

# GEMS Metropole School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 20-23 February 2017

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Age Group: 3-16 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. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the school. 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, 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. 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.

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 for parents, carers and others.
7. The school's procedures for handling complaints.
8. The quality of provision for boarding.
9. Leadership and management of the school.

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.

The BSO inspection was combined with an inspection carried out with nine inspectors from the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB). The DSIB inspection evaluated the school's performance when measured against the quality indicators for schools in Dubai. The outcomes of the DSIB inspection are contained within a separate report which is available from the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai.

### 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 Metropole School is a larger-than-average school, located on a single site in Motor City, Dubai. It is owned by the Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) group of schools. It opened in August 2014 with 1,120 pupils. Since then, it has grown rapidly and now has 2,679 pupils.

Pupils range in ages from three to 16 years. There are 614 children in early years, 1,549 pupils in primary and 516 in secondary in Years 7 to 10. The first Year 11 cohort will start in August 2017. Since opening, 394 pupils from across the school have moved to other schools in Dubai and other locations. All pupils follow the English national curriculum.

The school has an open admissions policy and 71 pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with a further 400 receiving additional support. The Small Steps centre is a specialist facility within the school for pupils diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder.

Pupils come from more than 100 nationalities. More than 75% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

The principal and vice-principal lead the school, supported by leaders of the early years, primary and secondary departments. There are 170 teachers. Of these, 167 hold a recognised formal teaching qualification. There are 53 teaching assistants.

The principal was appointed in August 2016.

The school is a member of Edexcel and is seeking accreditation as a centre for the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) of the UK.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by four inspectors from the Education Development Trust. There were also nine DSIB inspectors inspecting the school. The school was given three weeks' notice of the start of the inspection. The combined inspection team was given access to information about the school before the inspection. The BSO self-review and registration documents were completed in December 2016. A total of 103 lessons were observed during the inspection. Inspectors held 63 meetings with senior leaders, governors, other leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, administrators, other staff, parents and pupils. Inspectors also carried out: work scrutiny; analysis of surveys and assessment information; document reviews including the school's self-review, improvement plans, observation and training records, assessment systems and safeguarding policies.

## Evaluation of the school

GEMS Metropole School is a satisfactory school. It provides a satisfactory education for pupils from early years to Year 10 and meets the requirements for the Standards of British Schools Overseas. The principal has gained a realistic picture of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement since his appointment. There is satisfactory capacity for improvement.

The school's genuine and open commitment to inclusivity is clear with just over 1% pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities and 75% who are learning English as an additional language.

Children's starting points in **English** are low as most are learning to speak English as an additional language. Progress in English is satisfactory and attainment is below average. Children in early years make satisfactory progress in the early stage of building their communication skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Even so, the recently introduced scheme to boost writing has yet to make an impact and children have limited ability to use phonics to help them read new or unfamiliar words.

Pupils in key stage 1 are keen to practise speaking English and start to use broader vocabulary and longer sentences. They gain confidence in applying some of the early rules of grammar in their writing and, by the end of Year 2, use more complex sentence structures and an appropriate range of adjectives and adverbs. They read fiction and non-fiction texts and apply their knowledge of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words. Most read with appropriate expression to enhance the meaning of their own written English or the content of books.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in key stages 1 and 2 although attainment at the end of key stage 2 remains below average. Pupils maintain their enthusiasm to improve, especially in reading and writing. Those who perform at above average levels write creatively, using complex sentences and exciting vocabulary to reinforce meaning.

Pupils' handwriting in key stages 1 and 2 is immature. Few pupils use cursive script and teaching does not emphasise the development from printing letters to joining them into flowing script.

In key stages 3 and 4, progress in English is generally satisfactory and attainment is broadly average. Pupils in key stage 4 read more widely and use correct grammar and punctuation when writing creative and factual English.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress with intervention from specialist teaching and support staff to help them with speaking, listening, reading and writing English.

Attainment in **mathematics** is average. In early years, even though children reach below average expectations, their progress is satisfactory from their starting points. Attainment remains slightly below average in key stages 1 and 2, and broadly average by the end of key stages 3 and 4.

In early years, children order and match objects, learn to recognise number symbols and use regular geometric shapes to create patterns. They understand simple measures and can describe objects of different sizes or weight using simple mathematical terms. By the end of early years, the majority can recite number names to 100, identify the pattern of 10s and understand that two numbers can be added together to make a larger number.

