

# GEMS Wellington International School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: Monday 1 October – Wednesday 3 October, 2019

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Age Group: 3-18

Report Published: 17 October 2019



## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) Schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. This inspection was carried out by four Education Development Trust inspectors who spent three 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 (BSO). 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.

**A policy update was issued by the DfE 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. Manner in which complaints are handled
8. Leadership and management of the school
9. The quality of provision for boarding

The purposes of the inspections are to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare
- provide rigorous and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and celebrate their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

### 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

Established in March 2006, GEMS Wellington International School is a large, private, multicultural day school. It is part of the GEMS Education group of schools. The school is located in the Al Sufouh area of Dubai on Sheikh Zayed Road.

At the time of the last inspection, there were 2376 pupils on roll aged from three to 18 years. This has now increased to 2690. The school has identified 257 pupils who have some form of special educational need, including some who have particular gifts and talents.

The school comprises pupils of 90 different nationalities who speak over 50 languages and dialects, providing a rich cultural diversity. Pupils with Indian backgrounds form the largest cohort and 76 pupils are Emirati nationals. The majority of teachers are UK trained.

The school follows the English National Curriculum, adapted to meet the needs of its international pupils. Pupils are presented for GSCE examinations at the end of the secondary phase (key stage 4) and for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme at the end of the post-16 phase (key stage 5). Almost all students go on to study at universities, the majority in the United Kingdom.

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

The dates of the inspection were agreed with the school 10 weeks before the start date. The school's leaders made documents, policies and assessment information available to the Education Development Trust inspectors four weeks before the inspection. Inspectors also met with school leaders and toured the school on the day before the inspection started. The team examined the school's self-review document, the BSO compliance checklist and a range of other information before the inspection. Inspectors visited 51 lessons across the school covering a wide range of subjects. They held 26 meetings with governors, senior leaders, staff, parents and carers and pupils. Inspectors observed arrival and departure from the school, registration periods, assemblies and breaktimes. They also reviewed samples of pupils' work including displays and artwork. They reviewed school documents containing safeguarding and other policies, development plans, assessment information, attendance records, behaviour, rewards and sanctions. They observed all phases of the school at work and followed up any issues with school leaders.

## Evaluation of the school

GEMS Wellington International School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well to enter or re-enter the UK system.

The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools 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 across the school make outstanding progress and almost all reach standards that are above those expected for their age in England.

A majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children arrive in the early years with skills in English language and communication that are usually below those typical for their age. They make outstanding progress from their starting points and a large majority are well prepared for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1. Most children's listening skills improve rapidly in relation to their starting points, so that they are able to respond accurately to requests and follow instructions. The language-rich learning environment and the continual opportunities provided for children to speak ensure that their vocabulary rapidly expands. During the inspection children ably retold the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' in a variety of ways.

By the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in phonics skills is above average. Learning about the Titanic, Year 2 pupils were able to use objects, clues in the text and written information to extract and infer meaning.

In the primary classes, pupils continue to make outstanding progress and by the time they leave Year 6, they reach standards in reading and writing that are above those typically found in England. Year 4 pupils make effective use of similes and use increasingly rich vocabulary in their descriptive writing. Inspired by Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', pupils described a setting using opening sentences such as 'Standing in the land of crunchy candy...'

to capture the interest of a reader. By Year 6, pupils write in a wide range of genres with increasing confidence and sophistication.

In secondary classes, pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach standards in GCSE examinations which exceed English national averages in language and literature. Pupils in Year 11 communicate imaginatively and effectively, adapting tone and register, drawing on a range of stimuli including classic novels, poetry, music and visual material.

Rapid and sustained progress is made by students in the sixth form and consequently they attain outstanding levels that exceed world average outcomes. Impressively, students explore in depth themes such as 'fear in the novel', drawing on prior learning and extensive background research.

In **mathematics**, pupils across the school make outstanding progress and reach high standards.

