

GEMS Metropole School

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 14 – 17 November

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Age Group: 3-18

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) Schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by four 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. 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

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.

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 Metropole School is a large, private, multicultural day school for pupils aged from three to 18 years of age. It is situated in Motor City, Dubai, on a single site and is purpose built. It is owned by the Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) group of schools. The school opened in 2014. Currently, there are 2,726 pupils on roll. This is an increase of 47 pupils since the previous inspection in 2017. There is also now a sixth form, which opened in 2018. There are 305 children in early years, 1,340 pupils in primary and 1,081 in secondary, of whom 178 are in the sixth form. During the last year, some 17% of pupils left the school, the majority of whom went on to higher education, many in the UK. All pupils from Years 1 to 11 follow the English national curriculum, with children in Nursery and Reception following the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. In the sixth form, students choose from A-level or BTEC courses. The school has an open admissions policy and is inclusive. Just over 60% of pupils do not speak English as their first language and the school has identified 9% of pupils as having some form of special educational need and/or disability (SEND). The principal and vice-principal lead the school, supported by leaders of the early years, primary and secondary departments. There are 183 teachers at the school.

The school has implemented all COVID-19 health and safety regulations including temperature checks on entry, provision of sanitisers, wearing of masks and social distancing. As the pandemic took hold, the school closed for full-time learning in March 2020 and began remote learning. All parents and pupils were made aware of the situation and kept up to date by email and on the school's website. Attendance during this time remained above 90% and pupils' work was assessed by ongoing teacher-pupil interaction and by online testing. At the time of the inspection, there were strict rules in place for the use of equipment, for example, glassware in laboratories and manipulatives in EYFS classrooms.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by four Education Development Trust inspectors over four days. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed in October and 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, which was provided by the school four weeks prior to the inspection. Inspectors visited 86 lessons both

in classes and live online. Several were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff.

There were 17 meetings with leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board, including the chief executive officer (CEO).

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and the work produced digitally. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and operational and strategic plans. The school's safeguarding arrangements were inspected. The views of parents and carers, pupils and staff were also considered by looking at survey results and through meetings with parents, pupil councils and teachers.

Evaluation of the school

GEMS Metropole is a good school and provides a good quality of education. Within a very caring, safe British-style learning environment, pupils are prepared well to enter or re-enter the British system. Assessment processes continued online during the pandemic.

The school meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of legislation in the United Arab Emirates. 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' attainment and progress are good overall and outstanding in key stage 5. At GCSE and A level, attainment exceeds averages for pupils in England and the majority of pupils make good progress. A high proportion of children entering the school have English as an additional language or are bilingual. They make rapid progress in speaking and listening as a result of focused intervention and support.

Reading is a priority throughout the school. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and keen to discuss their books. Their reading ages against their personal starting points have improved and are now, on average, above their chronological age in key stages 2 and 3.

In the foundation stage, most children can identify letter names and sounds, including compound phonemes, and can read and write simple words and sentences. As they move up the school, pupils are increasingly able to read and manipulate texts and the majority can use language effectively in descriptive, factual and imaginative writing. Year 4 pupils enhance their writing by using adverbials of time and in Year 6 they used an extract from 'A Christmas Carol' to describe one of the ghostly visitors. In key stages 3 and 4, most pupils are able to analyse and evaluate fiction and non-fiction texts, inferring meaning and showing good awareness of the effects of language choices on the reader. Most can write fluently and convincingly for different audiences and purposes, using appropriate tone and register. They can adapt their writing well and many show exceptional imagination and technical skill. However, the writing skills of a minority of pupils throughout the school, up to the end of key stage 4, are still underdeveloped. For example, some make spelling errors and use incorrect punctuation, and a small number of younger pupils demonstrate poor letter formation and handwriting.

In English literature pupils enjoy discussing plays and novels. A group of pupils in Year 11 produced coherent and well-ordered arguments when considering one of the main characters in 'An Inspector Calls'. A-level literature students are confident in their interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy and 20th century novels, with many presenting thoughtful and perceptive views, supported by quotations and examples from the texts.

