

# GEMS National School, Al Barsha

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 30 May – 2 June 2022

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Age Group: 3 to 18 years.

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas (BSO). 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 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 Edubase.**

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas. These were updated with effect from September 2017. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations.

**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 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.
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### Key for inspection grades

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

### Proportions used in the report

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

### Information about the school

GEMS Al Barsha National School was founded in 2020. It is part of the GEMS group of schools. It is situated in the Al Barsha 2 district of Dubai. The school opened in September 2020 following the merger of two schools: GEMS Al Barsha National School for Boys and GEMS Al Barsha National School for Girls.

The school is larger than most of its type, with 1189 pupils on roll. It caters for pupils from three years to 18 years. It has 130 children in early years, 605 pupils in primary, 394 pupils in secondary and 60 students in the sixth form. Boys and girls are taught together from early years to Year 3. From Year 4 they are taught separately in single-sex groups.

The school attracts pupils from 39 nationalities. The majority of pupils are Emirati (78%) and the second largest group is Asian or Asian British (6%). For almost all pupils English is not their principal language (98%). The school has 157 (13%) pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are a number of pupils that enter the school at times other than the start of the academic year. Three hundred and forty-four pupils (33%) are new to the school this year. Many of these enter with very basic English language skills and with no experience of a British curriculum.

The school follows a 'dual curriculum' in the early years. Children are taught in both Arabic and English. The English early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum is taught in the foundation phase. From Year 1 to Year 9 the national curriculum for England and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s Ministry of Education curriculum form the basis of what pupils learn. In Year 10 both GCSE and IGCSE courses are available. At sixth-form level the students study UK AS and A levels.

The school is led by a principal and an extended leadership team. There are 106 teachers.

During the COVID -19 pandemic the school followed the health regulations set out by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority. The school offered online learning and direct learning on site in strictly enforced pupil 'bubbles'. It introduced regular sanitisation of classrooms and other spaces, mask

wearing by pupils and staff, and a one-way system to control movement. Online learning consisted of live lessons and made use of prepared resources. Since October, 2021 all pupils have been required to attend school (except those who are shielding). Pupils regularly attended both online lessons and onsite learning.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors. The inspection dates were agreed upon with the school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the school before the inspection. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed in May 2022. Prior to visiting the school, the lead inspector held two meetings with the principal and inspectors via video conferencing. He scrutinised the school's self-review document and its development plan.

The school has been open for two years. There was only one year's complete performance data available to inspectors. In addition, the timing of the inspection meant that there were limited opportunities to observe Year 11 and sixth-form lessons.

Inspectors visited 72 lessons. Fifty-eight lessons were jointly observed by an inspector and school leaders.

There were 32 meetings with school leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and carers, and members of the school's governing board. Meetings were also held with the school's administration team.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books. They analysed policies and development plans. The school's safeguarding arrangements were scrutinised. Parents' and staff surveys were examined and the views of pupils collected and analysed.

### **Evaluation of the school**

GEMS Al Barsha National School is a good school and provides a good quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years.

The school meets all of the BSO standards 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.

In **English**, pupils' progress is good but their attainment is variable. The rate of progress improved in the school's second year with more pupils reaching or, less frequently, exceeding UK expected levels of attainment. Pupils with SEND make good progress as a result of good teaching.

Children start school with very low levels of English and few speak English at home. In the early years, children quickly gain confidence in both understanding and speaking English, in part as a result of dual-language teaching. Around half of the children achieve the English early learning goals by the time they leave the early years. A strong focus on phonics and guided reading continues into Year 1 and contributes to ongoing progress.

By the time pupils reach the end of primary school, most write in accurate sentences, and many write extended pieces of work with imagination and accuracy. A large majority of pupils achieve in line with, or above, UK age-related expectations.

In the secondary phase there is a greater emphasis on writing and literature, to which pupils respond well. By the end of Year 11 pupils attain slightly higher than the UK average in IGCSE examinations, but few gain higher grades. Most pupils also take and pass English literature. Last year a small number took English at A level and passed with grades C or above.

Throughout the school there is a high level of consistency in the way teachers develop pupils' literacy skills. Teaching is nearly always good and sometimes outstanding.

In **mathematics**, pupils' progress is good across the school, but attainment is variable. Pupils with SEND make good progress.

