

GEMS Winchester School, Dubai

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 14-17 November 2022

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Age Group: 3-18

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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 five 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 DfE, a British School Overseas must have an inspection report which shows that its 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 GIAS (Get Information about Schools).

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant British Schools Overseas (BSO) standards. 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.

The DfE issued a policy update 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. The manner in which complaints are handled.
8. The leadership and management of the school.
9. The quality of provision for boarding.

The purposes of British Schools Overseas (BSO) 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

Grade 1 **Outstanding**

Grade 2 **Good**

Grade 3 **Satisfactory**

Grade 4 **Inadequate**

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 Winchester School Dubai is an inclusive, co-educational school that caters for pupils from age three to 18. The age range was extended to include two classes in foundation stage 1 in August 2022. The school opened in 2011 in Oud Metha with 500 pupils. A rapid growth in pupil numbers meant that the school outgrew its facilities and therefore relocated to a modern campus in Dubailand in 2020. The school is larger than others of the same type. There are currently 4,055 pupils: 230 in foundation stage, 1,999 in primary, 1,601 in secondary and 225 in post-16 education. Over 80 different nationalities are represented in the school, of which the largest ethnic groups are Indian (28%), Pakistani (14%), Filipino (13%) and Egyptian (12%). The vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), although only a small number require additional support in school. Two hundred and thirty-four pupils (6%) have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the). The school makes special provision for these pupils.

The principal has been in post since 2017 and the two vice-principals were internally promoted to their current posts in 2022. Leadership capacity has been increased over the past two years with extended senior and middle leadership teams. The school's curriculum is based on the English national curriculum adapted to the international context. Foundation 1 and 2 children follow the English early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. Pupils in Years 11 to 13 follow a curriculum leading to external examinations in a wide range of IGCSE and A-level subjects and BTEC diploma level 2 and 3 qualifications. The school is owned by the Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) group of schools.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by five Education Development Trust inspectors over four days. The inspection dates were agreed with the school with six weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. The inspection team had access to information about the school prior to the inspection. During four days, the team observed 95 lessons, 17 of which were conducted jointly with a member of the school's leadership team. Inspectors held 33 meetings during which discussions with staff, pupils, parents and carers and governors took place. They attended assemblies and observed extra-curricular activities. They scrutinised pupils' work in their books and held electronically. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and operational and strategic plans. The school's safeguarding arrangements were also inspected. The views of parents, pupils and staff were also considered by looking at survey results and through meetings.

Evaluation of the school

GEMS Winchester School is a good school and provides a good quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years. It shows outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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 in relation to these unmet standards and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Attainment and progress in **English** are good for pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND. Few pupils have English as their first language and the range of ability is wide, though there are fewer very able pupils than would normally be expected. Despite this, the good progress that pupils make as they move through the school means that they achieve results at IGCSE that are slightly better than the average for pupils in English schools.

Most pupils enter foundation stage without previous experience of formal education. They make rapid progress in all aspects of language development and by the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is broadly in line with that expected of children of their age in the UK. Their good progress continues through primary, so that they can

express their ideas orally, read for pleasure and information and write for a variety of purposes. For example, in Year 2, after watching a video of Paddington Bear having tea with the late Queen, pupils created their own character profiles of Paddington using a range of appropriate adjectives. By the end of Year 6, attainment overall in English is slightly above age-related expectations for pupils in England.

In secondary and post 16, pupils become increasingly articulate and are able to debate, analyse and evaluate a wide range of texts and write effectively in a range of genres. Year 7 pupils discussed a poem by William Blake, developing an understanding of the ways in which poets convey meaning by using symbolism, metaphor and allusion. In a Year 11 class, pupils read a text about tolerance and applied it articulately to their own experience. Their reading is fluent and expressive, their comments full of insight. In a Year 13 lesson, pupils analysed a poem, related it to their own lives and commented astutely on the poet's purpose and the means by which he achieves it. Although the number of pupils opting for A-level English is small, their attainment is at least in line with UK averages.

The attainment and progress of most students in **mathematics** is good across all stages. All groups of pupils, including those with SEND, make similar progress from their different starting points. In early years, the support for children who speak EAL helps them make better than expected progress and the majority meet or exceed age-related expectations by the end of the EYFS. Children's knowledge of mathematical concepts is developed through play-based learning and they make good progress in their understanding of number patterns, shape and measurement using the correct mathematical vocabulary.