When studying English, pupils throughout the school demonstrate very good learning skills. They collaborate well, enjoy sharing their ideas and support each other's learning.

Attainment and progress are good in **mathematics**. The majority of pupils make good progress so that attainment at the end of key stages 2, 4 and 5 compares favourably with averages for pupils in England. Almost all pupils become competent mathematicians.

In the early years, through playing, exploring, active learning and thinking critically, a strong mathematical understanding ensures readiness for Year 1. In the primary school, this develops sequentially, with almost all making satisfactory progress and a significant minority making good progress, indicated by a commercial testing scheme which shows progress compared with ability. In Year 4, pupils explain and justify calculations when multiplying three digits by one digit using column methods. By Year 6, they can then complete calculations involving equations. In Year 7, pupils use integers and find upper and lower bounds for discrete numbers and for real-life contexts. In key stage 4, GCSE results are above the average for pupils in England. 89% attained level 4+, compared with 69% in England. Pupils in Year 11 can complete calculations for function machines, mapping input and output for algebraic purposes. In Year 13, students solve complex problems related to functions and graphs, positive constants, polynomials and states of coordinates. 55% of students achieved A* to A at A level, which is in line with the average for students in England.

Across the school, although pupils have strong mathematical understanding, adherence to COVID-19 protocols prevents them gaining actual hands-on practical experience at present.

In **science** most pupils make good progress, reaching standards above those expected for their age in England.

Children in the early years develop very strong enquiry and observation skills which give an excellent foundation for year one. The learning in primary school is enhanced by a strong focus on developing skills of scientific enquiry and on ensuring that pupils understand the underpinning concepts. Pupils in Year 4 can describe the molecular arrangement in the three states of matter and discuss transition between states in terms of molecular energy. In Year 6, pupils can create a reasoned hypothesis about shadow size in relation to distance of light source and they can plan a fair test. They make appropriate observations and draw conclusions. In key stages two and three, commercial tests confirm that progress is above expected levels in relation to ability. Pupils in Year 7 confidently debate the advantages and disadvantages of renewable and nuclear energy sources. In key stage 4, good progress results in the majority of pupils achieving high standards in GCSE examinations in biology, chemistry and physics. These results are very similar to averages for pupils in England. At post-16, the majority of students perform well in lessons. Performance at A level in all three sciences is similar to the average in England.

Across the school, although pupils have outstanding understanding of scientific methodology, adherence to COVID-19 protocols prevents them from gaining actual hands-on practical experience at the moment.

In addition to good achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science, pupils achieve well in other subjects across the wider curriculum. Of 15 other GCSE subjects, pupils achieved at a level similar to, or better than, their English counterparts in 12 subjects.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (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 outstanding (see Standard 2 below).

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

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during November 2021, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas 2017 except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the United Arab Emirates. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK independent school system. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by 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 standards relating to the quality of the education are met except for the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The **curriculum** is outstanding. Some practical adaptations to the situation involving measures to cope with COVID-19, such as the necessity to sterilise equipment, have meant that in some subjects, science, for example, the experience is not as practical as before. Curriculum policies, plans and schemes of work are detailed and comprehensive and ensure that pupils of all ages and abilities can succeed. With the use of the school's small farm and forest area, pupils benefit from the school's immediate environment.

The very youngest pupils in foundation stage and Years 1 and 2 follow the English early years curriculum, which is very well structured to promote their personal, social and physical development, and which extends communication and language skills effectively. The organisation of foundation stage and Years 1 and 2 into an infant section facilitates collaboration between teachers and eases the transition from foundation stage to key stage 1.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted in the light of identified needs. For example, the school has introduced alternative qualifications such as ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) courses to meet the needs of pupils for whom GCSE and A-level routes are not suitable. Curriculum provision for pupils with English language needs or SEND is excellent, with specialist facilities and staffing which supports pupils well. Liaison with outside agencies ensures that the curriculum can be offered successfully to pupils with a range of physical disabilities and social, emotional and mental health needs.

