

GEMS Wellington Academy

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 14-17 November 2016

Lead Inspector: Sally Lane
Team: Ann Marie Dimeck
David Bowles

Age Group: 3-18 years
Report Published: 14/12/2016
Reference Number: 1035



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 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

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 Wellington Academy, situated in the Silicon Oasis district of Dubai, opened in September 2011. The last phase of the building opened in 2015 with significant growth in the number of staff and pupils. Over 1,300 more pupils are on roll compared to the time of the previous BSO inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were 4,306 pupils on roll with 119 nationalities represented. More than 70% of pupils speak a first language other than English and, for some, English is their third or fourth language. It is a fully inclusive, private academy with an intake policy that 'does not discriminate against any child or family', welcoming pupils of all abilities, nationalities, ethnicity or religion. British nationals are the third largest pupil group in the academy. There are 396 pupils identified as having some form of special educational need and 1,000 identified as having either gifts or talents. The large majority of students go on to universities around the world after their IB Diploma and IB career related programmes. However, the population is transient with pupils joining and leaving the academy throughout the years. Many come from schools with different curricular and educational approaches.

The academy follows the Early Years Foundation Stage programme, the National Curriculum for England and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations in key stage 4. The IBDP, Career-Related Programmes or the Blended Learning IBDP in partnership with the Pamoja programme are offered at post-16. The academy's core values are 'Global Citizenship, Pursuing Excellence, Growing by Learning and Learning through Innovation.' The academy focuses on the development of learning skills and competencies in all age groups and a wealth of enrichment opportunities broaden pupils' experiences.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

The BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors. On this combined inspection, there were also nine DSIB inspectors. The academy was given three weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. The inspection team had access to a wealth of information about the academy prior to the inspection. Schools in Dubai are required to submit documents online each year and inspection teams can view these. The two teams contributed to a shared evidence base for reaching the judgements found in both reports. Over four days, the team visited 157 lessons. Inspectors held 52 meetings to interview senior leaders, subject coordinators, the special educational needs coordinator, other staff, pupils, parents and governing body members. The team scrutinised pupils' work and academy documents including: the self-review document which reflects the academy's self-evaluation; improvement plans, policies, assessment systems, and safeguarding procedures. They observed the academy at work and followed up on any issues raised. Inspectors examined the results of questionnaire surveys returned by parents and followed up any issues raised.

Evaluation of the school

GEMS Wellington Academy is an outstanding academy. It provides an outstanding quality of education for all of its pupils and meets the standards for British Schools Overseas. It shows excellent capacity for further improvement.

Approximately one quarter of all children in the early years speak English as an additional language and a further quarter are emerging bilingual speakers. The attainment and progress made by children, given their starting points, are outstanding. This results in the attainment of the children being very high; it is on a rising trend over time. There is some variation in attainment between different groups of children, but this is largely confined to the differences in the proportion of children exceeding national benchmarks. The children get off to a good start when, right from the beginning, routines are established so children become actively involved in their own learning. Relationships at all levels provide a highly positive learning environment where children thrive.

There are many opportunities for children to develop their communication and literacy skills. They sing, recite nursery rhymes, listen to stories and respond to them. Stories such as 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' provided the stimulus for children to develop further their literacy skills by listening to the story, accurately anticipating key events and responding to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. The rapid acquisition of language underpins children's excellent attainment and progress in reading and writing, as does the teaching of phonics, which is a strength of the department. In Foundation Stage 2, children recognise initial sounds and are able to sound out new words using phonic knowledge. The most able children are beginning to write in short, narrative sentences using appropriate grammar and descriptive words.

Every opportunity is taken to develop children's understanding and use of age-appropriate mathematical language. For example, when standing in a line to leave the classroom, they are

asked to consider, 'Is it straight or curved?' In Foundation Stage 1, there are many fun and interesting activities such as fishing for numbers, which enable children to begin to develop recognition of one-digit numbers. In Foundation Stage 2, children are able to read, write and count numbers to 20, and to add and subtract one- and two-digit numbers. Children learn about other aspects of mathematics. For example, in introducing children to measure, they were able to explain which was the heaviest item using the bucket scales. They make outstanding progress in mathematics because they learn through regular practice and consolidation and, therefore, are well prepared to build on their mathematical achievements in key stage 1.

