

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	GEMS Founders School, Dubai
School address and postcode:	PO Box 390498, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
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School website:	www.gemsfoundersschool-dubai.com
Head teacher:	Matthew Burfield
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Award verifier:	Andy Taylor
Award adviser (if applicable):	School- led approach
Date of verification:	9 th September 2019

Commentary on the evidence provided:

- The portfolio evidences a range of comprehensive and well-organised documentation reflecting a school which strongly believes in the vital role it has in supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of all. The key performance indicators of all the objectives have been evidenced and therefore meet the requirements of the award.
- The school' vision and the core pillars encompass the importance of emotional wellbeing across the whole school to support its stakeholders. Mindful leaders have volunteered to promote these values.
- Leaders have developed a long-term strategy for wellbeing. It is an integral part of the school improvement process and because of this, work in this area will continue following the final verification.
- All stakeholders are well informed about the award.
- A redacted CPOMS case evidences the work of the school in supporting the whole family.
- All staff have been trained to at least Level 2 in safeguarding. Leaders use a range of other training to complement this. As a result, staff are well equipped to support pupils and ensure they are safe. Pupils views confirm this.

- Wellbeing and safeguarding are now permanent agenda items at meetings to ensure these aspects remain a high priority. The long-term vision of the school is clear and focussed strategic commitments have been made to ensure developments to support the wellbeing of all continues. These are evidenced in action plans with clear impact indicators, some of which are based on the results from a SWOT analysis carried out by leaders.
- Through a range of activities, supported by PSHE and other aspects of the curriculum, pupils have a better understanding of mental health.
- There is clear evidence of student voice being used to help identify developments for the school. The creation of gardening groups and more opportunities to represent the school in sports' competitions are but two examples.

Strengths identified during verification:

- Leaders model the standards expected within the organisation. All staff are treated with respect and the senior management, via a range of rewards and activities, ensure staff feel valued. Achievements of both pupils and staff are recognised and celebrated regularly.
- The Wellbeing Award (WAS) co-ordinator has been highly effective in her role. Because of this effective management, staff feel both involved and well informed about developments towards the award.
- Leaders empower other staff: an example of which is the staff welfare committee which has been allocated its own budget to support the wellbeing of colleagues.
- When not teaching, staff are provided with light and spacious working areas. In addition, they have access to counsellors. Health care insurance is provided by GEMS.
- Local Advisory Board Members (LABM) have a wide range of skills which are used to support the work of the school and its leaders. They visit school regularly throughout the academic year.
- Wellbeing is a focus for the school's induction procedures for new staff. The latter are encouraged to nominate another member of staff, to whom they can contact if needed.
- Because of their effectiveness, leaders are working with other schools to support the development of strategies to improve wellbeing.
- The school support the parents by providing a range of workshops, focusing on topics such as separation anxiety and how to help with examination stress.
- The broad, balanced and enriched curriculum, including knowledge gained from assemblies and the work carried out by staff, provide the pupils with a range of strategies to support their own wellbeing. As a result, pupils are better equipped to deal with the pressures as they progress through the school. In addition, wider curricula opportunities, such as annual camps and visits to other countries, enable the pupils to develop their independence and self confidence and esteem.
- The school's approach to facilitating discussion about mental health is effective. Using World Mental Health Day as a whole school focus, is one example of the school's drive to reduce the stigma around this area.
- The pupils to whom the assessor talked are very proud of their school. They highlighted the provision within the school where support was readily available.

Impact:

- Leaders have used the WAS framework to benchmark its practice and to ensure the most effective practices are being employed.
- Staff feel valued and as a result, retention rates are very high. Also, with the whole organisation, there are numerous opportunities for staff to develop their teaching and wider leadership and management skills.
- Through meetings, committees, focus groups and general surveys, pupils feel their views are both sought and acted upon. For example, the school's house system was adapted following feedback. Pupil voice within the school is strong.
- There is an effective safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe and trust adults to help them with any issues. They feel that the staff genuinely care about their wellbeing.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning because of the broad and exciting curriculum. PSHE and wider curricula opportunities really develop the overall confidence of the pupils.
- Staff feel their views are listened to and acted upon. The bespoke CPD model adopted by the school is an example of a change which has been implemented.

Areas for development:

- To use the LABM visits to gather first hand evidence of the impact of strategies and practices used by the school to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of all.
- To further develop the use of the website to include copies of relevant presentation material from workshops for those parents unable to attend.
- To develop the induction programme to provide opportunities for new parents to listen to the experiences of current parents.

Verifier recommendation:

- GEMS Founders School, Dubai to be awarded the Wellbeing Award for Schools for a period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

Wellbeing has become a central aspect at GEMS Founders School, Dubai in terms of staff, parents and most importantly children. The accreditation has given us a framework to use so that we could put all of our initiatives into one place and then reflect on the impact. Our Vice Principal, Janet Foley, is passionate about this critical concept and has driven the vision, strategy and implementation of the work that we do here at GFS. We are very proud that this work has been recognised and will continue to develop the holistic approach to well-being we have currently in place.

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