The range of subjects offered allows pupils ample choice when they select options in Year 9 and Year 11 and the school shows flexibility in enabling them to follow the pathways best suited to their aptitudes and interests. Pupils are very well prepared at each stage in their education, beginning with advice and guidance on GCSE subjects for Year 9 pupils including one-to-one interviews and parents' evenings. Year 11 pupils benefit from a full progression programme focusing on careers and higher education. There is a strong focus on entry to the UK university application process and life in the UK. Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, especially if this involves a move to the UK. The school supports students very well through events such as HE and Careers Fairs, a 'market hall' activity with current sixth-form students and visits from alumni to share their experiences.

Pupils are equipped very well for the opportunities and responsibilities of life in British society. British values are highlighted through the taught curriculum in all subjects. For example, British authors form the basis of the literature courses, history and geography highlight UK themes, moral education covers core values of just treatment for all and personal liberty, and science celebrates the work of famous British figures such as Stephen Hawking.

A particular strength of the school is the enrichment curriculum, which has been significantly expanded in recent years after consultation with pupils and parents. Staff and external providers lead the sessions, known as masterclasses. They include a very wide variety of options, including cooking, drama, mindfulness, crafts, eco club and book club. Recent additions include golf and scuba diving. Pupils are timetabled for one session per week and opt for an activity which interests them. Further sessions take place outside school. Older students can take part in established

programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Model United Nations. They also have the opportunity to complete an Extended Project Qualification.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. The school meets this BSO standard.

All pupils are now fully in school. There is no more remote learning. When the school was closed during the pandemic, the school used video conferencing for distance learning, which was predominantly conducted via live lessons.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and understand how children learn. They plan lessons which engage pupils' interest and enable them to gain a greater understanding of the subjects studied. Carefully structured activities which build on prior learning contribute to pupils making good progress. Most lessons include opportunities for pupils to work in groups or pairs and they collaborate very well, sharing ideas and communicating effectively. Teachers use questioning well to check understanding and to encourage pupils to develop and justify their views, especially in key stages 4 and 5. In English literature, pupils showed excellent awareness of Shakespearean tragedy and presented thoughtful opinions on an extract from 'Othello'. Pupils in Year 7 science developed a good understanding of nuclear and renewable energy and were able to engage in debate, supported by the teacher. Most teachers skilfully build on pupils' contributions in discussion.

Pupils are self-reliant in the main and take increasing responsibility for their own learning as they move up the school. Younger pupils in foundation stage and key stage 1 are beginning to review their own work using simple 'I can' statements, while Year 12 students in art engage in high-level discussion, giving tactful and pertinent feedback on each other's work.

At all stages, teachers share very clear learning objectives with pupils, which are systematically reviewed in order to measure progress. In this way, by the use of deft questioning of individual pupils, support, further work or increased challenge can be introduced as appropriate. In key stages 4 and 5, teachers relate work to examination requirements, ensuring that pupils are conversant with specific assessment objectives and know exactly what they need to do to improve. In a few lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11, most-able pupils are not challenged to strive for excellence.

Classroom organisation and the management of learning provide opportunities for pupils to work at an appropriate level. Tasks and activities are generally differentiated using a 'bronze, silver and gold' system so that pupils can select the option best suited to them. Teachers encourage them to be ambitious in their choices. Pupils with SEND, and the most able, are identified in lesson planning and teaching is tailored to meet their needs. Where there are ILPs (individual learning plans), they are incorporated into the lesson effectively.

Teachers make good use of resources to support learning, including technology and texts. Pupils use tablets and other electronic devices well to research and record their work. In foundation stage and primary, teachers are especially imaginative in the use of large equipment and outdoor space in, for example in the farm areas. Work is frequently linked to the wider world and particularly to UK and UAE life and culture. In moral education, pupils researched the issue of globalisation in order to prepare an oral presentation, and in Arabic they considered how celebrity could lead to a loss of personal liberty, linking this to the core British value of respect for the individual. Year 1 children explored 3D shapes by finding shapes in the environment and then comparing 2D and 3D shapes.