In science, children have practical opportunities in their independent learning activities to develop early investigative skills regarding the world around them. Children in Foundation Stage 1 are able to sort and classify animals according to whether they live in the sea or not and are able to predict changes and talk about the differences. They develop skills of observation and observe the similarities and differences between different materials. All children develop outstanding enquiry and exploration skills as a result of an imaginative learning environment.

Attainment in **English** is, overall, outstanding and exceeds the national averages in England for the end of both the early years and key stage 4. The progress made by pupils is very impressive as, overall, they make outstanding progress in English throughout the academy. As a result of very strong teaching across the key stages, combined with the highest expectations of staff, pupils are able to make real and substantial gains in their learning. Consequently, pupils are able to display a range of literacy skills so that, by the time they leave the academy, they are very well prepared to embark upon the next steps of their journey to becoming global citizens.

When pupils reach the end of primary, attainment in English continues to be high. A very large majority of pupils reach the expected national standard and a large majority exceed it. There is some variation in the performance of different groups, with girls and the most able pupils having the greatest proportions meeting and exceeding recognised benchmarks. The progress made by pupils through the primary phase is outstanding with the proportion of pupils making expected progress well above national benchmarks. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils exceeding expectations has increased by over one third. In Year 6, pupils show a very deep level of understanding of how to edit a piece of work effectively, and confidently carry out the editing process to an extremely high level.

By the end of key stage 4, overall, attainment is outstanding with the proportion of pupils achieving a Grade A* to C at IGCSE, well above the average figure in England. Progress is outstanding because a large majority of pupils exceed expectations. This is true for all groups of pupils. In Year 11, pupils accurately use quotations from a text to construct an argument, revealing a deep and comprehensive understanding of the key messages of the author.

At post-16 level, attainment is outstanding, as is progress in IB programmes. A large majority of students exceed their targets and are well prepared to continue their studies to a higher level in a range of countries across the globe.

Pupils' attainment in **mathematics** is outstanding in the primary phase. Progress is equally outstanding. In external benchmark tests, over two thirds of primary pupils attain above age-expected levels. In Year 2, pupils can identify different ways to add two-digit numbers and then select the most effective method to use. They do this by working collaboratively and trying out ideas. In Year 6, pupils are growing in confidence to reason mathematically, demonstrating ability to solve problems in real-life contexts with greater depth of proficiency and understanding.

One group, for example, worked as graphic designers to enlarge a two-dimensional shape by positive and fractional scales and enlarge a pattern onto the corridor floor.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics is also outstanding in the secondary phase. A large majority of pupils attain above expected levels in GCSE and in external benchmark tests. Throughout the secondary phase, pupils make outstanding progress. In Year 8, pupils are able to enlarge a shape using a centre of enlargement, and know the effect of a negative scale factor. By the end of key stage 4, pupils can use techniques to compare two pieces of data of their choice and produce a report on their findings. They are able to draw and interpret a cumulative frequency graph and interpret key information from a histogram. Pupils' progress is well-above expected levels with no discernible difference between the achievements of different groups of pupils.

Students' attainment is broadly average in post-16. In IB, most able students attained results in line with curriculum standards, as did those in the mathematical studies group. Attainment in lessons mirrors external assessment results. Students make good progress and are able to describe and identify an arithmetic sequence, calculate the 'nth term' and calculate the sum of an arithmetic series. The most able students are able to manipulate vector expressions and apply these to complex geometric problems. Rates of progress for both female and male students are above expectations, when taking into account starting points. All teachers do not demonstrate the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to support these students to achieve much higher grades.

Attainment in **science** is outstanding from early years up to GCSE examinations. In post-16, IB results are above average and good overall. Progress is outstanding across the academy.

Pupils develop their science investigation skills throughout the primary phase through a strong emphasis on 'working scientifically' in real-life scenarios, using a thematic approach. For example, in Year 2, pupils investigate the limitations of paper and explore ways of making paper stronger to build a bridge for King Lenny. He speaks to them via a video, setting them a challenge to build him a bridge. This strongly engages and enthuses pupils who are encouraged to think for themselves and make predictions. Attainment is improving year on year. By the end of key stage 2 most pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made outstanding progress, so that most pupils are exceeding their targets.

In key stage 3, a wide variety of teaching strategies and activities are used to develop pupils' independent and collaborative learning skills using a range of technology to research and explain scientific facts. They continue to develop scientific skills, for example, in Year 8, by writing an investigation to discover the angle of refraction and angle of incidence. A few Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to run a dissection enrichment club for Year 4 pupils under the guidance of a Year 13 student. They carry out this leadership, 'teaching' role, with enthusiasm and professionalism.

