn to read, but to be active readers. The accommodation is carefully organised giving no sense of an organisation with more than 4000 pupils and staff. The environment is safe, stimulating with spectacular murals and artwork that create a warm and inspiring atmosphere. Pupils are rightly proud of their art and their contribution to the school environment.

Staff are well qualified and deployed effectively to maximise their skills and knowledge. They benefit from extensive professional development which is exceptionally well-planned and supported internally and externally. This links to the appraisal process, making a cycle of reflection, monitoring and training. The leadership teams include teaching and learning coaches who are highly valued and play a significant role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Their support in improving the use of assessment information and questioning skills has already made some impact. The value of their work is recognised by GEMS and the coaches now share their good practice in other schools.

Internal and external self-evaluation is established and accepted as routine. GEMS peer reviews are carried out annually and those outcomes influence the priorities of improvement plans. The school was first inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) in February 2019 and until then used DSIB's inspection framework for internal self-evaluation. Specific audits, for

example, health and safety are carried out and all issues addressed. Leaders are well informed about the school's strengths and areas to improve and do not shy away from making changes when necessary. This thorough understanding of the school leads to relevant improvement and strategic plans that are shared with all staff through the leadership framework.

The highly effective leadership has excellent capacity to identify, plan and implement sustainable improvements and support GEMS Founders School as it continues to grow.

## **Standard 9. The quality of provision for boarding**

Not applicable.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

GEMS Founders School fully meets the requirements for British Schools Overseas.

It meets all of the standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws. These are set out below.

2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;

5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

Further develop the use of assessment information to modify, where necessary, teaching practice to more closely meet the needs of pupils.

Maintain the drive to deepen and extend pupils' learning by, for example, increasing the range of teachers' questioning styles.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	√			
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### The quality of provision for boarding

	NA			
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## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Founders School
<b>Type of school</b>	International School
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2016
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 -19 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	3742
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 22,000 – AED 33,000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Address of school</b>	Umm Sequim Street, Al Barsha South, Dubai, UA
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971.4.519.5222
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:gfs@gemsedu.com">gfs@gemsedu.com</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Matthew Burfield
<b>Proprietor</b>	Global Education Management Systems

## GLOSSARY

**Achievement** – Progress made by a pupil taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

**Accreditation** – The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and if deemed as having achieved the standards required is provided with some form of official certification or recognition.

**Accreditation Board** – The body responsible for the strategic direction, operation and conduct of the accreditation service provided by Education Development Trust

**Assessment** – The process of finding out how well pupils have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

**Attainment** – The level pupils reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

**British Schools Overseas Inspection (BSO)** – Inspection framework and standards defined by the DfE for British schools overseas to opt to be inspected against.

**Education Development Trust** – Formerly CfBT Education Trust, we are one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally.

**Central Support Team** – Personnel based in Education Development Trust Head Office who are responsible for the administration of the various educational services provided to international schools.

**Combined or Joint Visit** – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

**Cycle of Inspection** – The period of three years between BSO inspection visits.

**Curriculum** – The educational programmes or courses of study taught by a school including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extra-curricular enrichment programmes.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB)** – All private schools in Dubai are required by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority to be inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). A joint DSIB/BSO inspection may be requested through the KHDA's strategic partner Education Development Trust.

**Leadership** – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

**Learning** – Pupils’ gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

**Management** – The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of a school’s work in an efficient and useful way.

**Ofsted** – The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in England and is responsible for school inspections in England.

**Progress** – The gains in learning made between two points in time. A pupil can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

**School self-evaluation** – The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school’s work on the outcomes for pupils.

**Standards** –

- (1) The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils and a school demonstrates at a particular point in time.
- (2) The evaluation requirements to be used in the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

**Teaching** – All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing pupils’ learning.

With 40 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust exists solely to provide education for public benefit.

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train. As one of the top 30 charities in the UK, we work for and with individuals and communities in order to help them reach their potential

Education Development Trust has built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services to national organisations such as Ofsted, the Teacher Training Agency and to schools in the north of England. Our main aim is to improve schools through high quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges.

Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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