Attainment by the end of the primary phase is at least in line with the national average for England. Pupils become more confident in reasoning mathematically and in problem-solving and can explain their answers using correct terminology. Inspectors observed Year 4 pupils using a range of strategies to subtract four-digit numbers and Year 6 pupils successfully used common factors to simplify fractions. In secondary, pupils build on their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding and by Year 10 their problem-solving skills are strong, for example, as seen in the different methods used to find the exterior angles of polygons. In IGCSE examinations, most pupils achieve grades which are higher than predicted in their CAT4 assessment and the percentage achieving grades 9 to 4 is slightly above the average for England.

The school is in its third year of offering A-level mathematics and students have the option of pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The number of students

achieving grades C and above is steadily increasing, although it is still below the average for England. Students were seen to differentiate successfully functions with two or more terms and see the relevance of their learning to future career and higher-education choices.

Across the school, all groups of pupils, including those with SEND, show good attainment and progress in **science**. This is a considerable achievement in early years, as much of the focus is on language acquisition. The children use scientific language and develop methods of enquiry when investigating their world. They collaborate in handling different materials safely and use guided exploration to begin to classify objects by their properties, achieving at least in line with age-related expectations by the end of EYFS.

Across primary, pupils build on scientific concepts and formalise their skills in scientific investigation and methods, although the opportunities for laboratory practice are few. Progress and attainment are best in Years 3 to 6, where pupils are consistently well managed and use age-appropriate skills for learning. In Year 4 pupils talk about how deforestation contributes to climate change and the corresponding loss of biodiversity. They are less able to identify possible energy savings in their own classrooms. In Year 6, science subjects subtly separate in preparation for secondary learning. By the end of Year 6, standards in science compare very favourably to the national-curriculum expectations for England.

In secondary, pupils' IGCSE results are slightly better than those of their UK counterparts. Although laboratory access is limited, pupils use sound methods and build on safe practices developed in the primary phase. Pupils ask questions, which enhances their understanding and minimises misconceptions. Almost all achieve clear success criteria and understand the targeted scientific language. In the best lessons, pupils take more ownership of their learning and readily use devices to research and record learning.

In the sixth form, students think critically and make progress independently. The rapid presentation of complex concepts and information appropriately challenges all students. Strong motivation and study skills enable students to follow interests and deepen their curriculum understanding. They are well prepared for examinations with regular sample questions. They achieve results at A level which are in line with UK averages. They consistently relate studies to real world problems and solutions.

Across the school pupils make good progress in a broad range of other subjects. Attainment in the creative and performing arts and in commercial subjects is well above the average for UK schools and in line with worldwide averages. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and teaching strategies which are targeted to the needs of each pupil contribute to these high standards. Pupils enjoy the practical, open-ended tasks provided in these subjects and the opportunity to engage in debate, relating their learning to real-life experiences. Pupils of all ages are highly competent in the use of technology and inspectors saw them use this effectively to support and enhance their learning in many of their subjects.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is good (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment are good overall (see Standard 1 below).
- 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.

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during November 2022, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards (2017 updated) except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the United Arab Emirates. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK independent school system. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by 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 except for the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010

The curriculum at GEMS Winchester is good and improving. Pupils are immersed in the '7Cs' (creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, confidence, curiosity and consciousness), a group of learning skills that underpin the curriculum and reflect the values and vision of the school. These skills are central to lesson planning and schemes of work, promoting language acquisition, respect for differences and a thirst for learning. During the inspection, lesson observations and scrutiny of curriculum planning and pupils' work showed that the curriculum promotes respect and equality in relation to age, disability, race, religion or belief and pregnancy and maternity. However, owing to UAE law, the curriculum does not address same-sex marriage, civil partnership, gender reassignment and sexual orientation in the same way. The curriculum is inclusive, with subtle adaptations for those pupils with SEND or EAL. The curriculum is taught in a bright and welcoming environment where many classrooms displays act as a 'second teacher'.

Children receive a firm foundation for learning in the early years as they prepare for the English national curriculum. This especially good start to their learning is rooted in an engaging learning environment, high-quality resources and excellent teaching. Children benefit from easy access to stimulating outdoor areas where they can develop physically, socially and intellectually. Whether making perfume with fresh leaves from the school's sensory garden or racing around a large, shaded quadrangle on wheeled toys, children show a love of learning and they leave this phase of the curriculum ready for Year 1.