By the end of key stage 4, the large majority of pupils make outstanding progress to exceed their targets, particularly at the higher grades. This continues to rise year on year so that the proportions who achieve A*-A grades are greater than similar schools and, compared to their targets, are much higher. Most pupils achieved A*-C grades at GCSE. High expectations, consistent assessment of learning in lessons and individual attention to pupils' learning needs, all contribute to the excellent progress they make.

In the post-16 phase, students study for IBDP. Last year they performed above world averages in biology and physics, but below in chemistry. However, statistical comparison is somewhat unreliable due to the small numbers taking the examinations. Small class sizes where teachers

know their students and how they learn very well, alongside strong independent learning skills, contribute to the overall outstanding progress students make from their different starting points.

The attainment and progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is outstanding. In the primary and secondary phases, pupils show considerable confidence and skills in using technology; they plan their learning, research and analyse information, and present work to a very high standard. The 'blended curriculum' gives pupils the opportunity to learn online and to engage in interactive lessons. This brings a wider dimension to their learning and increases pupils' appreciation of the concept of universal learning that crosses traditional geographical boundaries. Post-16 students show a comprehensive knowledge of how technology works as well as the ability to demonstrate considerable skill in the use of a variety of technologies.

While there is some variation in performance, overall, pupils achieve very well across a number of subject areas. In music and business studies, pupils perform very well, enjoying the subject, and developing their knowledge and skills to an impressive level. In business studies, pupils successfully consider the impact of globalisation on the world economy and formulate their own views based on evidence. In history, pupils investigate the use of paintings as propaganda tools in Tudor England and, in so doing, developed their critical thinking skills.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

The quality of the curriculum provided by the academy is outstanding (see Standard 1 below).

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall (see Standard 1 below). To improve assessment still further, the academy should complete the re-alignment of the internal processes to accommodate the changes in the National Curriculum for England and ensure all leaders and teachers make the best use of internal benchmarking assessments.

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 academy's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the Standard (see Standard 7 below).

The leadership and management of the academy are outstanding (see Standard 9 below).

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during November 2016, the academy 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 academy meets the requirements of the Standard. The academy's curriculum is outstanding and closely follows the National Curriculum for England. It fulfils its requirements to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter or re-enter the UK educational system effectively. All lessons, other than language lessons, are taught in English. There is a clear emphasis on literacy and this allows pupils to make rapid progress in developing their reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills throughout the key stages. A relatively recent addition to the curriculum has been the introduction of an accelerated reader programme, designed to improve further pupils' reading skills. Britishness features strongly in the curriculum, from the use of English texts such as 'Harry Potter' to Shakespeare, to English history. The library is heavily weighted towards British authors and pupils talk confidently about the authors they enjoy. In post-16, UK newspapers are analysed for techniques such as negativity and continuity. Comparative learning of the differences between Dubai and England also feature regularly.

A clear curriculum policy sets out the academy's vision and a clear set of values is identified on which the design and implementation of the curriculum is based. These are to develop learners as global citizens of the future; pursue excellence in all that the pupils do; achieve intellectual growth from learning and to learn through innovation. To support these core values, the curriculum is underpinned by the development of a number of competencies associated with successful citizenship in the 21st century. Such competencies include the ability to inquire and research effectively; become critical and reflective thinkers; communicate effectively; act with honesty and integrity; develop an open mind; be empathetic and compassionate to others; take risks and understand the importance of achieving a balance in life between academic and physical activity. The combination of these competencies and traditional subjects ensures that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum across the academy.

The curriculum is personalised for every pupil. By adopting this approach, the academy provides a curriculum that is rich, diverse, and interesting. Distinct pathways of learning are created with the combination of a range of academic subjects and extensive enrichment opportunities. Pupils play a large part in choosing their own pathway and, in this sense, the curriculum is chosen 'by the pupils for the pupils'. This element of choice is increased by the provision of a 'blended curriculum' where pupils choose how they learn, using a variety of approaches based on the application of the latest technology. Personalisation of the curriculum also ensures that individual learning needs are effectively met for all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The early years curriculum provides learning experiences appropriate for young learners. There is a strong emphasis on social, emotional and physical development evident in almost all lessons. A holistic approach allows the children to relate their learning to real-life experiences. It is highly effective in supporting children's outstanding progress in all subjects.