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

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5 (b) (vi). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is outstanding.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school is outstanding. The school meets the standards for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development apart from those specified in paragraph 5 (b) (vi) due to the laws of the host country relating to the provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

The school is inclusive and welcoming and fully meets the requirements of the UK Equality Act 2010 pertaining to age, disability, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion and belief. For example, there are events to mark religious and national festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Christmas and Chinese New Year, as well as UAE National Day and Flag Day, in which the whole school comes together in celebration. The Sheikha Fatima Award highlights the achievements of female students who serve as role models for others. Requirements of the UK Equality Act 2010 relating to gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation are not met due to the laws of the host country.

The school is a harmonious and pleasant community. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to school. They are considerate, mature and respectful of each other. They appreciate their teachers and the opportunities afforded to them. This is reflected in high attendance and punctuality. They clearly enjoy being in school and speak warmly of the care and support they receive. They treat each other with kindness and consideration and are particularly caring towards those with disabilities. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Good behaviour is promoted largely through a system of rewards and incentives. Incidents requiring disciplinary sanctions are rare because pupils are generally self-regulating but, when needed, behaviour management is very effective.

The school promotes and celebrates UK life and traditions very effectively and, consequently, pupils embrace core British values of respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law. They act responsibly and take the initiative in many extra-curricular activities such as Model United Nations conferences, where they demonstrate great maturity. Master classes and assemblies, for example, give pupils throughout the school opportunities to take on leadership roles and develop their self-esteem and confidence. Their participation in many sporting events is another avenue by which pupils have the chance to excel and develop positive attitudes and understanding of 'fair play'. Pupils also appreciate and respect Islamic and Emirati values and traditions and show awareness of other countries and cultures.

They are proud of their school and make a very positive contribution to school life. They also serve the local community through the sixth-form community-service programme and initiatives involving all age groups such as beach clean-ups, breast cancer awareness campaigns and supporting a local dog shelter. International links include an annual visit to a Kenyan village, where pupils undertake voluntary work. Pupils are very well-informed about environmental issues and have a real desire to make a difference. They are involved in recycling projects and even the youngest children enjoy participating in outdoor activities using the school's forest area and farm.

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

The school meets the requirements of this BSO standard and the regulatory requirements of the U.A.E.

The schools' care for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is outstanding. Pupils settle in well to GEMS Metropole. They are placed in one of four houses and if they have a sibling in the school, the house is the same. Safeguarding arrangements, including training for staff and pupils, are rigorous and well monitored. They meet and exceed UK requirements. There are two designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and deputy DSLs who are level 3 trained. All staff are trained in-house and are aware of the procedures involved. Both around the school and in assemblies and lessons, advice for pupils is clear about how they should react if they are concerned about abuse or threats. Training for teachers and other staff takes place at the beginning of each year and is repeated periodically. Scrutiny of surveys and discussions with parents indicate that they feel that their children are both safe and happy.

The school takes well-being and mental health seriously and in addition to eight staff members trained in teen mental first aid, several sixth-form students have been trained. These are available to younger pupils in communal areas during break. During the measures taken as a result of COVID-19, pupils' well-being was monitored by teachers' online. Now that all pupils are back in school, well-being is monitored by all adults in the school. Pupils feel that their emotional health is boosted by spending time with the school's therapy dog.

The school has very effective safer recruitment procedures applying both to directly and indirectly employed staff. Pupils are confident in sharing concerns with trained adults or via a confidential reporting system that is prominently advertised around the school. They know what to do if they have a concern about themselves or others. On these rare occasions, a confidential conversation takes place which involves all relevant people. Pupils in the school councils said that they felt very safe and looked after both in and around the school. The school has very effective anti-bullying procedures ensuring that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including online. Bullying incidents are rare and are dealt with effectively. There are designated trained first aiders and their certificates are up to date.

A detailed written behaviour policy is backed by an excellent and well-understood rewards and sanctions policy. Staff systematically record any incidents on the school information management system which enables tracking of behaviour over time. Behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is excellent. Punctuality and attendance are well monitored and recorded on the information system. Pupils nearly always arrive punctually at school and lessons and attendance is 95% in both primary and secondary, which compares well with an average figure of 90% in the UK.