The primary curriculum is based on the programmes of study of the English national curriculum and there is a high degree of fidelity to this, evident in teachers' very detailed planning. Leaders take note of the best current practice in the UK and have introduced changes after careful research, for example with a revised mathematics scheme. Along with the other core subjects of English and science, pupils explore their learning in detail. School leaders are now working on establishing similar levels of consistency in other foundation subjects. The primary curriculum is enriched by

exciting opportunities, for example the 'hook' days at the beginning of cross-curricular topics. On one of these occasions, Year 4 pupils made a virtual trip to Stonehenge where they wore augmented-reality headsets to return to the Neolithic period in history.

In secondary, and then into sixth form, pupils study assiduously towards a selection of IGCSE, A-level and BTEC courses that match the rigour and expectation of the UK curriculum. Over the past year, leaders have introduced greater flexibility and choice into the range of subjects and courses on offer. However, there are still some limits, particularly as students move to sixth form and they are not always able to select the pathway that they wish to follow or is best suited to their needs. Leaders have further plans to broaden these pathways, in addition to exciting links with business and commerce to create work placements and internships. Those that are on offer promote high expectations, collaborative learning and quality. Leaders are quick to make adaptations to the curriculum on the basis of evidence. In Years 10 and 11, mathematics teachers addressed common misconceptions by changing the timetable, introducing an extra session to address them. Formal careers guidance helps pupils in their choices at IGCSE and post-16 education. Sixth-form students say they are very well supported in preparing for application to university and preparation for life beyond school.

The Britishness of the curriculum is apparent throughout the school with noticeboards and work in moral, social and cultural education comparing aspects of British culture with Emirati culture. British values are highlighted throughout the curriculum and are signposted in teachers' planning. Pupils are well prepared to enter or re-enter the British education system if they choose to do so.

A programme of local visits enhances pupils' learning. This is supplemented by 'virtual visits' which pupils can undertake in the school's virtual-reality bus. The curriculum is further enriched through a range of sporting, scientific and creative clubs and activities. Since the move to the new site, this has proved more difficult to organise but school leaders have endeavoured to maintain a wide offer, even putting on late buses so pupils can stay and enjoy the enrichment on offer.

The quality of **teaching and learning** is good with outstanding features in **assessment**. The school's rigorous assessment system provides a detailed analysis of individual pupil performance in all subjects and across all groups of pupils. This analysis is used effectively by most teachers to help them plan lessons relevant to the different needs of their pupils and to identify those pupils who require additional support or challenge.

As a result, almost all pupils make good progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of the curriculum. The growing number of pupils in the school with SEND are supported very effectively and make very good progress from their starting points.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They draw on a range of strategies to plan tasks and activities that engage and motivate their pupils. Planning focuses on developing the '7Cs'. This clearly has an impact, as seen during the inspection in pupils' strengths in communication, collaboration, confidence, creativity and critical thinking. Teachers use discussion in small groups and whole class debate very effectively to encourage pupils to think critically and to express and justify their opinions. In a Year 5 reading lesson pupils used their knowledge of Bloom's taxonomy to set each other challenging questions on the text 'Below deck: A Titanic Story' and recorded their ideas on their allocated section of the classroom wall. Year 11 economics pupils engaged in a lively debate on the causes, consequences and impact of inflation, drawing examples from the current situation in the UK. The teacher's skilful questioning and insistence on pupils supporting their opinions with evidence helped to deepen the understanding of all pupils.

Clearly communicated learning objectives and effective time management contribute to pupils engagement, successful completion of tasks and good progress. High-quality resources sustain pupils' interest and encourage active participation in learning. Most-able pupils are provided with suitable extension tasks and teachers challenge them to widen and deepen their learning through personal research and using digital learning resources. However, in some primary foundation subjects teaching is not sufficiently adapted to meet the learning needs of more-able pupils. Teaching assistants provide effective targeted support for SEND pupils, for example to develop their language and vocabulary, improve their reading level or develop mathematical fluency. Teachers are adept at meeting the needs of pupils who speak EAL and, as a result of the support they receive, they enable pupils to have access to the full curriculum very successfully and make good progress from their starting points.