The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop as leaders through a range of academic and curriculum enrichment learning opportunities. Student ambassadors lead activities and events, support the learning of others and represent their peers in a number of sporting, academic, social and cultural events through the school year. These take place within the

school, the local community, nationally and internationally. Vertical tutor groups serve to provide opportunities to take on leadership roles. Leadership is also encouraged on a daily basis in lessons, where pupils frequently become lead learners who make their own decisions concerning their learning. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning and so develop extremely well as independent learners.

Pupils display a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and display strong social skills as the result of a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education. Further, there is a strong ethos of the need to develop the pupils as 'global citizens' where pupils are encouraged to learn about and embrace a range of cultures, explore how different societies work and develop their employability skills. The provision of careers education is organised very effectively in the academy.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding across the academy. Almost all teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understand how children learn. All teaching is effectively planned and this helps to maximise pupils' learning. Through their planning, teachers communicate very high expectations to pupils and set learning tasks that are well matched to the needs of pupils. The level of challenge is appropriate, as the pupils find the work difficult but achievable. No one is left behind and all make progress, including pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Further, teachers' lesson planning includes an opportunity for pupils to really stretch themselves and this allows pupils to achieve more than they initially thought possible.

Teaching also successfully develops the critical thinking skills of pupils. In many lessons, highly effective, open questioning is employed by teachers to encourage pupils to consider the information in a variety of ways. In Year 2 English, the teacher deliberately asks open questions to encourage the pupils to think how they might create a mythical creature. Such questions also encourage pupils to be creative in their thinking as they construct their monster, and make excellent progress in formulating and expressing their ideas.

Lessons often focus on promoting problem-solving skills and encouraging pupils to become independent learners. By posing key questions and setting specific tasks, pupils are encouraged to see problems as challenges that can be overcome. Teachers encourage the pupils to own their learning and to take responsibility for the progress they make. They do this extremely well. In Year 11, the pupils took the lead for their learning when required to find out how to use effectively quotes from a text in answering a question. The teacher became a facilitator for learning rather than being a person that the pupils relied upon for the right answer.

In lessons, pupils are also encouraged to develop their capacity to collaborate and co-operate in their learning skills. In Year 6 music, pupils collaborate very well to produce their own composition and eagerly perform it as a group. Pupils enjoy the chance to learn together and willingly share and discuss their ideas. They recognise that they can learn much from each other and appreciate that cooperation is an important skill to develop as learners. Equally, teachers appreciate, and consequently plan, learning activities that bring pupils together to develop their understanding, and to problem solve in a highly effective way.

Assessment arrangements are very good and there is a framework in place to assess formally attainment and progress at key points across the year. In the foundation stage, assessment information provides highly valid, reliable and comprehensive measures of children's academic,

personal and social development. The academy is still completing the realignment of the internal processes to accommodate the changes in the UK curriculum. Leaders and teachers do not consistently make the best use of international benchmarking assessments and are not aware of their implications in planning lessons. In lessons, teachers continually judge the progress of pupils in a variety of ways and, as a result, they know very well the strengths and development points for individual pupils. In lessons, teachers constantly assess the progress of pupils and adapt lessons in light of the feedback they receive. Detailed written feedback is provided to pupils that both recognises what has been done well and offers guidance and advice on what needs to be done to improve. Pupils are regularly given the opportunity to peer assess their work and to give constructive feedback. For instance, in Year 7, the teacher modified the pace of learning in light of the progress being made, with the result that new learning was consolidated and deepened.

Pupils' behaviour for learning in lessons is superb. Pupils display excellent relationships with their teachers. They also show a deep respect for each other, especially in terms of willingly accommodating each other's views and opinions. This serves to create a very productive climate for learning. Pupils are prepared to take risks and occasionally make mistakes because they are secure in the knowledge that they will receive support and help from their peers as well as their teachers. They celebrate each other's learning. They welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning and are willing to take the lead in their learning.

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

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a result, pupils develop as highly confident, independent learners.