Security is very strong, with security guards at all gates and in all reception areas. They are courteous and friendly but strictly ensure that only those authorised are admitted to the school. Arrival and departure routines are exceptionally well organised and security guards and senior staff monitor all gates. Bus loading and unloading arrangements are exemplary and ensure safety. Pupils scan their ID cards on entry and exit and are supported by a bus guardian.

The school doctor and three nurses provide timely and effective first aid in a purpose-built clinic. The clinic staff maintain accurate records of treatment, store and administer medication securely and provide guidance on healthy living.

School leaders robustly ensure that the school complies with all health and safety requirements. A rigorous risk assessment procedure is in place covering all activities, including the school forest area. The school also uses external audits such as ISO to test compliance. It complies with UAE civil defence fire regulations that are as stringent as in the UK.

Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The requirements of this standard are fully met.

There are robust arrangements in place to check the suitability of the proprietor and the Local Advisory Board (LAB) expects that the senior leaders of the school will carry out all appropriate checks on current and newly appointed staff members. There is a comprehensive record kept of all checks made on all staff who access the school and these are kept up to date. These checks include governors and members of the corporate board, as well as teachers, assistants, therapists and gardeners.

Consequently, all adults in the building, from the gardeners to the teachers, are suitable to work with children. The HR department ensures that high standards are met with both interviews and the induction of new staff, which results in strong teachers being appointed. The school's leaders ensure that suitable and supportive performance management procedures are in place to monitor the quality of teaching for effective learning and there are well established and successful professional development programmes in place. These ensure that not only are teaching skills developed, but aspirations are fulfilled, as learning support assistants, for example, qualify as teachers and librarians.

Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The school fully meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

Pupils enjoy an outstanding, inspirational learning environment that is safe and secure. The accommodation is scrupulously cleaned, tidy and maintained to a very high standard by the cleaning team. It is exceptionally well thought out and used well. Each building, primary and secondary, promotes the 'community' atmosphere that both parents and pupils value highly and speak about. This excellent learning environment allows pupils to develop a mature, resilient and balanced approach to their studies and ensures that they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. It ensures that all curriculum requirements can be fulfilled and contributes to very positive learning experiences for pupils.

For pupils and visitors with physical needs, ramps and lifts allow controlled access to all levels of the school and promote a very inclusive environment.

There are many spaces around the school that provide excellent facilities for teaching, learning and social activities. Seating is available in the school's outside social spaces.

The three libraries house a wide selection of books covering all subjects which are age and stage appropriate from the early years foundation stage to Year 13. Classrooms are clean, well ventilated and generously resourced, as are specialist subject classrooms and facilities that support science, art and technology. For example, all chemicals are stored safely and accessible to authorised staff only. The inclusion hub and school clinic meet stringent UAE requirements and are well supported by external medical professionals.

Well-thought-out displays reflect the school's high expectations for learning and personal development, ensuring pupils think about their citizenship in the UK, UAE and globally, for example the sustainable world's 10 priorities.

Sporting facilities are exemplary, including two swimming pools, supervised by trained lifeguards, with accessible safety equipment. Three sports halls are well organised, equipped with high-quality resources, provide a high-quality learning environment relevant to age and promote pupils'

experience, health, and well-being. Extensive shaded areas and the provision of drinking water ensure that pupils are protected from the heat and the sun.

Learning support assistants and additional adults are effectively deployed to meet the needs of all pupils, reduce barriers to learning and ensure that access to all areas is safe, including to separate toilet facilities.

The procedures for food hygiene are robust. Catering staff are well trained in the safe storage and serving of food and water, which meet expected standards. Food options are carefully chosen, varied and approved to promote healthy living. Due to COVID-19 regulations, the school's canteen served pre-packed hot meal to students.

Medical facilities include a school clinic and services are provided by a team of nurses and doctors who deal with medical emergencies and provide advice and guidance on healthy eating, lifestyles and medical concerns raised by pupils and adults. The school clinic manages safety in relation to COVID-19 well.