Children enter EYFS with skills well below those typical for their age in mathematics. Attainment is below average at the end of EYFS and at the end of the primary phase it is low. Data demonstrates that attainment is marginally higher than the UK average in IGCSE and broadly in line with the UK average at post-16.

During the foundation stage, the vast majority of children are well taught and progress well. They learn numbers and numerical patterns. Some can count to 20, identify odd and even numbers accurately and recognise different quantities and compare them.

In the primary phase, although attainment is below UK age-related expectations, most pupils continue to make progress. However, for the most able pupils, teachers sometimes do not set tasks of sufficient difficulty. At times, this hinders the progress of this group. Some pupils show confidence in solving mathematical problems and in developing their reasoning and mathematical fluency. Some can successfully use a number of methods for calculations and comparing and simplifying fractions.

In the secondary phase, progress continues to be good. Pupils develop critical thinking and reasoning skills. They become more successful at solving problems. Many can use a range of calculation strategies, reason mathematically in geometry, number and algebra and solve problems. Consistent reviewing of misconceptions is common in lessons. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in carrying out mathematical activities independently. The curriculum is well planned, enabling pupils to build on previous learning.

Progress is also good in the post-16 phase. Through rigorous data tracking, effective inclusion strategies and a range of continuously evaluated intervention activities, all groups of students make good progress, with their current grades above their Advanced Level Performance System targets. A-level results are predicted to be equally positive this year, based on internal assessment to date.

In **science**, progress is good across the school but attainment is variable. Pupils with SEND make good progress.

In the early years children enter the school with low levels of scientific knowledge and understanding. As a result of a curriculum that stimulates the curiosity of the children, which is delivered in both Arabic and English, the children make good progress in understanding the immediate world around them. Topics such as: 'Is it really an ugly bug?' excite the children and encourage them to know more about the world around them. They improve their use of specialist vocabulary and know how to carry out investigations. They delight in exploring different habitats and their understanding of the natural world develops well.

In the primary phase, pupils' attainment is below UK standards. However, progress is good, with the greatest gains in knowledge and understanding occurring in Years 5 and 6. The school data that is

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available, as well as other inspection evidence, indicates that the gaps between standards in this school and those in England have narrowed over the last two years.

Effective teaching supported by a curriculum organised around key questions such as: 'What can animals teach us about being human?' encourages pupils to view scientific investigation as relevant to their daily lives and motivates them to improve their observational and investigative skills.

In the secondary school pupils extend their scientific knowledge and improve their skills of investigation because teaching is well planned and promotes good progress. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in asking scientific questions, making predictions and carefully observing and recording results accurately. By Year 11 many pupils make very good progress. Attainment is average in physics and above average in biology, chemistry and combined science.

Sixth-form students are confident learners. They are highly motivated by a curriculum that both interests and challenges them. They display competence in a range of skills and attain at levels that are broadly average when compared to UK standards.

Effective teaching across the school ensures that the progress made by pupils in other subjects is good. From low starting points, pupils reach levels of attainment that are broadly in line with UK standards.

- **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 is good overall (see Standard 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good (see Standard 3 below).
- The standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Standard 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 5 below).
- The provision of Information for parents meets the requirements of this standard (see Standard 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are good (see Standard 8 below).

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during May to June 2022, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas (2017 updated) except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. 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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5 (b) (vi) of the UK Equality Act 2010 that cannot be met due to the laws of the host country. The school's provision promotes respect for all, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief and pregnancy and maternity. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

The **curriculum** is good. The school meets the requirements of the revised English early years and national curriculums alongside those of the UAE Ministry of Education. Within the primary and early years departments, the curriculum is particularly innovative, creative and exciting. Across the whole school the curriculum is well matched to the needs of its pupils including those pupils with SEND and English as an additional language, emphasising Britishness within an Emirati context. Pupils learn about the British Parliament, British history such as the life of Henry VIII, and British poetry. They study Shakespeare plays such as Macbeth.

The focus in the early years is on developing children's speaking skills and developing a foundation for literacy for which the phonics and guided-reading programmes are central components. The partnership between teachers speaking English and Arabic helps all learners to develop confidence and skills in speaking and listening.