Children in the early years make outstanding progress from their below-typical starting points and a large majority are well prepared for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce and extend children's understanding of shape, measurement and number through a variety of activities.

In the primary classes pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach standards that are high in relation to the average in England. Primary pupils apply their knowledge and skills with confidence to solve problems. They increase in independence and confidence, demonstrating and explaining their working to others.

In secondary classes pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach standards that are above averages in England. They build on these skills, for example by solving equations and plotting and interpreting graphs.

Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress and achieve high standards in relation to the world average for IB. They have an excellent understanding of mathematics and take the lead in lessons, explaining their methodology to prove, for example, the De Moivre Theorem for themselves.

In **science**, pupils across the school make outstanding progress and reach standards that are above those expected for their age and higher than those expected in England.

Children in the early years make outstanding progress from their below-typical starting points and a large majority are well prepared for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1. Their learning is enriched by a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities, for example when building bridges to carry the Billy Goat Gruff.

In the primary classes, pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach standards which are above those typically found in England. Their excellent scientific knowledge is typified by the consistent use of a wide, technical vocabulary, almost always in the correct context. The recent support given by specialist science teachers to classes in Years 5 and 6 has further improved pupils' depth of knowledge and skill development.

In the secondary classes, pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach high standards in their GCSE examinations, higher than their English counterparts. They are especially successful in applying their knowledge within a more practical context, taking great

care that their experiments are reliable and fair. They are careful and precise in the way they record their work through tables, charts and graphs.

Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well and are well placed to succeed in future learning. They are able to produce regular high-quality reports and well-argued hypotheses, for example how changing the temperature of water affects its surface tension.

As well as achieving outstandingly well in reading, writing, mathematics and science, pupils achieve equally well in other subjects across the wider curriculum. The school has developed a very well-considered curriculum which is designed to help pupils understand links between subjects as well as developing key learning and critical-thinking skills as they progress through the school.

#### **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 outstanding overall (see Standard 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Standard 3 below).
- The standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Standard 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 5 below).
- The provision of information for parents meets the requirements of this standard (see Standard 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Standard 8 below). Senior leaders have recently restructured the wider leadership team to ensure that all staff focus on the experience of the 'whole child' as each individual pupil moves through the school, replacing just a focus on a particular key stage or department. Leaders recognise that this new approach is in its infancy and fine tuning is required before it is fully embedded.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during October 2019, 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. Those precluded are marriage and civil partnership; gender reassignment; sex and sexual orientation. 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 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 provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

The **curriculum** is outstanding. The school follows a British curriculum which is exceptionally well planned and sequenced. All children in the early years follow an enriched programme of learning to attain early learning goals and this continues seamlessly into the delivery of the national curriculum for all pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4. Excellent information and guidance give pupils the greatest access to a wide range of GCSE courses in which they consistently excel. Those pupils who move on to the sixth form receive a highly individualised programme within the IB curriculum. A strong emphasis on careers advice and guidance, coupled with academic rigour, means that a large majority of students fulfil their ambition of securing a place at their chosen university, over half of which are British universities.

The curriculum is a careful balance of well-sequenced knowledge and valuable learning skills. For example, pupils are able to interpret complicated experiments in Year 11 because they have a very secure understanding of the concept of variables. This has been taught at different stages in their journey through the school and built up over time. Similarly, pupils in Year 10 can understand the dangers to the rainforest eco-system, partly because of their excellent prior knowledge of food chains taught in Year 6 science lessons. The school's recent work on high-performance learning (HPL) techniques has assisted pupils in making these relevant links across the curriculum, often evidenced through their excellent use of vocabulary. Pupils are typically articulate and thoughtful.

A strong feature of the curriculum is the way all pupils are included, even if this means creating a personalised pathway for individuals. Staffing and resources are carefully targeted to ensure that all pupils have the best possible chance of succeeding. As a result, pupils have a very strong understanding of respect and equality of opportunity for all.