Most teachers have established effective routines for learning and classroom management is very good, particularly in secondary. In a small number of lower-primary lessons, some of these routines are not reinforced consistently. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are highly respectful. Teachers consistently give verbal feedback to pupils during lessons and provide opportunities for pupils to assess their own understanding and offer constructive feedback to their peers. Written

feedback on half-termly assessments in each subject, to which pupils also contribute, helps them to understand their strengths and identify the next steps in their learning.

Teachers maintain and develop their professional skills through a well-planned professional training programme. In addition to subject-specific content, this also includes classroom-management strategies and effective assessment and questioning skills. Teachers are required to reflect on how this training will improve their practice and then demonstrate the impact on pupils' outcomes.

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 UK Equality Act 2010.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and a key strength of the school. The school promotes respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief and pregnancy and maternity. Requirements of the UK Equality Act 2010 relating to gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation are not met due to the laws of the host country.

Key British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs figure prominently in pupils' thinking, appropriate to their age. They reflect on them articulately and with insight. In a meeting with Year 8 pupils, for example, one commented that these values were not exclusively British but present in many cultures. This prompted a mature discussion in which pupils commented favourably on the multi-cultural nature of their school. They stated that respect for other cultures did not dilute their own cultural identity, rather it reinforced it. This was one of many occasions in which pupils were observed to discuss social issues, both in the UAE and internationally, knowledgeably and with mutual respect and mature understanding. Some pupils, for example, expressed pleasure that Britain now has a prime minister of Indian parentage.

Attendance is excellent, as is punctuality. Both are carefully logged and followed up. Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. Lesson observations, meetings with staff and discussions with pupils confirmed that they demonstrate self-discipline,

respect for others and sensitivity to ethnic and cultural differences. In a few instances, especially in the younger age groups, some pupils can become a little exuberant in lessons. Nevertheless, relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent and the ethos of the school strongly encourages effective learning.

Pupils value their opportunities to exercise leadership through roles such as head boy, head girl, learning ambassadors and class representatives. They feel that they have a strong voice and real influence. Learning ambassadors, for example, observe lessons and give polite feedback to the teachers. The leadership team adopted ideas, volunteered by a Year 8 pupil, for solving problems with car parking. His initiative and the leadership's response brought tangible benefit to the community.

Pupils value and benefit greatly from the considerable emphasis given to moral and cultural education. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught to non-Muslim pupils, whereas Muslims follow Islamic studies. Both groups receive moral and social education. Specialist lessons, informed by detailed schemes of work, are supported by assemblies and many activities, such as Model United Nations, World Scholars' Cup, UAE flag day and Remembrance Day celebrations. The school's promotion of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty are developed through the curriculum and phase assemblies. These contribute to pupils' understanding of public institutions in the UAE and the United Kingdom. Comparisons between aspects of Emirati and British culture feature prominently in displays around the school. Pupils confirmed in discussion that they feel that PSHE and moral and social education create important opportunities for learning from each other through discussion, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. They value diversity and reflect maturely on democracy and the rights and responsibilities associated with it.

Pupils' community involvement is also very strong. Pupils support a range of charities and assist in community activities such as beach cleaning, hair donations by the school community and parents to raise funds for cancer research, arrangement of community iftar during Ramadan, involvement with local businesses and projects focused on sustainable development.

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

The school meets the requirement of this standard and the regulatory and cultural obligations of the UAE. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding.

Policies and practices ensure that all pupils know who to contact in the event of a concern about themselves or others. Excellent relationships between pupils and all staff mean that pupils readily talk to their trusted adults in school. Pupils are taught about personal safety in PSHE lessons and particularly how to stay safe when online. Comprehensive safeguarding training is in place for all staff, provided in the language the employee is most comfortable with. Expectations are in line with UK and UAE requirements. Appropriate software is used across the school to record concerns and incidents. The school has recently doubled its counselling offer and although workload is high, the counsellors actively encourage pupils to use their services. The clinic is well staffed and collects comprehensive information about health and welfare. Clinic staff actively promote good health and support pupils who are unwell. The two doctors manage and advise school leadership on COVID-19 issues.