In the primary phase, the curriculum is based around a literary text, which encourages learning across all subjects and promotes vocabulary acquisition. Each module is introduced and closed in a stimulating way. The current Year 2 unit, based on Tiddler, included a display of small fish with a hidden soundtrack in which fish call for help. Schemes of work, devised by the school, enable teachers to plan well.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Pupils choose two optional subjects to study towards IGCSE examinations as well as the core subjects. They take either English language and literature or English as a foreign language and combined or triple science. In post-sixteen provision, they study for A levels and BTEC qualifications but with more restricted choice. From September 2022, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network courses will be available for pupils with SEND. Across the school, there is good provision for pupils with SEND. Pupils who are gifted and talented have been identified for additional provision.

Good careers advice results in pupils making appropriate option and post-school choices. Careers lessons are timetabled in post-sixteen provision. All pupils in Year 10 complete a week of work experience, which develops life skills and often incentives for future work or study. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' learning, including debating, eco clubs, sports activities, well-being sessions and the study of the Qur'an. The school suspends the regular timetable for an annual 'Week without Walls' when pupils work in different groups on a range of activities, including setting up and running an enterprise. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The curriculum is kept under constant review. External and internal examinations are analysed in detail to determine where elements of the curriculum may need amending in the light of pupils' performance.

Curriculum policies and plans encourage respect for all, with particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, race and religious belief. They cannot fully address marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation or gender assignment due to the laws of the UAE. The

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school teaches moral education and addresses personal, social and health-related issues in assemblies, form periods and schemes of work. Pupils in Year 9, discussing King Henry VIII, addressed what makes a good leader and how they, themselves, might lead. Primary school themes are mostly based on British texts and resources across the school are predominantly British. Pupils have recently studied the preparations for the Queen's Jubilee. They show a good understanding of democracy and how it works in action.

The school needed to adjust the curriculum during, and after, periods of remote learning. Even in the initial period back in school, opportunities for practical and collaborative work were limited. Consequently, the school continues to review its provision to pinpoint gaps in learning, makes resultant modifications to elements of the curriculum and provides additional intervention for groups who have fallen behind.

The quality of **teaching** and pupils' learning is good. It has improved appreciably over the year as new teachers have been well supported by middle and senior leaders. Teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge are particularly good. They use a range of effective strategies to enable pupils to learn and have a very good understanding of their pupils and how to help them. Relationships with and between pupils, are excellent and they are keen to learn. The quality of teaching and learning is especially good in English, where there is a high level of consistency, with some outstanding teaching. However, while leaders and teachers throughout the school have laid a good foundation on which to produce more outstanding learning opportunities for pupils, at present there are too few examples of outstanding teaching and learning.

Across the school, teaching is conducted at a lively pace with varied activities which keep pupils motivated and allow both reinforcement of emerging learning for some pupils and extension for others. On occasions, however, some pupils who find learning more difficult become confused when instructions are not clear enough. The most able pupils are sometimes given work that does challenge them sufficiently. Behaviour is good throughout the school. Teachers have created vibrant learning spaces. The use of 'working walls' encourages pupils to find relevant information independently and refer to work covered in previous lessons.

Pupils learn very well collaboratively. Throughout the school, teachers plan lessons in detail to meet the needs of all pupils and assess their learning throughout lessons. They encourage pupils to assess their own learning and that of their peers. Helping pupils to understand their own learning needs is a strength of the school. Pupils in most lessons have high expectations of themselves and want to improve and help their peers to improve too.

From the early years, pupils are encouraged to check their own work and act independently wherever possible. In one lesson children writing a letter to the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk, found spellings of key words from language cards without prompting. In a Year 6 lesson, boys checked a partner's draft of a letter to an agony aunt and gave constructive feedback. Teachers create real-life situations wherever possible. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils completed tasks with fractions and decimals in planning catering for a celebration of the Queen's Jubilee. Year 2 pupils investigated how to fix a broken umbrella in science.

Support staff in the early years and in the primary school, including those working with pupils with SEND, play a valuable role in classrooms and help all pupils to make progress. Teamwork among staff is exceptionally good and Arabic- and English-speaking staff combine well to develop children's learning in the early years through a highly effective 'dual language' approach.

Teachers use technology well and provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to use the internet to extend their learning. Pupils in Year 7, for example, in a project about an imaginary country, undertook

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extensive research and Year 10 pupils researched individual artists to examine techniques to incorporate into their own work.