In addition to the outstanding core curriculum, the school offers a huge variety of extra-curricular activities which are highly valued by pupils. Many of these are instigated in response to the pupils' interests, such as in the area of digital and creative technologies. One such initiative saw pupils design, build and market small racing cars to take to a competition overseas. Having competed, these same pupils now act as mentors for the next set of pupils who join the club.

The school's extensive, high-quality facilities greatly assist the teaching of the curriculum. Pupils respect this quality through the care they show for resources and equipment, greatly enhancing their learning.

The curriculum fosters a set of valuable attributes that are present in a high number of pupils and assists them with their learning. For example, pupils are typically self-motivated and self-disciplined, independent and responsible, collaborative and creative. These attributes are highlighted through a valued house system which encourages a sense of community to which everyone belongs. A focus on democracy and tolerance contributes to upholding fundamental British values, whilst displays around the school show how the school is playing a full part in the UAE's Year of Tolerance.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** across the school is outstanding. This enables pupils to make excellent progress in acquiring knowledge, increasing understanding and developing skills across the curriculum.

In early years teachers create a highly inclusive and supportive environment. This helps children settle into school well and develops their confidence. Teachers demonstrate a deep

understanding of how young children learn and develop. They provide continual opportunities for children to learn through active play and exploration. Independent learning skills are promoted to help children improve their knowledge of the world around them. As a result, they make outstanding progress in achieving the early learning goals.

Across the school, relationships between pupils and teachers are highly positive and respectful. Consequently, pupils are well motivated and are keen to participate actively in their learning. They say they enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and learn through discussions with their peers. They find most lessons 'stimulating and engaging'. The positive learning environment ensures that pupils feel exceptionally confident in seeking clarification or help if they are having difficulty. They know their 'contributions in lessons will be valued'. Teachers' skilful class and behaviour management strategies ensure that pupils behave extremely well and that lessons are productive.

Teachers are well qualified and have excellent subject knowledge. Learning activities are meaningful and teachers plan tasks and activities that interest, engage and motivate pupils. Most teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to extend and deepen their thinking. Teachers use a wide range of methods and resources to support effective learning. The school policy of 'bring your own device' from Year 2 onwards promotes the use of digital technologies to enhance pupils' learning experiences and skills. Teachers facilitate the delivery of HPL, so that pupils develop a wide range of learning skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, innovation and independent learning. Pupils make choices and challenge themselves and teachers help to remove any barriers that restrict their learning.

Teachers have high expectations. Their use of assessment is highly effective in setting challenging work which is closely matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Tasks encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning, rather than just acquiring knowledge. This encourages them to become exceptionally independent and resilient learners. The pace of learning is brisk, leading to pupils making rapid and sustained progress.

Teachers know pupils well as individuals and have a detailed knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. Most teachers assess pupils' work effectively and routinely give constructive feedback so that pupils know how to improve their work. Teachers increasingly provide individual feedback through verbally recorded notes, alongside digital images of a pupil's work. This approach is successfully supporting improvement in standards. There are thorough systems to track and assess pupils' attainment and progress. This information is used effectively by teachers to match work to pupils' individual needs and abilities and to challenge them to make more rapid progress.

The styles of teaching, learning and assessment take account of those commonly used in schools in the UK and equip pupils with the knowledge and skills to enter or re-enter the UK educational system at an appropriate level.

Teachers speak very highly of the support and encouragement they receive from school leaders.



## 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 provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The school is fully inclusive and, as a result, pupils develop an excellent understanding that: 'no matter who we are know we are all really important'. Inspection evidence, including discussions with pupils, scrutiny of their work and examination of curriculum plans, confirms that the school encourages respect and tolerance for the different groups described within the Equality Act 2010. It fully meets the requirements set out in the Act in relation to age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief. However, it is unable to meet the requirements in respect of gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation due to the laws of the host country.