Leaders meet frequently to review health and safety throughout the site, ensuring swift and effective responses to concerns and risks. Policies and risk assessments are comprehensive and up to date and all required safety checks and training are recorded. Hazardous materials are stored securely, especially in the science preparation rooms. Fire drills are carried out in line with requirements. The fire precaution displays in corridors are striking and innovative.

The school corridors have a one-way system to reduce risk of injury and the chance of infection transmission between lessons. Pupils arrive punctually at lessons because they like learning and transitions are gently but effectively supervised. Supervising staff also check on pupils' welfare as well as reminding them of expected standards.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, reflective of the school's overall vision and positive behaviour policy. Bullying is rare because of the respect pupils show to each other and the awareness raising they receive. Any bullying is well managed, using a restorative approach. Pupils readily talk about their love for the school and confirm that they feel safe, respected and listened to. Pupils who are new to the school are helped to settle in very quickly and those moving on to other schools are well supported. Parents are

overwhelmingly confident that their children are safe and happy at the school. One parent commented: 'The school is a warm place where there is genuine care and concern for every child'. Very effective communication with parents helps manage pupil and family well-being. Physical fitness is encouraged and enshrined in the school day and as part of the sports programmes after school.

Attendance is carefully monitored and robustly managed. Alongside pupils' love of learning, this results in outstanding attendance rates for all groups including those with SEND.

Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

There are robust arrangements in place to check the suitability of all staff employed by the school, as well as that of the proprietor and the local advisory board. These checks, which are carried out before the member of staff commences work, include the person's identity, medical fitness, background and police checks, right to work in the UAE, references and qualifications. Details and dates of all checks are recorded on a single central register which is very well maintained by the human resources manager and audited by senior leaders and GEMS Education. All checks comply with the expectations for schools in England and the UAE and ensure that all staff are qualified for the posts to which they are appointed and are suitable to work with children.

New teachers undertake a comprehensive induction programme before they commence work. All teachers benefit from the school's ongoing programme of professional development to ensure that they continue to build on their knowledge and skills.

Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

GEMS Winchester is located on one large site. It is modern, clean and very well cared for by all in the school. The buildings are spacious and, although there are often more than 30 pupils in relatively small classrooms, the teachers harness the spaces skilfully to maximise effective learning. Wide, well-lit corridors promote calm and are lined with

interesting, attractive, up-to-date and relevant displays. The reception area is welcoming for parents and the clinic is exceptionally well resourced.

Large indoor spaces for assemblies and productions, appropriate and developing sports facilities and garden areas all contribute to pupils' well-being and enjoyment. Most outside areas, including the very well utilised roof space, have appropriate shade from the sun. The outside play and exploration areas in early years are appropriate to the curriculum.

Laboratory facilities for science cannot always provide for practical work at secondary and opportunities to introduce primary pupils to laboratory experiences are very limited. However, the new science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) laboratory is providing additional opportunities for practical work in those subjects. The virtual-reality bus has significantly enhanced digital learning opportunities for the whole school. Plans to extend the school's facilities, which will provide additional facilities for science, are well developed.

The school's Wi-Fi network is robust, well managed and effectively meets all current digital learning needs. It is secure and protects users from digital hazards and threats.

The school is accessible for those who have mobility impairments. There is a lift and doorways are wide enough to allow wheelchair access. The building design and utilisation enhance the inclusive ethos of the school.

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

The school meets the requirement for this standard.

Parents value the school's prompt attention, the quality and regularity of information and the extent to which staff are visible and approachable. Despite the size of the school, parents feel that staff know pupils very well and are highly supportive, one telling the inspection team: 'They personally reached out to me.'

Leaders prepare parent surveys regularly. Recent surveys show very high levels of satisfaction in the ways that the school communicates with parents. In addition, leaders convene meetings to discuss the results of surveys. Parents are proactive in proposing changes. For example, they recently suggested that Year 7 and 8 pupils have lockers in school. This was acted on within days.

A Friends of Winchester group is very active, more so since the disruption caused by the pandemic. Working together as school and parents, they plan community events such as a Sports and Well-Being Day on the school premises. Parent representatives also sit on the school's local advisory board.