Attainment in key stages 1 and 2 is below average in mathematics; progress is satisfactory. Pupils' understanding of numeracy is not always secure as they lack sufficient experience of practical activities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding.

Currently, the school lacks reliable information from internal assessments. Lesson observations and work scrutiny confirm that, in key stage 3, attainment is average and progress is satisfactory. Pupils are more confident in dealing with algebra but have greater difficulty with handling statistics and in using mathematics to solve problems. In key stage 4, pupils apply factual knowledge of mathematics with limited evidence of critical thinking.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make generally satisfactory progress in mastering mathematical concepts and calculating, due to the support of specialist staff.

In **science**, attainment is average and progress is satisfactory. Progress in early years is satisfactory, but attainment is below average due to children's low starting points. In key stages 1 and 2, progress accelerates and, by the end of key stage 2, attainment is in line with expectations. This improving picture continues and, by the end of key stage 3, attainment is above average and progress is good. Current performance information for pupils in key stage 4 indicates that attainment and progress for those pupils who have been at the school since 2014 are at least in line with the average.

The variable performance of pupils' attainment and progress is the result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, along with insufficient use of assessment information. Where pupils learn most successfully, teachers use secure subject knowledge to plan lessons with clear learning objectives that focus firmly on scientific enquiry and/or developing scientific knowledge. Pupils also learn effectively when there is an appropriate balance of opportunities for them to extend and deepen their scientific knowledge and skills. Teachers mostly select appropriate topics for study and use resources imaginatively to promote learning. This is reinforced further where teachers are enthusiastic, energetic and have friendly attitudes, creating

a learning environment where pupils feel safe, enjoy their learning and are keen to explore key ideas and concepts, often independently of the teacher.

Learning is less effective when teachers do not plan lessons that interest and inspire pupils; use questioning that fails to stimulate their interest or encourage deeper thinking. At times, pupils have insufficient time to answer the teacher's questions and tasks are not always matched to individual needs. Some pupils opt for the easiest choice when given flexibility to select from a number of activities, meaning that lessons lack challenge and this limits pupils' progress.

Pupils enjoy the breadth of subjects offered, particularly arts and physical education. They are confident to use a range of media and resources to create individual pieces of two- and three-dimensional art. They know how different materials behave and the effect of combining different media to enhance visual impact. They apply their knowledge of art to criticise commercial, classical and contemporary art.

Physical education plays a major part in the daily life of all phases of the school. Pupils build their skills of control, agility and stamina as they participate in team and individual sports. They also learn the rules of each sport, so strengthening their personal development and awareness of the need for guidelines.

From early years, children show responsibility and concern for the environment and, by key stage 2, pupils relate the impact of human activity on the environment in social studies lessons. They enjoy using technology for research and to present their work, but opportunities for this in lessons are sometimes hampered by teachers' reluctance to pass control of computers, tablets and digital devices to pupils.

Pupil's behaviour is good and relationships with their peers are polite and respectful.

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is satisfactory (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall (see Standard 1 below). At times, leaders place insufficient focus on how well pupils learn during the evaluation of teaching. The systems for understanding assessment information are at an early stage of development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good (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 satisfactory (see Standard 9 below). Leaders recognise the importance of improving self-evaluation, strategic planning and particularly the accurate analysis of assessment information. Currently, this is not sufficient to identify priorities for improvement or strengths in teaching and learning.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during February 2017, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas. 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 school meets the requirements of the Standard. **The school's curriculum is satisfactory.** The curriculum is broad, balanced and based on the English national curriculum. It also includes Arabic and Islamic Education to meet the requirements of Dubai, and French from Year 3. The written curriculum policy is backed by appropriate plans and schemes of work.

The curriculum caters well for the needs of individual pupils. It has recently been adapted to reflect the inclusive admissions policy and to meet the diverse needs of all pupils. Curriculum review is an accepted part of the leadership's routine, to acknowledge the changing school population, meet its needs and also respond to any external changes to the curriculum.

A robust system for early intervention identifies pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and allows the prompt establishment of personalised learning plans. These plans allow pupils to access the curriculum and to make satisfactory progress. The needs of pupils learning English as an additional language are catered for in teachers' planning and focused support in lessons or small intervention groups. The Small Steps centre provides highly skilled support and specialist teaching to its small cohort of pupils who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder.