Pupils are very proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They have excellent relationships with one another and great respect for their teachers. One Year 9 pupil said: 'I guess you don't want any school to tell you how to achieve well, but you would want a school to inspire you. This school gives us no limits. How teachers inspire us is what drives them.' This enjoyment is also reflected in the high levels of attendance, which are above the average in England. Pupils' punctuality in arriving at school and lessons is excellent. A very high proportion of pupils take part in the many and varied extra-curricular activities provided to extend and enhance their personal and social skills. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of experiences open to them.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, they display high levels of interest and concentration. They savour the high level of challenge provided and display a real love of learning, developing a thirst for knowledge. They relish the frequent opportunities they have to take the initiative. Pupils have an excellent understanding of moral codes and right and wrong. Issues are explored in depth in moral education lessons across the school. These are extended further in sixth-form lessons on ethics.

From the outset in the early years, children grow rapidly in confidence and independence. Even the youngest regularly take the lead in lessons and have frequent opportunities to work collaboratively and to solve problems. As pupils move through the school, they routinely demonstrate and explain their thinking to others. They relish the frequent opportunities they have throughout the school to take the initiative and tackle problems. As a result, they do not give up easily when faced with difficulty. They contribute to assemblies and take responsibility, for example as school councillors, with enthusiasm. New pupils to the school speak very highly of their 'buddies', explaining: 'These helpful older pupils soon become our friends.'

Pupils ask challenging questions and express their views clearly and articulately. They respect the views of others and are self-assured. They are very keen to make a meaningful contribution to the world. Their views are canvassed and taken into account through the school council. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are asked to give their views about how best they can be supported in their learning. The personal, social and health education curriculum encourages pupils to value one another's views and feelings. Staff and pupils

collaborate to create class rules. Equality for all is actively promoted and teachers and support staff work very effectively together to ensure that all pupils can reach their potential. Inclusion is at the heart of this outstanding school.

The key expectations of 'The WIS Way' (to be kind, polite, confident and tolerant) permeate the school and are celebrated in house assemblies and through the awards schemes. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to use their initiative and take responsibility both in school and in the wider community as volunteers and for instance as fund raisers for the 'Adopt a School' project supporting a school in Cambodia. Pupils in the primary classes are also encouraged to consider how they can volunteer in their community, for example in the outpatients of a local children's hospital.

They are very well informed about environmental concerns and put their concerns into action through the 'Plastic Free School' and energy-saving initiatives. The promotion of fundamental British values and mutual respect for, and tolerance of, those with different faiths, cultures and races from their own are strong features of the school. Pupils also have a well-developed understanding of and sensitivity towards disability in all its forms. British history and culture are explored in the humanities as well as the democratic process. Pupils have a very good understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures. Pupils of all ages take responsibility and are elected to leadership roles by their peers.

### **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 host country.

Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are outstanding and pupils are cared for exceptionally well. Governors explain: 'We want our children to thrive here and not just perform well.' This is underpinned by the school's 'GEMS Jewels of Kindness' (respect, helpfulness, empathy and compassion).

Pupils grow to become mature, well-rounded young people and have the confidence to share any concerns with an adult, knowing that someone will always listen and always help. Pupils are also keen to take a lead in developing welfare in the school. For example, pupils have recently held workshops for staff and governors on how to support and encourage pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and they have a very good knowledge of issues related to e-safety.

Pupils speak exceptionally highly of how the school helps them feel safe and happy. Parents agree and are confident that the school will keep their child safe. Incidents of bullying are very rare and dealt with quickly, appropriately and sensitively so they do not escalate.

School leaders take a robust approach to making sure the school complies with all health and safety requirements and undertake regular risk assessments and audits. All policies and procedures are available to parents electronically. The school also uses external specialists to monitor and maintain appropriate equipment and facilities. School leaders are swift to respond to all issues no matter how minor.

Security staff provide a very warm welcome to staff, pupils and visitors while remaining exceptionally vigilant. Pupils and adults are kept safe because routes for vehicles and pedestrians are understood by all. Well-trained staff supervise pupils as they move from lesson to lesson, at break as well as during lunchtimes. Staff have a very secure understanding of their safeguarding duties.