The provision of curriculum guidance and information is a particular strength. Weekly bulletins are circulated to primary parents, while half-termly guides are sent out in secondary. These are followed up by parent workshops or coffee mornings with the school's leaders to explain changes in curriculum, such as that in mathematics in the primary phase. There are regular opportunities to discuss pupils' progress with staff, including a Familiarity Day at the beginning of the school year and a pupil/parent/tutor conference at the end. Here, pupils are tasked with presenting their learning to a joint panel of parents and staff.

The information on the school website meets requirements. The helpful 'frequently asked questions' section on the curriculum website responds well to those most common queries posed by parents.

The parents spoken to during the inspection were extremely grateful to school staff for the quality of communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting support. They appreciated, in particular, the emphasis placed on pupils' mental health and well-being.

The guidance for pupils as they approach key decisions is communicated well to parents, who are then fully involved in the choices that their children make. Parents feel that pupils are well prepared for any future move to the UK education system. They say that GEMS Winchester has a growing reputation in the community for being highly inclusive, of which they are very proud.

Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school has a clear and detailed complaints and resolution policy which is available to parents on the school website. School leaders attach great importance to working in partnership with parents and aim to resolve all complaints quickly, fairly and with due process. All complaints are treated seriously and school leaders ensure that the welfare and best interests of the pupils are at the heart of any decision making.

The policy allows for complaints to be resolved informally in the first instance. It lays out clear steps for the informal and formal stages and for the complaint to be escalated to GEMS corporate office or to the Knowledge and Human Development Authority if a parent is not satisfied with the outcome at school level. Secure, confidential written records are kept of all complaints and their outcome. Written feedback is provided to the complainant and the respondent.

Responding to the inspection questionnaire, almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the way in which the school responds to concerns. This is reflected in the school's net promoter score, which has moved from -9 to +34 over the past 3 years. Only one complaint reached the formal stage during the last academic year.

Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The quality of leadership and management across the school at all levels is outstanding. Leaders ensure that the BSO standards are consistently met.

Leaders demonstrate a clear vision and values which are shared by every member of the school community and are central to the ethos of the school. As described by one middle leader, 'Everyone is driving the school vision because everyone shares it.' Leaders model the school's values in their communication, their visibility around the school and in the highly positive relationships seen among leaders, staff and pupils. Parents comment that: 'Students feel respected and connected with their teachers and the school's leaders.' A further comment was: 'Leaders make a point of having someone to welcome the children every day.'

The respect and trust afforded to middle leaders by the principal and senior leaders contributes to the success of leadership at all levels. Middle leaders have the freedom to lead, initiate and take responsibility without being micro-managed. This highly effective distributed leadership model has led to rapid improvement in a number of key areas such as the expansion of the early years and sixth-form provision and enhancement of the school's SEND provision.

There is a culture of continuous improvement in the school, encouraged by the principal and supported by rigorous self-evaluation at all levels. Faculty, subject, phase and year leaders all carry out a process of fortnightly monitoring, evaluation and

review of their areas. Leaders use the information to identify development priorities and to inform planning at all levels. Self-evaluation is honest, accurate and transparent. Leaders are very aware of where improvements still need to be made and staff recognise the purpose and the role they all play in ensuring the best possible learning outcomes for their pupils. The principal describes the school as a 'learning school' and staff speak of their excitement at being part of the school's journey to becoming outstanding.

Senior leaders have a relentless focus on the continuous development of staff at every level. A robust annual appraisal system for all staff, including the principal, determines the content of the weekly professional development programme. There is a strong commitment to succession planning and new and aspiring leaders follow a comprehensive leadership development programme. Staff have the opportunity to complete additional qualifications and have access to external courses through links with local schools and the wider GEMS community. They recognise that if they work hard and are committed to improving their practice, they will have opportunities to develop. Leaders and governors take their responsibilities for equality of opportunity seriously. Staff overwhelmingly say that they feel valued and well supported, that they are treated fairly and that they enjoy working at the school.

The school benefits from the support of a very experienced and highly skilled local advisory board and from GEMS corporate office. They ensure that the school is compliant with all legal requirements and that safeguarding procedures are effective. The separate responsibilities of the board, GEMS Education and the school's leaders are clearly understood and respected and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. The school's proprietor and the local advisory board recognise the uniqueness of GEMS Winchester as being a fully inclusive school which celebrates diversity, promotes equality and values the development of character and personal attributes as well as academic credentials. The board's financial policies have ensured the successful growth of the school. It demonstrates its support for the school's vision by its investment in time, for example in contributing to the professional development programme and organising school events. It invests in buildings and infrastructure to continue to develop the school.