The curriculum is extended for pupils who are gifted and talented, allowing them to deepen their knowledge and extend their skills.

Cross-curricular links are evident in many lessons, for example integrating culture, heritage and environmental features through music, geography and language when introducing new countries in Year 8 geography. The curriculum draws on local resources to raise pupils' knowledge of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), making them aware of the history, culture and contemporary issues in the area.

The digital media strategy is at the early stage of supporting innovative learning, with pupils encouraged to bring their personal laptop or tablet computers to school. Even so, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use fully the range of available technological devices.

The school is strongly committed to teachers' professional development with regular training focused on supporting new or inexperienced teachers to deliver the curriculum and meet the needs of all their pupils.

From key stage 2, pupils make the most of the diverse range of extra-curricular opportunities, with over 25 activities on offer. These include sports, creative and performing arts and the application of technology.

Transition between each key stage is planned carefully with structured induction days to help pupils understand the changes in the next phase of the school. This extends to preparing pupils from key stage 3 for their transition to higher education or the world of work. The programme includes building self-awareness, taking responsibility for mentoring younger pupils, sports leadership and producing the school newspaper.

The curriculum reinforces the school's British character and is evident in the structure of the day, in lessons and meaningful displays. The values of fairness, democracy, equality and respect for

rules are reflected in how pupils relate to each other, teachers and adults with other roles across the school. Pupils are well equipped to enter or re-enter the British educational system.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory.** This is variable with elements of good and less effective practice in all key stages.

Where learning is most successful, pupils have opportunities to work collaboratively and to take the initiative in their learning. As a result, these pupils attain well and make good progress. In Year 5 science, for example, pupils worked together as young scientists studying the life cycle of plants and increased their scientific understanding and skills.

Where learning is less effective, there is an imbalance between teacher- and pupil-led activities in lessons. Teachers spend too much time giving instructions or explanations and this limits the time available for pupils to gain knowledge and skills. As a result, their progress is limited and pupils underachieve.

Some lessons are planned carefully with activities matched well to learning objectives and pupils' needs. Such planning stimulates pupils' interest, engagement is high and allows pupils of all abilities to make real gains in their knowledge and understanding. For instance, in Year 4 mathematics, careful planning combined with clear teacher explanation secured good progress for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The needs of pupils learning English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are met as specialist staff adapt teachers' planning and those pupils progress at a pace reflecting their needs.

Planning is, however, too often generic so that the needs of all pupils are not always met and progress is sometimes limited. Such planning tends to lack challenge, so pupils find the work too easy and lack opportunities to deepen their understanding or extend their skills. On these occasions, they become passive learners and do not show initiative or experiment in their learning.

Where teachers display secure subject knowledge, this allows them to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge of key subject content and concepts. This builds pupils' confidence as they learn because teachers answer questions and explain complex ideas clearly. It also encourages pupils to engage in productive dialogue about key ideas, theories and opinions.

Teachers use a range of resources to plan and deliver the curriculum. They are often used to produce imaginative presentations for pupils although, at times, opportunities are too few for pupils to use the school's wealth of technology for learning in lessons.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and use this to inform curriculum planning, track pupils' outcomes and set targets. Analysis of assessment information is at an early stage with limited benchmarking of pupils' outcomes against national and international expectations. Leaders have identified this as a priority for improvement.

Teachers use a range of teaching styles, assessment methods and resources to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills necessary to join or re-join the UK educational system, or British schools in other international locations.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. The spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils is good. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and respectful. Pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils' take responsibility for their behaviour when moving around the school, in lessons and when at leisure with little need for adults to remind them of codes of conduct. During breaks, they enjoy each other's company, playing age-appropriate games and sports or spending time in friendship groups. Pupils new to the school quickly form positive relationships with their peers and become accepted as part of the school community. This reflects the school's mission of 'happiness' with pupils of more than 100 nationalities showing mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils describe their relationships positively commenting 'We all understand and help each other speak English.' Pupils welcome visitors and are confident to offer help or to share information in mature ways.

Pupils recognise the need for rules and codes of conduct to maintain order and create a safe community. The school uses positive behaviour reinforcement and adapts this to reflect the different needs of younger and older pupils. This is a well-established approach and leads to a calm atmosphere conducive to learning. The school tries to identify and resolve any issues at an early stage which helps to maintain the orderly school. Older pupils build their self-confidence by taking on responsibilities as leaders of activities and teams. Pupils gain experience of voting and the importance of representing the views of others through open elections for school-wide roles.