The school has analysed the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' learning and is making ongoing adjustments to address emerging issues. This has included providing additional help for pupils facing examinations and increasing opportunities for practical and collaborative work and extended writing. Remote learning has proved effective in enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils were regularly assessed during COVID-19.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Gems National Al Barsha is an inclusive school. Staff and governors passionately believe that all pupils should be valued equally and should treat one another with respect. All pupils, including those with SEND, are fully involved in school life and provided with the care that they need in classrooms and during extra-curricular activities (ECAs). The relationships between pupils and adults are excellent and respectful. The school has high expectations.

Behaviour is good. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong, which the school deliberately promotes through an effective behaviour policy. Pupils whose behaviour fails to meet school expectations are invited to 'reflect' for 20 minutes on the choices that they make. They are supported by two full-time school counsellors who reinforce the positive attitude through conflict resolution and mediation. Regular online surveys show that all pupils want to do well and value the importance of education. The school has developed effective routines and expectations. Pupils apply 'three before me': three chances to ask your peers, use personal resources and the learning environment for support before you ask your teacher.

The school develops the pupils' sense of worth and responsibility through programmes such as 'Star of the Week'. Assemblies are celebrations where teachers give 'special mentions' or 'shout outs' to pupils.

The school is proactive in promoting equality. For example, post-16 students ran an international women's day. The 'zero discrimination' programme is focused on tolerance and respect for all. The school holds an autism awareness week including a workshop with parents.

The school is addressing gender equality by systematically offering the same opportunities to all boys and girls across the curriculum and ECAs. National-day and global-day events celebrate the school's 39 nationalities.

Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles in English, physical education (PE) and science, through 'Bite-Back Champion' inspired by Jamie Oliver and through pupil-led assemblies and initiatives such as Dubai Fitness Challenge. The lunchbox associated with a colour ('Tuesday is red so tomatoes...') encourages pupils to think about healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' emotional well-being is carefully monitored by all staff. IGCSE pupils in information and communication technology designed an artificial-intelligence 'worry BOT', now being adopted by the whole school. This is a QR code which enables all pupils to share their concerns with the pastoral team, the two school counsellors and the safeguarding lead. 'Word of Kindness' is part of anti-bullying

week. Pupils have contributed to a wall where each one has written a word of kindness. The features of kindness and respect are ingrained in the school's DNA.

Pupils understand the meaning of British values such as democracy and feel strongly that democracy is part of the school culture. There are elections for the pupils' council in primary and secondary and eight prefects are elected in secondary. There are multiple opportunities for leadership, such as being handwriting champions, core leaders and 'Bite-Back Champions'. In moral education, Year 5 pupils spoke about pupils' rights and debated 'whether it was acceptable for a child to miss a school day and go to the park because they have the right to play and be happy'.

Pupils have good knowledge of public institutions in the host country and are aware of public institutions in the UK such as Parliament, the National Health Service, Red Cross. They learn about local elections in Britain and about the monarchy.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard and the regulatory requirements and cultural obligations of the UAE.

Planning and provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good with robust policies and procedures. These comply fully with the host country's requirements and fully reflect UK regulations. Procedures are rigorously and consistently implemented and regularly monitored. Risk assessments are undertaken for school activities which present a potential hazard. Pupils and staff work in a healthy, safe and calm environment. Duty rotas ensure that pupils are always supervised both inside and outside the school premises. The vast majority of pupils say that they feel safe in their school and that adults always listen to their concerns. Pupils eagerly await the 'student of the week' on Fridays and the 'feel-good Friday postcard' when staff email parents.

Pupils new to the school are helped to settle in quickly and those moving to other places are well supported with careful planning for their individual needs. The school organises two team-building days with multiple rewards. Form tutors meet their pupils each morning and there is a buddy system in place to help new to settle in.

The school has an annual health, safety and environment audit. All staff are responsible for the safety of the premises and report any incidents and 'near misses', which are then appropriately recorded and immediately followed up. The school has robust fire-safety systems and procedures in line with UK and UAE best practice.

The school has good systems for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality. Attendance is currently 94%, slightly below the pre-pandemic UK average. An action plan has already resulted in some improvement this year. Pupils attend school and lessons on time.