GEMS Winchester has undergone a period of rapid growth and change over the past three years which has seen the school relocate to larger premises. Pupil numbers now exceed 4,000. As a result of outstanding leadership, underpinned by the values of respect, tolerance and responsibility, the school still retains the warmth and

friendliness of a cohesive and inclusive community. Leaders and governors routinely seek the views of parents, pupils and teachers when determining the school's priorities for continued improvement. Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that the school is well led, with one parent commenting: 'The progress the school has made during the past three years is tremendous. We consider ourselves very lucky to be part of the GEMS Winchester community.'

Early Years provision

Most children have very limited English when they start school and had few opportunities to interact with others during the pandemic. Despite this, children in the early years make rapid progress from their starting points with most meeting the English expectations for their age in all areas of learning.

In English, children use their phonic knowledge to write simple words and sentences. In reading they predict what happens next, correctly sequencing stories showing good levels of comprehension. In mathematics, they use concrete materials to improve their understanding of the properties of 3D objects. In science children collaborate well in their investigations of the world around them and particularly enjoy building models and experimenting with a range of materials.

The early years team is very well led. Staff have high expectations and provide a learning environment that allows children to develop their individual interests and talents. The recent development of the outdoor area offers physical challenges and excellent opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills, balance, strength and coordination. Teachers have a deep understanding of how young children learn and develop. They provide them with a safe and secure environment with excellent opportunities to become active learners, to play and explore and think critically and creatively. They assess children through close observation and form a holistic picture of their progress. Parents contribute to the assessments and receive daily feedback on their child's learning and activities through annotated photographs. Teachers provide interactive workshops for parents to help them support their children at home, particularly with reading.

Children make great gains in their personal growth; they learn to manage their behaviour, share and take turns. They develop a sense of community and respect their own and others' needs and cultures. They are very well prepared for transition to Year 1.

Sixth form provision

Sixth-form provision is good overall. Numbers of students choosing to remain at GEMS Winchester for their post-16 education are growing year on year. Students have the option of following A-level courses or BTEC level 3 diploma courses. Attainment at A level in 2022 was slightly below the average for UK schools. However, this is skewed by the small number of students. Students make good progress from their IGCSE starting points. BTEC outcomes are above UK averages. Effective leadership of the sixth form ensures high-quality teaching and demonstrates a strong commitment to providing a student-centred education. Assessment information helps teachers to personalise students' learning and adapt the curriculum to meet evolving educational and career aspirations. Although the school offers an increasing number of BTEC courses, the range of pathways open to students for whom vocational courses are more appropriate is currently limited.

Transition arrangements for students are well organised. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and understanding of examination-board requirements. At guidance meetings students are asked what they want to do when they leave school, rather than which subjects they want to choose. Careers advisors and the school counsellor advise students of the challenges they will face both in the workplace and at university. Students find out about entry requirements to study in Europe, Canada, the UK and the Middle East.

The school also promotes students' personal and social development including leadership skills. The various ambassador roles where they assume a specific responsibility to coach and mentor others help sixth-form students to become confident, articulate individuals who are ready to face the challenges beyond school life.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Winchester School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws.

It cannot fully meet the standards set out below that relate to the UK Equality Act 2010.

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:

1. In some subjects, particularly in the primary phase, teaching is not always sufficiently well matched to the learning needs of more-able pupils. Leaders should ensure that teaching takes sufficient account of pupils' prior attainment and capabilities so that all pupils reach their full academic potential.
2. There is currently a limited number of options available for pupils in Years 10 to 13 for whom traditional IGCSE and A-level courses are not suitable. School leaders should continue to adapt provision to ensure that the range of pathways and qualifications is sufficient to meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils.

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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School Details

Name of school	GEMS Winchester School Dubai
Type of school	Private
Date school opened	August 2011
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	4055
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	NA
Annual fees (day pupils)	18,300 AED to 34,500 AED
Annual fees (boarders)	NA
Address of school	P.O Box 113272, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number	+971 (4) 337 4112
Email address	enquiries_wsd@gemsedu.com
Headteacher	Mr. Matthew James Lecuyer
Proprietor	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 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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