The school takes its responsibilities to raise awareness of different forms of bullying very seriously. Concerns are dealt with promptly and sensitively with support for the victim and other pupils involved. The school recognises the challenges some new pupils face when transferring from other educational settings. It provides constructive support and guidance for them, so they can integrate as successful members of the school community.

Pupils take pride in being members of an international community. The school celebrates its rich cultural diversity with formal events and by raising awareness of the culture, history, traditions and languages of different nations. Pupils of all ages have a strong awareness of being global citizens with a shared experience of living in the UAE. They demonstrate great self-confidence and enjoy presenting their work on the history, culture, and diversity of the UAE. The school also celebrates the culture and heritage of the UAE and Dubai, giving pupils insights into the rapid economic and demographic changes in the country. They understand the impact of human activity on the natural environment and the need to recycle and reduce pollution.

Pupils have a good knowledge of organisations and of society in the UK. The school is organised similarly to schools in the UK and conveys a sense of being British through daily routines and the curriculum. Most teachers are from the UK or Ireland and integrate knowledge about Britain, its history and social events into lessons. Pupils learn about life in the UK through exchanging emails with those of a similar age in a UK school. Projects such as 'A Walk in London' allow them to learn about public transport, buildings and the geography of a capital city located on the banks of a large river. They are also aware of democracy, freedom to express

individual thoughts, equality, rights of fairness and respect and can relate these to being members of the school community.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. Procedures for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good. The school has trebled in size since opening, with new pupils starting continuously during the school year. Admission procedures comply with local requirements and the school accepts pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very strong induction arrangements help new pupils to settle quickly and become accepted members of the school community. This reflects the core element in the mission statement of 'happiness'.

The school benefits from updated policies on safeguarding from the GEMS corporate safeguarding specialist. It verifies that these comply with, or exceed, expectations for schools in Dubai and meets the same expectations as in the UK. The need to protect pupils when using technology and the internet is acknowledged as challenging. The school has protective firewalls but recognises that modern digital devices give pupils easy internet access. This is tackled by rigorous training for pupils about risks and protecting themselves when using the internet, including cyber-bullying and harmful websites.

Expectations for behaviour are clear and understood by new and established pupils. This results in a warm atmosphere with positive and respectful relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils know the consequences of not complying with behaviour codes and accept sanctions, along with guidance about how to address unacceptable behaviour. The vice-principal manages behaviour consistently and takes particular care to support new pupils as they adjust to the school's expectations for behaviour.

Attendance is above average and is recorded carefully. Robust systems record late arrivals at the start of the day.

Children and pupils are supervised well while relaxing and playing spontaneously during breaks. They take responsibility for managing their actions and know how to play safely. Staff complete comprehensive risk assessments for off-site activities, maintaining the rigour in caring for all pupils.

School transport is of high quality with supervision throughout journeys to and from school. Careful planning ensures pupils travel on the correct bus and are met by an approved adult.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles for parents and pupils, starting with daily sales of fresh vegetables in the café, and this approach is reinforced throughout the day. Pupils are aware of the need for healthy foods, exercise and the impact of pollutants on health. Displays of pupils' work promote all aspects of healthy lifestyles.

Clinic facilities allow pupils who become unwell or who are injured at school to be cared for by qualified nurses. First-aid kits are located throughout the school and a significant number of adults are trained first-aiders. Arrangements for safety around the swimming pools are thorough with trained lifeguards on duty at all times.

Policies for health, safety, fire and evacuation are robust, comply with local requirements and are verified externally. Regular evacuation practices ensure that adults and pupils new to the school are familiar with routines when alarms are raised.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. Leaders take very seriously the need to check the suitability and qualifications of all staff. The school builds on the GEMS corporate policies and expectations for the recruitment of all staff and volunteers. These are updated routinely to ensure compliance with arrangements for safeguarding and child protection in the UK, including safer recruitment. Records of staff and volunteers comply with local requirements and those expected in the UK. The school has acted to strengthen vetting arrangements for cover teachers to exceed local expectations. Contractors employing staff at the school must also comply with the school's expectations for robust checking of potential staff regarding their previous work experience and suitability to work with children.