School leaders have developed highly effective UK-compliant systems for safeguarding and child protection with eight appropriately trained leaders. All staff attend safeguarding and child-protection training at the beginning of the year and have regular updates. Key safeguarding contacts are on posters around the school. This information is shared in assemblies and form times and included in the newsletter as a standing item. Staff and pupils know their safeguarding duties and responsibilities well because of the monthly surveys and training-day reminders.

Anti-bullying is strongly promoted with a yearly anti-bullying week led by the pastoral team and student council. Pupils report that bullying is rare in their school and if it does occur, it is promptly managed by student leaders and staff.

Pupils are taught how to eat healthily and about road safety. They are well aware of the dangers of high temperatures and the need to drink water regularly. They learn about how to use the internet and social-media channels safely.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school provided effective guidance to both pupils and families. This included online webinars focusing on 'e-safety internet' and 'how to keep your child safe'. Teachers taught pupils about the dangers to their mental health of being online too long and the need to take regular breaks while using online platforms. Pupils were encouraged to carry out physical exercises during online lessons. Parents believe the school provides a safe learning environment.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard. The proprietor is licenced to provide a range of educational services. Initial scrutiny of the suitability of teaching staff is carried out at GEMS central office. Subsequently, the school's human resources department (HR) keeps a detailed and up-to-date single central record (SCR) of all staff, volunteers and contractors, designed to secure the safe recruitment of staff. The SCR contains evidence of a person's identity, their right to work in the UAE, a medical assessment, references from previous employers and proof of qualifications. In addition, a police check is carried out to ensure that potential employees have not been barred from teaching. All teachers from Britain have clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the school subscribes to the DBS updating service.

All members of non-teaching staff undergo a police check prior to beginning work at the school. The school uses the International Child Protection Service to check that no potential employee has been involved in any child protection issues. The HR team checks that third-party contractors have been screened and cleared to work in the school.

A number of senior staff are qualified to take part in the safer recruitment process. They receive regular training involving an online course followed by an assessment. Records of those qualified to recruit staff safely are kept up to date.

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

The school meets the requirement of this standard. The site is spacious and carefully planned to allow for a range of learning activities. The environment is maintained to a high standard. Buildings and outdoor spaces are kept clean and are in excellent repair. Indoor spaces and classrooms are clean and free of any obstructions and the temperature indoors is carefully monitored with pupils benefiting from air conditioning that produces a controlled climate. All classrooms and indoor spaces have appropriate levels of lighting which allow pupils to carry out safely reading and writing activities and physical and practical activities such as cooking and PE.

There is a range of specialist facilities including technology suites, swimming pools, sports hall, early-years indoor and outdoor spaces and a medical centre with three full-time members of staff and an isolation room. Specialist resources are used efficiently.

The site is secure. It has an external fence with clearly defined entrance and exit points. All points of access to the school are controlled by dedicated staff. CCTV is used to monitor entrances, corridors, sports hall and technology rooms. All staff and visitors wear identity badges or lanyards and staff are trained in how to challenge a newcomer to the campus.

The safety of pupils is further enhanced by the carefully controlled arrival and departure of pupils. Traffic, including buses, is directed by stewards. All chemicals for science lessons are stored securely, with access limited to nominated members of staff. Chemicals are labelled and dated.

Risk assessments are always carried out when required. They are detailed and monitored by staff who have specialist training. All staff undertake training on completing a risk assessment and are advised by specialists on how to complete them.

There are separate toilets for boys and girls. Entrances to these are clearly marked. Separate changing rooms, including showers, are provided for pupils engaged in PE and extra-curricular activities. There are a number of drinking-water stations available to pupils. The temperature of water is carefully controlled. All toileting and washing amenities are maintained to a very high standard of cleanliness. Library facilities include a large stock of suitable texts.

School corridors and classrooms display pupils' work. This helps to create an environment which promotes a message that pupils' achievement is important and is celebrated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, movement around the school was strictly controlled and pupil 'bubbles' enforced. A one-way system was put in place as well as regular sanitation points for pupils and staff. There was deep cleaning of resources and transport, and mask wearing was strictly enforced.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard. Its website is up to date and contains relevant information for pupils, parents and visitors. The vision and mission of the school are displayed on the website, giving a picture of the school's aims and values. The curriculum is outlined, including what is taught in each phase of the pupils' education. School policies can be accessed by parents and there is information on how the school provides specialist teaching for those pupils with SEND. Contact details of senior and middle leaders are provided.