The attendance and punctuality of pupils are carefully recorded and monitored by school staff. Attendance is higher than the national average in the UK. Safeguarding arrangements are exceptionally robust and meet corporate, national and UK expectations. Leaders make sure that all staff complete a well-considered and carefully planned training programme, which covers all aspects of welfare, health and safety. Staff receive regular updates throughout the year. First aid is administered promptly when needed and follows the first-aid policy.

The school complies with fire regulations, holds emergency drills at least termly and fire equipment is routinely checked. These are as stringent as those in the UK and meet UAE regulations and legislation.

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

The school meets the requirements for this standard.

Arrangements to check the suitability of the proprietor are robust. The chair and members of the Local Advisory Board have high expectations of senior leaders, who are rigorous in carrying out all required checks on current and new staff members. These ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. All aspects of staff recruitment and vetting are led by the highly effective human-resources team within school and are subject to quality-assurance checks by senior staff and regular audits conducted by GEMS Education.

Staff-appraisal procedures are well established and work effectively. Leaders invest time and energy to ensure that strong appointments are made. This has made a positive contribution to strengthening the already highly effective team. Leaders make sure that appropriate and well-established performance-management procedures are in place to support and challenge staff. They provide a wide range of training opportunities for staff to fine tune their skills and practice.

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

The requirements of this standard are met.

Pupils benefit from an inspiring learning environment which radiates high standards and expectations. Great care is taken with its upkeep and it is clear that staff and pupils are very proud of their school.

Many areas have recently been refurbished, such as a spacious and well-equipped early-years outdoor area. The colourful and engaging library is also very well stocked with a wealth of literature. In many year group bases, a particular area of learning is featured in the break-out areas to engage the pupils, often in an interactive way. Two swimming pools, two sports halls and extensive outdoor sports facilities greatly assist the teaching of an outstanding curriculum, whilst a modern and capacious theatre is well used for assemblies, drama lessons and performances.

The school does everything possible to make the site safe and accessible. Corridors are wide and free of obstacles, leading to an orderly flow of pupils around the building. Where classrooms require specific equipment to assist the teaching of the curriculum, they have been modified extremely well. For example, three music classrooms and five rehearsal rooms have been upgraded with modern acoustic fittings, greatly assisting the ability of students to refine their skills.

Other rooms are well suited to requirements. For example, the new IB centre (The Falcon Centre) is an appealing suite of rooms, working both as a teaching space and as an area for individual study and discussion.

All staff at the school work assiduously to ensure compliance with relevant safety standards and these are reviewed regularly through a cycle of thorough risk assessments and audits. Great care is taken to keep children safe outdoors, for example by providing ample shade and regular access to filtered drinking water. Fire-evacuation procedures are regularly reviewed and practised, with personal evacuation plans in place for those pupils who need them.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

A range of communication systems keeps parents fully informed about their child's education and all that is happening in the school. These include a school communication application, newsletters, emails and parent-and-carer information meetings. Parents greatly value the English curriculum that promotes British standards and expectations. The school's website provides a range of easily accessible information concerning all aspects of school life. This includes basic information, contact details, admissions processes, selected policies, examination results, events calendar and news.

Parents receive regular and detailed reports as well as formal and informal updates about their child's academic and personal progress. Written reports are sent to parents termly and there are regular parent-teacher consultations across the school year. Parents of children in the early years have continual access to information about their child's progress through an online system. Pupils' learning targets are shared to allow parents, teachers and pupils to work together and enable further improvement. Parents have readily available access to teachers and can email or arrange additional meetings to discuss their child as needed.

The school regularly runs workshops on aspects of the curriculum and specialist topics. Recent workshops have focused on children's mental well-being and mindful parenting. Workshops are attended well and welcomed by parents. The school actively seeks the views of parents through regular surveys and discussion groups and acts on suggestions when appropriate. For example, parents requested, and the school agreed to, an additional parent consultation during the year and more flexible appointment times to support working parents. Continual informal dialogue with parents helps the school to improve what it does and enables prompt intervention where necessary.