There are planned routes for safe exit. Although the libraries are being used, this is timetabled carefully to control numbers. The school clinic conducts daily humidity checks and issues authorisation for safest play.

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

The school meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

When parents speak of GEMS Metropole, they talk about how much they value the open, secure, caring atmosphere. They value the British curriculum. They say that the school will respond rapidly to any concerns. A recent campaign, 'You said, we did', answered some questions parents had about the accessibility of information. As a result, 'GEMS connect' has been introduced as a core parent app. Similarly, when parents wished to receive more frequent reports about their children's achievement, the school responded by reporting every half term, not termly.

One parent mentioned how their child arrived at the school with little spoken English but was helped and accommodated by the school providing a "buddy" to ease transition. Parents say that the school is welcoming. Indeed, the café in the school's spacious lobby, provides a useful and popular place for parents to meet informally.

The school offers parents the opportunity to respond to a commercially produced survey. This has shown an increase of 28 points, which indicates a good level of satisfaction with the school's response to parental concerns and to the way the school has dealt with the pandemic.

A variety of communication methods ensures that parents are kept up to date. These include emails, telephone calls and WhatsApp groups. All appropriate information is available and accessible. The school's website has a dedicated area for parents which contains links to all policies as well as previous inspection reports. Parents are well informed about a variety of issues including events, changes of date, the latest COVID-19-related measures and buses and traffic. They receive regular reports, both informal and formal, about their children's achievements. The principal has a regular meeting with parents called "happy meet", where parents may meet online, and both praise the school and mention any concerns they have. These meetings have proved to be a popular and rapid way of dealing with issues as well as a means for the school's good work to be recognised. Parents are very positive about the school. They appreciate its inclusive values and warm, happy, productive atmosphere.

Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

Due to the school's open culture, concerns are dealt with in an informal manner initially, but should the need arise, a comprehensive complaints procedure is available and this is clearly explained on the school's website in the parents' portal.

Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Leadership and management across the school are good and ensure that the BSO standards are consistently met. The school, under the overarching guidance of the corporate GEMS group, reacted swiftly to the demands of coping with COVID-19. The response was very well managed, with teachers working together to prepare online learning experiences, sharing expertise and ideas. As the school reopened, the management of the return has been equally well managed, with signage and information very evident. Procedures have been in place which ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them and letters and emails have kept parents fully informed. The day-to-day routines run very smoothly.

The senior leadership of the school is outstanding. There is a clear vision seen in the school's ambitious development plan. This, together with the determination that all pupils will succeed, is appreciated by all. A very positive, warm and supportive culture permeates the school.

Leaders at all levels have very high expectations for staff and pupils alike. Expectations are equally high for behaviour, teaching, learning, ethos, professional development, resources and accommodation. The school is inclusive. Leaders believe that all have a right to thrive in the school.

A large part of the school's vision is the determination to 'develop future leaders'. This shapes each pupil's experience, as they are encouraged to discuss with the school's leaders their aspirations and concerns. During the inspection, in lessons and on corridors, conversations were heard between teachers, leaders and pupils regarding issues which affect their lives, not simply school matters.

Middle leaders have the expertise and capacity to improve the school and are doing so, but the impact of their efforts on achievement is yet to be seen consistently.

Governance is outstanding and the local advisory board, together with the GEMS 'corporate' board, ensures that support, challenge and accountability are of the highest standard, with very high expectations articulated clearly. Both the corporate board and the local advisory group understand fully the roles and responsibilities which they have and allow the school's leadership to lead the school without undue interference. The school, therefore, operates in compliance with local and national laws. Board members have broad experience and expertise, and this is brought to bear on their clear understanding of the way the school functions. They are well informed and conversant with a range of data and issues and, consequently, can hold the school's principal to account, for both financial and academic outcomes. The board supports the school's leaders as they develop the school. Recently they extended the leadership team to include assistant heads.