The school prioritises the need for regular and frequent communication with parents and follows a policy of making all teaching staff accessible to them. There is a dedicated parent-portal page which contains additional information regarding the school calendar, transport arrangements and school newsletters. It also contains advice on how parents can support the pupils' learning at home. Staff see parents as partners in the pupils' learning. All literature is produced in both Arabic and English.

There is a remote-learning guide for parents and pupils. It describes what online learning looks like and the roles of teachers, parents and pupils. The guide also provides detailed guidance on the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe when online.

Parents can give written feedback and suggestions for improvement using the parental portal. The school also provides a 'Parent Experience Centre' online, where issues concerning admissions are dealt with daily.

Written reports on pupils' attainment and progress are regular. They provide information on pupils' attitudes towards learning, attendance rates and the acquisition of learning skills.

Parents say that communication with the school is frequent and mostly effective. They appreciate that there are a number of methods available to communicate with members of staff. They also feel that producing all written information in both Arabic and English helps to keep them informed about the latest school developments.

Parents feel that the school responded well to COVID-19. They were kept informed of how the school responded to the pandemic and feel that the quality of teaching and learning was good. They feel that they were well supported through the pandemic.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard. Information on how to raise a concern or complaint is accessible and the names and school addresses of senior and middle leaders are available together with a guide on who to contact, depending upon the nature of the complaint. The complaints policy is up to date and located on the school's website.

The process for complaining is both informal and formal in nature. Initially the school seeks to deal quickly with a complaint informally. Should a formal complaint be made, a staged process allows parents to escalate their complaint from their initial contact with the school to the principal and the school board. Timescales for making a complaint, receiving feedback and achieving a resolution are explicit. Opportunities for panel hearings are provided.

There have been two formal complaints made by parents in the last 12 months. They were dealt with according to procedure. Records of complaints are held securely. Parents feel their concerns are listened to and acted upon by school staff.

## **Standard 8. The quality of leadership and management**

Leadership and management are good. Leaders are successful in securing good outcomes for pupils. They fulfil their responsibilities by making sure that the BSO standards are consistently met. They are effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

The school operates legally and within set financial budgets

The leadership of EYFS is good.

Leaders are effective in providing a common sense of purpose and sharing it with staff and parents. Staff are aware of the school's key priorities and appreciate how such priorities contribute to maintaining a British school which delivers a curriculum that is sensitive to, and respectful of, Arabic culture and local traditions.

Board members know the school very well. They have an accurate and detailed picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They and school leaders understand how their responsibilities differ. They meet frequently and receive regular updates on school performance. This allows their decision making to be based upon the latest evidence. Relationships between board members and the principal are good, demonstrating high levels of cooperation. The Board holds the principal to account through an appraisal process that sets targets. These are regularly reviewed and refined.

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Board members have developed a leadership structure that results in good teaching and learning. Recently, the principal and board reviewed the school's leadership structure with a view to securing further improvement in the context of growing school numbers. The result was the creation of an extended senior leadership team with defined roles and responsibilities.

All staff believe that the safety and well-being of the pupils is paramount. A comprehensive set of measures is in place to keep pupils safe while in school. Guidance is also provided for parents on how to make sure their children learn safely. The school environment is welcoming and well maintained. The school timetables allow the curriculum to be delivered to all pupils. Time for extra-curricular activities is identified. School leaders and staff welcome pupils, parents and visitors to the campus each day. Staff are readily accessible especially both at the beginning and end of the day and a café for parents and visitors is available.

Leaders ensure that there are plenty of resources available, resulting in good teaching in classrooms and outdoor spaces. Teachers and teaching assistants are appropriately qualified and are committed to improving pupils' attainment. Their work is managed effectively to produce learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.

Self-evaluation is rigorous and detailed and involves staff, pupils and parents. A clear cycle of analysis, 'plan, do and review', is in place. A wide range of evidence is examined including pupil, parent and staff-survey results, examination results and reports from education authorities and other external providers. Self-evaluation is an ongoing process.

The results of self-evaluation lead to the production of a whole-school development plan. This plan has a number of priorities and targets and it forms the basis for the development of operational plans at phase and department levels

Staff appraisal involves all staff in the school. It holds individuals to account and also facilitates improvement in individual staff performance by including targets for development. The results of staff appraisal, together with whole-school priorities, form the basis of continuing professional development opportunities for staff. These opportunities are varied in nature, involving working with colleagues in school and external partners such as the GEMS Wellington Schools Cluster. They have helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management.