All members of the academy community model, through the quality of relationships and interactions, the principles they wish to promote. The house system provides a common vision and sense of belonging for the academy community, and house points reward and promote positive behaviour. Pupils say they really enjoy working as part of a team, as well as the competitive nature of the house system, which permeates all aspects of academy life.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibility; at a meeting they said it prepared them for adulthood, and there are numerous opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. These include sports ambassadors, eco-ambassadors and digital gurus. Pastoral ambassadors have been taught mediation skills and, as a result, are well prepared to help with friendship problems. It was their idea to have a friendship stop in the playground. House captains, elected through a democratic process by their peers, lead the house ambassadors who are the vehicle for presenting the views of the pupils to the leadership team. Pupils are proud of the strength of the pupil voice, and the high priority given to it. For example, they are currently researching the best locations for printers that will be restricted to pupils' use. They recognise just how much they contribute to the smooth running of the academy and foster a community of caring learners.

Pupils are actively engaged in supporting a wide range of charities through events organised by the charity ambassadors. These focus on 'the joy of giving without expectation'. Pupils are also proactive in the local community, and a group of pupils from the academy, as part of their IB programme, regularly support pupils at the Dubai Centre for Special Needs.

Assemblies not only reinforce the values of the academy, but recognise pupils' achievements and particular talents, including good attendance and punctuality. They are also an important vehicle, along with the wider curriculum, for raising pupils' awareness of their own and others' beliefs. Assemblies celebrate a range of world cultures and religions including Diwali, Christmas, Eid, Hajj and Holy Ramadan. The impact of this is illustrated in the way pupils demonstrate tolerance of, and respect for, those from different faiths and cultures.

The academy places a high priority on developing pupils' personal development and the refined and well-developed personal, health, social and cultural education curriculum promotes healthy and safe lifestyles. As a result of innovative approaches to promote healthy lifestyles, the academy won the KHDA well-being award for 'healthy and happy schools'.

The rich and varied curriculum ensures pupils have a good knowledge of UAE heritage, public institutions in the UAE, internationally and in Britain. Foreign exchanges, concert and gallery visits extend pupils' cultural awareness. Britishness features strongly throughout the academy. For example, British traditional tales and nursery rhymes are used as a medium to teach early literacy. The focus of a recent assembly was 'Why do some people wear poppies?' and links were made to the Remembrance Day service in Britain. A visit from Prince Michael of Kent during the inspection demonstrated links with the UK monarchy.

Pupils talk with pride about their academy. They enjoy its diversity and international dimension and the accepting atmosphere. Their behaviour is exemplary and they have a clear awareness of what is right and wrong. They display self discipline, maturity, listen to each other's views, and support one another in this highly inclusive academy. Pupils across the academy told inspectors how much they value opportunities to develop as a person through the arts and sporting opportunities provided and through the care and support from staff who always 'go the extra mile'.

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

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. Arrangements to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Academy policies are regularly updated and firmly embedded into routines. They reflect the academy's commitment to inclusion and its aim to meet the needs of all of its pupils. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding match current requirements in the United Kingdom and the requirements of Dubai. The safety and security of pupils is of the highest priority and all staff, including teaching assistants and welfare staff, receive suitable training in this area. Child protection arrangements and safeguarding training are included within the induction programme for all new staff members. Consequently, staff know exactly what to do if concerns are raised.

Pupils' attendance at over 96% is outstanding. Ensuring pupils attend regularly and punctually continues to be an academy priority. They are monitored closely by tutors and heads of house. The academy ensures parents are aware of the clear link between attendance and achievement.

Safety and security arrangements meet local requirements. Regular drills ensure that staff and pupils know the procedures to be followed during evacuation of the buildings. Evacuations are completed speedily and efficiently. Security for visits outside the academy has a high profile and

risk assessments are an integral part of the planning of all visits. An admissions register and an attendance register are kept up to date; both conform to regulatory requirements.

Appropriate policies are in place to promote excellent behaviour and to guard against bullying. Supervision of pupils is very effective and most pupils say that they feel very safe in the academy. Pupils have very few concerns about behaviour because instances of bullying are extremely rare and they know who to go to with any worries. Academy data confirms that incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils settle into school very well, particularly when they join from other schools. This is because other pupils are friendly and welcoming.

The academy doctor and nurses provide excellent care for pupils who become ill or require regular medication. The medical team keeps the relevant staff fully informed about the health needs of individual pupils. There is a comprehensive written policy on first aid, which is implemented appropriately.

Learning support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective and enables all to play a full part in academy life and make rapid progress. Parents speak very highly about this aspect of the academy's work and confirm they are included in planning how the needs of their children are being met. Pupils' progress is closely monitored and, when this slows down, identified pupils of all abilities are immediately offered additional teaching in areas where they are struggling. This excellent provision is a key contributory factor towards the rapid progress they make. Careers education at pre-and-post-16 helps students decide on their future direction in learning and beyond.

Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. GEMS corporate support services ensure that all the required checks are in place and confirm that employed staff are suitable to work with children and have the right to work in Dubai. All leaders involved in the recruitment of staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. The very large majority of appropriately qualified staff are British trained with considerable experience of the UK curriculum.

Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. The premises, resources and accommodation are excellent and make an important contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils are proud of their academy and treat it very well, helping to keep it clean and tidy. For example, pupils are actively involved in recycling waste and take their responsibilities very seriously.

As pupil numbers have continued to grow, the academy has opened a new campus since the last inspection. Both are impressive buildings, supporting the academy in its aim to provide 'personalised learning through the use of technology, pedagogy and innovative learning spaces'. It is successful in achieving this aim. Younger children benefit from an attractive, well-equipped early years department with an outdoor learning space which features a jungle theme. This enables them to improve their practical and imaginative skills as they learn to climb and play within a safe and secure environment,

The buildings and classrooms are clean and maintained to a high specification. Facilities for the preparation, serving and consumption of meals are hygienic. The academy meets all the requirements of the Dubai authorities who carry out regular checks of the premises and accommodation. The academy buildings allow safe access and, should the need arise, evacuation for all pupils including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are high quality medical facilities.

Classrooms are of a good size and, together with the shared areas for each year group, provide attractive and inspiring environments for learning. Specialist teaching areas for music, drama, dance, swimming, gymnastics, physical education and food technology are very well equipped and make a strong contribution to the outstanding progress made by pupils in these subjects. The blended learning spaces offer high quality learning environments particularly suited to the use of technology.

Well-resourced library provision is an important feature of each phase of the academy. It is well used, available to pupils throughout the day, and encourages a love of reading. Post-16 students spoke in glowing terms about the study facilities available to them. Across all parts of the academy, available space is utilised well to support the delivery of the rich and broad curriculum. High quality displays, artwork and photographs, many with a British theme, demonstrate that the academy is a stimulating learning environment in which pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and reach high standards.

The academy is well decorated and maintained. The director of operations and her team carry out regular reviews and work hard to ensure that the premises are thoroughly maintained in a safe condition. This enhances the quality of learning for all pupils.

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

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. The provision of information for parents, carers and others is outstanding. The academy enjoys a strong, productive and mutually supportive relationship with parents. The website contains a wealth of information, including a section on parent partnership. This explains ways for parents to support learning and therefore play an active role in their child's education. The introduction of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has further improved channels of communication between the academy and home and is welcomed by parents.

Parents receive a full picture of their child's achievement and progress through both written reports and parent consultations. In their meeting with inspectors, parents reported the pupil-led conferences are a very effective and innovative way for pupils to share their achievements, and communicate their next steps in learning with their parents.

Consultation with parents is a significant strength. Parent ambassadors meet once a month to discuss initiatives and events and their remit covers pastoral, environment, sport and charity. They also organise parent coffee mornings, which are held once a month and offer advice to parents on a range of topics including 'staying safe online' and 'blended learning'. A link teacher meets with the ambassadors, and acts as a conduit between parents and the academy.

The academy is responsive, where possible, to parents' views. One example was listening to the concern parents had about parking. As a result, the academy has introduced a one-way system.

Parental surveys reveal that they are very happy with what the academy offers, and feel that they have ready access to both leaders and teaching staff. Almost all said they would recommend the academy to another parent. Parents think highly of the academy and appreciate the range of opportunities for their children to learn across the wider curriculum and, in particular, the performing arts and sport. They particularly like the vertical house system which is organised across phase and engenders a sense of belonging, which sometimes can be lost in such a large academy. The system also enables older pupils to support and mentor younger ones. Parents say their children love the academy, and would not want to go anywhere else.

Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The academy meets the requirements of this Standard. The complaints' policy is available on the academy's website and parents are aware of it. The academy has representatives from the Parents' Executive and front-desk staff available each morning to deal with queries, which means that informal concerns can be quickly resolved. The operations manager deals with concerns regarding accommodation, facilities and health and safety via email. Depending on the nature of the complaint, different leaders deal with concerns raised via the hotline telephone number. Most issues are dealt with swiftly and informally but, when necessary, complaints are escalated according to correct procedures and are documented fully. Parents confirm that procedures are clear.