Senior staff from all departments are trained as designated leaders for safeguarding and ensure consistent training and practice across the school.

Most teachers hold UK-recognised teaching qualifications and are qualified to teach the subjects and ages they teach.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. The premises occupy a single site and are currently surrounded by construction in the locality. The building has three floors and is planned well so there is little sense of almost 3,000 adults and pupils being on site at any time.

The robust perimeter wall, with manned entrances, keeps the site secure and no vehicles are allowed to access the school buildings. Leaders are uncompromising in addressing external factors to increase car parking and drop-off areas to minimise even further the risk of accidents outside the school's premises.

Security staff check diligently all visitors as they enter and leave, including parents. Identity badges are programmed to allow access to distinct sections of the building, thereby increasing internal security.

The buildings are light, spacious, well ventilated and fitted with high standard acoustic treatments. Corridors and staircases allow easy access between floors, with a lift available. Pupils and staff who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can move easily throughout the site. Their needs during an emergency evacuation are catered for well. 'Safe havens' are marked clearly on external landings, so fire marshalls can identify their location quickly and evacuate them safely.

Buildings meet local requirements for construction, safety and standards of hygiene. Maintenance and cleaning teams take pride in ensuring high standards throughout the day. Severe rain and sand storms with strong winds at the start of the inspection increased demands on the operational teams, who worked tirelessly to remove sand, maintain hygiene and safety. The same high standards are also evident in all areas where food is stored, prepared and

consumed. Pupils and cleaning teams ensure hygiene where snacks and meals are eaten during the day.

Specialist facilities include well-shaded swimming pools, sports pitches, indoor sports halls, creative and performing arts facilities, libraries and science laboratories. All are equipped with high quality fittings appropriate to the age of the children and pupils. Technology throughout the buildings allows teachers and pupils easy access to extensive digital resources.

Early years classrooms and the outdoor play area are on the ground floor and allow free-flow activities between indoor and outdoor areas. The increasingly large numbers of children in early years classes mean that some classrooms can be cramped; at times, this limits opportunities for children to explore and to be creative.

Clinic facilities are equipped well and allow pupils who become unwell or injured at school to receive appropriate care in privacy.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. On his appointment, the principal recognised parents' concerns, their need to be heard and to be understood fully. He initiated open forum meetings which parents found extremely constructive and gave them confidence and assurance that viable solutions would be found to address their concerns. The principal followed these initial meetings with clear communication about changes, so keeping parents fully informed. Subsequent meetings gave clear information to parents about on-going developments; parents confirm that the principal genuinely seeks and responds to their views.

Parent representatives are elected to a school-wide parents' forum. This provides a workable structure for gathering and sharing the views of the large parent community. The principal attends these meetings, which are constructive, open and reflect the school's willingness to work in partnership with parents.

The advisory board comprises a group of individuals, including parent representatives, with broad experience to provide additional support and challenge to leaders. This recent initiative has yet to influence the school at a strategic level.

Parents and prospective parents have access to extensive information about the school, activities and their children's learning through the school's website and social media. This includes the school's inclusive approach to admissions and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents speak of the advantages of sharing information using social media, with its immediacy and capacity to reach large numbers of contacts at the same time. They also recognise disadvantages, particularly the risks of unsubstantiated rumours spreading, and are working with the school to explore how to minimise this.

Formal reports about each child are followed by meetings with the teacher, or teachers, who have contributed to the report. These meetings supplement contacts with teachers by email and face-to-face meetings which take place as part of daily school life.

The school offers a warm and welcoming atmosphere to parents, with a café inside the entrance atrium. This is located carefully to allow parents and staff to meet, while not interfering with the reception desk or pupils moving to different parts of the campus.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. The complaints policy is clear and builds on the GEMS corporate policy. The policy is shared openly with parents and prospective parents who are aware of how to raise a formal or informal complaint.

Parents share concerns with staff at an early stage and this allows issues to be dealt with promptly. During the inspection, groups of parents spoke highly of changes introduced by the new principal to gather their views and address their concerns with lasting solutions. Examples of successful outcomes include addressing concerns about teaching and continued attention to managing local traffic issues.

The genuine commitment to listen and respond to parents' concerns ensures formal complaints are rare. Records of complaints and comments are held securely and comply with local requirements.

## **Standard 8. The quality of provision for boarding**

Not applicable.