Teachers are positive about their school. A large majority enjoy working at the school. Almost all staff believe that pupils make good progress and most feel that pupils' behaviour is managed well. A large majority of staff believe that the school is well led and feel supported well by school leaders. Professional-development opportunities are seen as helpful for improving the quality of teaching and learning by a majority of staff.

## EYFS provision

Early years provision is good. In the early years, teachers and teaching assistants create a vibrant learning environment where children are welcomed and feel safe. Children start with limited ability to speak or listen in English. The early years team adopts a dual language approach in which lessons are planned and taught by an English-speaking and an Arabic-speaking teacher, working in close collaboration. Most children respond well, listen carefully to teachers, and soon gain enough confidence to speak to each other in English. Most-able pupils enjoy speaking in class, such as when they described a rocket trip to Mars and a forthcoming one to Jupiter!

Through deliberate teaching, pupils are encouraged to become independent in the classroom and to reflect on what they have learned. They are keen to put forward ideas to solve simple scientific problems such as how to free an object encased in ice. Children are active learners and make good gains in all aspects of learning, with around half leaving the early years at expected levels, which represents good progress. Teachers give detailed attention to improving children's literacy skills with regular, well-planned sessions of phonics and guided reading. The children enjoy lessons and work very well together.

The early years team is led very well. Staff work exceptionally well together to deliver an exciting curriculum that encourages children to ask and answer questions. Children learn in a safe and secure environment. All staff know the children very well. Their progress is tracked carefully. Parents are informed regularly about what is being taught and they are increasingly involved in actively supporting their children's learning at home. Workshops have been provided not only for parents but also for the children's nannies.

The school has adapted the curriculum to take account of learning gaps that emerged during COVID-19 and has made appropriate modifications in line with the revised English early years curriculum framework. Resources are plentiful and teachers prepare excellent learning materials.

## Post 16 provision

Post-16 provision is good. The school offers a range of courses at AS and A level to enable students to follow their interests and reach their full potential. AS level examination results are broadly in line with UK averages. A transition plan and an induction programme allow students to start their AS and A levels in the summer after their previous examinations. Retention is good. Post-sixteen provision is expanding, with a 27% growth predicted for September 2022. The school is currently exploring a wider choice of subjects at AS and A level including art and design, languages and humanities, International Baccalaureate provision and BTEC pathways.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Personal interviews help students choose options and they fully understand the school's expectations. Students attend a yearly careers fair and have opportunities to complete an internship programme in a variety of national and international companies and in the school when they are in Year 12. This helps them make better career choices. Each student has a post-16 career plan.

The inspection team was only able to observe a few lessons directly. However, inspectors' scrutiny of teachers' planning, students' work and assessment information clearly shows that teachers have good subject knowledge. They understand the requirements of all examinations. Relationships between staff and students are respectful. Teachers track progress very thoroughly and work well with students. High expectations lead to good student attitudes to learning and outcomes.

Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles in the school. They run a termly student council. They have set up committees for events, assemblies, well-being and mentoring to help younger pupils. They regularly participate in national and international competitions, for example the Microsoft Academy Imagine Junior. They also take part in termly round-table debates across the GEMS network.

All students are applying to, and being accepted by, prestigious universities in the UK as well as in the UAE and Canada.

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## Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Al Barsha National 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. Raise the levels of attainment and rates of progress in mathematics in the primary school by making sure that, for the most able pupils, teachers always plan work that is difficult but achievable. This will allow pupils to reach their full potential.
2. While the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good overall, there is not enough outstanding teaching. Teachers should make sure that they always explain clearly, to those pupils who find learning difficult, what they are learning and why. This will ensure that levels of attainment and rates of progress of the least able pupils improve.

## 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

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Al Barsha National School
<b>Type of school</b>	Private
<b>Date school opened</b>	September, 2020
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 -18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed to Year 4 then separate boys' and girls' provision
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1189
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	N/A
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 42,000 – 62,000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	N/A
<b>Address of school</b>	AL Barsha South 2 Dubai, UAE Telephone number: +971(0)4-5069222
<b>Email</b>	registrar_gns@gemsedu.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Karim Murcia
<b>Proprietor</b>	GEMS

## 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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