Standard 8. The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

Standard 9. Leadership and management of the school

The academy meets the requirements of the Standard. The leadership and management of the academy are outstanding. The principal has a clear vision and strategic direction for the academy, based on 'Inspiration - Innovation - Transformation', which is driving forward continued improvement. Widely distributed, highly effective leadership promotes the academy's values, so that a shared sense of direction is embedded across the academy. The early years leadership team work continuously and with dedication and vision to drive academy improvement for the young children in their care. The academy's vision and ethos are seen in the positive and enthusiastic staff and high levels of parental satisfaction in children's overall experience at the academy. Pupils embody this ethos in their attitudes to learning, high levels of motivation and engagement in all that they do. This commitment to excellence by all makes a positive difference to pupils' highly positive experiences, personal development and outcomes. As an inclusive academy, all leaders promote equality and embrace diversity, which contributes to the extremely caring atmosphere where pupils are happy. A world record was set recently where 119 nationalities from the academy sang the UAE national anthem together. Since the academy opened in 2011, it has trebled in size from 1052 to 4306 pupils. It has continued to improve and innovate over this time, confirming its outstanding capacity to improve.

The academy's self review is based on systematic and rigorous processes to identify strengths and weaknesses at all levels. It is based on accurate analysis of internal and external international data, the comprehensive monitoring of the quality of teaching and improvements made across the academy. The views of parents and pupils are also considered. All of this evaluation is used to inform the academy's priorities and improvement plans. Departmental action plans reflect the academy's priorities for improvement and the latest developments to the UK curriculum and assessment. Leaders set high expectations for improvement and demonstrate a strong commitment to, and capacity for, improvement. There is a palpable feeling of high aspiration among staff and pupils.

Rigorous performance management is in place, leading to personalised targets and opportunities for professional development. Governors appraise the performance of the principal, setting rigorous targets. The number of teachers has grown significantly with the majority being carefully recruited from the UK and Eire. This enables them to confidently teach the UK curriculum and prepare pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK educational system. A relatively low turnover in staffing indicates staff stability, high morale and mutually supportive relationships. The academy is strongly supportive of developing talent through the 'talent board', thereby promoting leadership potential to develop its leaders from within. Very effective and personalised staff development at all levels facilitates their development, including the GEMS-wide network of staff development and sharing of expertise. High quality induction helps new teachers settle in their new environment. There is a culture of continuous improvement; hence the sharing of best practice is commonplace. The impact of professional development is evaluated thoroughly. Pupils benefit from, for example specialist musicians and specialist teachers for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are also specialist teachers for pupils who speak English as additional language. These various specialists have a positive impact on pupils' experiences and support their outstanding attainment and progress. Systems and routines run smoothly and efficiently, contributing to a calm and purposeful learning environment.

The GEMS corporate governing structure ensures accountability for all the academy's outcomes. Internal reviews by GEMS ensure they are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development and seek ways to support further improvement. Governors and leaders ensure safeguarding procedures are effective. The newly formed executive scrutiny committee, made up of a range of stakeholders, gives governance a greater voice. This group, alongside the parent council, feeds into the academy's continued development and improvement. All groups work extremely well and have excellent relationships with school leaders to both professionally challenge and support, acting as critical friends. Since the previous inspection, parents play a more strategic role and have a greater impact on overall governance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Wellington Academy (Silicon Oasis) fully meets the requirements for British Schools Overseas.

What the school could do to improve further

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

1. Further improve assessment by:
 - completing the re-alignment of the internal processes to accommodate the changes in the UK curriculum
 - ensuring that all leaders and teachers make the best use of international benchmark assessments.
2. Improve students' attainment in post-16 IB mathematics courses by:
 - ensuring that all key teachers can demonstrate the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to support better these students.

Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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	√			
--	---	--	--	--

The quality of provision for boarding

	n/a			
--	-----	--	--	--

Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	√			
--	---	--	--	--

School details

Name of school	GEMS Wellington Academy (Silicon Oasis)
Type of school	Private
Date school opened	September 2011
Age range of pupils	3-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	4,306
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	0
Annual fees (day pupils)	AED 35,067 to AED 79,185
Annual fees (boarders)	n/a
Address of school	PO BOX 49746, Silicon Oasis, Dubai, UAE
Telephone number	+971 4 515 9000
Email address	Contactus_wso@gemsedu.com
Headteacher	Mr Michael Gernon
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.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Education Development Trust
16-18 Duke Street
Reading
RG1 4RU
UK

Report reference no: 1035