The governance, both corporate and local, ensures that all pupils are safe and happy by, ensuring, for example, that safeguarding arrangements are of the highest standards, are understood by all and are up to date.

A comprehensive professional development programme develops staff and improves pupils' outcomes. For example, learning support assistants have recently become qualified as laboratory technicians and librarians. They have realised personal goals whilst improving the breadth and depth of expertise within the school. Staff value the school's leadership and their morale is high.

The process of self-evaluation and of planning to improve the school involve all, from parents to pupils, via a committee structure. All feel involved. Within the plan are timed targets which are realisable and based on assessment data, as was recommended in the previous report.

Leaders place great emphasis on maintaining the 'Britishness' of the school. For example, a child in an early years classroom, when sounding out the word 'b-u-s', was heard to say, "it's like a London bus, isn't it?" when seeing the picture. In a similar way, when considering the coins to use during number work, British currency is used.

Prior to the pandemic, a school visit to Kenya allowed pupils to see the world through the eyes of others and the discussions, both in Kenya and on returning to the school, were heart-warmingly honest. Pupils valued the things they had so much more because of the visit and were able to express their feelings very clearly. As one pupil expressed it, "we are very lucky to have such a great British school to go to".

Early Years provision

The early years provision caters for children from three to five years. It is well led with smooth day-to-day operation. It complies with the English EYFS curriculum. Similar teaching methods are used across EYFS and Year 1 to ease children's transition at the end of the Reception Year. Parents are welcomed into EYFS classrooms and support their own children in the forest area. Assessment is by observations recorded on an online tracking system. This enables good monitoring of progress towards EYFS goals. Parents have access to the tracking system and are encouraged to contribute evidence. Communication is strong. There are regular meetings with parents. They are given the learning objectives for each half term's work. Recent developments have added to the good classroom provision to strengthen the capacity of the outdoor learning environment to enhance learning. Generous staffing levels enable strong support for children's well-being. Children's behaviour is excellent and their personal development and levels of independence are above what is typical for their age.

Sixth form provision

The sixth form is well led. Students are provided with a wide choice of 18 A levels and 2 BTEC courses, as well as ASDAN routes with which to develop their academic and vocational skills. The BTEC provision is growing and provides a valuable alternative for some students. Excellent support and guidance regarding university placements and employment are provided. 92% of students proceed to higher education, including institutions in the United Kingdom.

Lessons in the sixth form are characterised by teachers' outstanding subject knowledge and high expectations of what students can achieve. Excellent questions and a 'tutorial' atmosphere make students think deeply about their work and encourage them to evaluate their own work and that of others in a searching and well-informed manner. Learning skills, especially those of critical thought and evaluation, are well developed.

Standards, in English particularly, are high and students' very positive attitudes contribute to the outstanding progress they make across a broad range of subjects. In mathematics and the sciences, standards are broadly in line with averages for students in England.

Students enjoy the sixth form and they have a positive impact on their younger peers, acting as role models. They are articulate, caring and compassionate. Their behaviour is exemplary.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Metropole School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country's 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:

In key stage 4, some teachers do not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently. As a result, some of these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. School leaders should ensure that all teachers provide sufficient challenge to the most able pupils so that they achieve their full potential.

The writing skills of some pupils are insufficiently well developed. Leaders should ensure that all teachers check that simple errors of spelling and punctuation are corrected so that standards in writing are at least good in all years.

Middle leaders are very able and work hard to bring about improvements across the school. Plans to create a greater consistency in what they do should be fully implemented so that middle leaders' impact on pupils' achievement can be readily evaluated.

Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactor	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management		✓		
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School details

Name of school GEMS Metropole

Type of school Private

Date school opened August 2014

Age range of pupils 3-18

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number on roll (full-time pupils) 2726

Number on roll (part-time pupils) N/A

Annual fees (day pupils) AED 33792 to AED 45056

Annual fees (boarders) N/A

Address of school

Honsho Road,

Motor City,

Dubai, UAE

Telephone number +971 45507200

Email address registrar_mts@gemsedu.com

Headteacher Mr Nav Iqbal

Proprietor 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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