## **Standard 9. Leadership and management of the school**

The school meets the requirements of the Standard. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Some aspects are good. Leaders and governors promote equality and do not tolerate discrimination; this sets a positive role model for pupils, parents and staff. There is clear distinction between governors and leadership, with each recognising the role and responsibilities of the other.

The GEMS corporate leaders appointed an experienced principal in August 2016 who is determined to drive sustainable improvements. For instance, he has worked hard to gain a balanced picture of the school's strengths, its priorities for improvement and underlying reasons for trends and patterns in previous performance. He recognises the complexity of implementing sustainable improvements within an organisation where pupil and staff numbers are predicted to rise rapidly for at least two years and is realistic about how this can be achieved.

The principal, on appointment, advocated an innovative approach to creating and presenting the school's mission statement, which allowed staff, pupils and parents to contribute. The result is a dynamic and eye-catching series of concepts and values, based on the school's fundamental of 'happiness' and embodying the school as the centre of a pioneering community. This is widely shared and is easily understood.

The GEMS corporate leaders hold the principal and other leaders to account, with reports on key areas of the school's performance. Representatives of the GEMS board routinely appraise the principal's performance in relation to targets for improvement at whole-school level throughout the year.

The principal has worked closely with corporate leaders to secure capital funding for school expansion. The corporate group's extensive resources to support its schools have been under-used to help the school improve its assessment systems and self-evaluation.

Strategic planning lacks defined and measurable medium and long-term goals, resulting in a lack of rigour in monitoring progress. Self-evaluation is currently limited as the school's use of assessment information is too narrow to provide a full picture of the school's performance. This contributed to the judgements in the self-review documents for both inspections being over-generous.

Internal monitoring of progress against operational plans takes place at weekly leadership meetings. This ensures that appropriate actions are taken in relation to plans across the school and changes made where the results of planned actions are not deemed sufficient. These meetings include operational and finance leaders, so providing a broad base for informed decision-making. These meetings are not sufficiently linked to the school's self-evaluation processes and do not support evaluation against key performance indicators.

The structure for distributed leadership is led by the principal and vice-principal; heads of early years, primary and secondary lead a network of middle leaders that has widened recently. A significant number of these leaders are new to leadership and to the process of monitoring progress towards strategic outcomes.

The school runs smoothly as policies are known and followed by adults and pupils. Staff and leaders at all levels take responsibility for their roles and work well together to create a stimulating environment for learning. The day-to-day operation of the school is managed successfully, giving no sense of the high numbers of adults and pupils in the building.

Arrangements to safeguard all children and pupils are known well by leaders, managers and governors and are followed rigorously.

The early years department is managed well and staff quickly gain a thorough understanding of the needs of very young children. Varied learning activities allow the children to make progress across the various areas of learning.

Professional development takes place weekly with training and support to address individual staff needs and whole-school issues. Teacher appraisals are an established part of routine and link to the professional development programme. Lesson observations are currently not used fully to inform professional development owing to insufficient regard to learning outcomes for pupils. The key focus of lesson observations is on teaching and teachers' actions, which limits leaders' understanding of the impact of teaching on learning and progress.

Parents' responses to surveys show increasing levels of satisfaction with the school and its leadership. Discussions with large groups of parents and observations at formal meetings for parents highlighted the value they place on the responsiveness of the principal and changes made to include parents' views more fully.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## What the school could do to improve further

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

1. Develop further whole-school strategic planning by:

- Identifying clear and defined medium and long-term outcomes
- Ensuring outcomes are quantifiable and measurable
- Including interim goals and ensuring leaders at all levels use these to monitor progress towards the strategic outcomes.

2. Establish school self-evaluation processes that:

- Are understood by members of staff
- State precisely the key performance indicators for the school
- Use accurate assessment information as the basis for improvement planning.

3. Extend arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching to improve the focus on pupils' learning.

## 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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### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable				
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### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management			√	
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**School details**

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Metropole School
<b>Type of school</b>	Early years, primary and secondary
<b>Date school opened</b>	August 2014
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	2679
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	33,000 AED to 44,000 AED
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Address of school</b>	PO Box 392980, Honsho Road, Motor City, Dubai, UAE
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 045507200
<b>Email address</b>	a.cashin_mts@gemsedu.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Cashin
<b>Proprietor</b>	GEMS Education

## 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 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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