Parents are highly positive about the school. They value the culture of inclusion and the happy and supportive nature of the school. One parent exemplified this by explaining that when new to the school, 'The school wrapped their arms around my child and supported us all.' Parents report that they are well informed about all that is happening in the school and the progress their children are making. They say that the school and staff are open and very accessible and that the school responds very effectively to all reasonable requests for information and any concerns they may have. They say that the school works well in partnership with them to support their child's education. They feel that they are listened to and that their views are valued.

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

The procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of this standard.

A well-considered and detailed policy gives parents clear guidance about how to raise any concern. This supplements the guidance parents receive as their children are admitted to school. School leaders are keen to listen to any concerns and resolve any questions before they escalate into formal complaints. As a result, while all complaints are exceptionally well documented, they are few in number. The policy allows for an external panel, including representatives from GEMS Education, to review the most serious complaints. Parents and pupils are exceptionally positive about leaders' responsiveness to any concerns.

## **Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Leadership and management across the school are outstanding and ensure that the BSO standards are consistently met.

The leadership of the principal is inspirational. The vision, ambition and determination that all pupils will succeed is understood by all. A very positive, warm and friendly culture permeates the school.

Leaders at all levels have exceptionally high expectations for staff and pupils alike. These expectations are equally high for teaching, learning, behaviour, culture, ethos, professional development, resources and accommodation. At the heart of this inclusive school is the desire that every pupil thrives.

To fulfil the vision 'that each child thrives', the principal has restructured and extended the leadership of the school, the key stages and the curriculum. Leaders are now focused on pupils' experience and outcomes as they move through the school, rather than on the performance of an individual department, subject or key stage. The principal trusts her staff and leaders, empowering them and genuinely devolving responsibility. She welcomes the ideas and suggestions of others and encourages staff and pupils to develop their leadership skills. Leaders recognise that this new approach is in its infancy and say: 'More needs to be done before it is just how we want it to be.'

Governance is highly effective, providing strong support and focused challenge and holding leaders to account. Board members ensure that the school has clear financial policies and provides effective value for money. Corporate governance through GEMS and local governance

through the Local Advisory Board are complementary, with clearly distinct and defined roles and both adding great value to the school. This ensures that the school is run in accordance with local and national law. Members of the Local Advisory Board are highly skilled and experienced professionals from a wide range of backgrounds. They use this breadth of experience well to understand how effectively the school operates and performs. Well-informed governors use their first-hand knowledge of the school's performance during their annual appraisal of the principal. Governors are 'completely behind' the recent changes to the leadership structure, explaining: 'We want children to thrive in our school and not just learn how to perform.'

Corporate governance, together with the Local Advisory Board, works very closely with senior leaders to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are of the highest standard, up to date, shared and followed, so keeping pupils safe and happy in school. One pupil explained: 'School is like my second home; I am loved and cherished in both.'

Early-years leaders are highly experienced and have recently made significant improvements to the outside area, making sure children have access to high-quality learning experiences.

Inclusion is a very strong feature of this outstanding school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are highly valued members of the school community and provided with well-considered support. This helps them thrive as well as their peers.

The high-quality resources are used very effectively by adults and pupils. The importance of reading books is reflected in the extensive library stock to encourage pupils not only to learn to read, but to be active readers. The accommodation is very well maintained. The environment is safe and stimulating, featuring spectacular art work that creates a warm and inspiring atmosphere.

Staff are well qualified and deployed very effectively. They benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities, which are exceptionally well planned and supported internally and externally. Staff speak positively about the support and encouragement they receive and acknowledge: 'We do have to work exceptionally hard, but we can see it is paying off, the children are lovely.'

Internal self-evaluation and external review are well established and accepted as routine. GEMS peer reviews are carried out by peer headteachers regularly and outcomes influence the priorities of improvement plans. The school is regularly inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau and has been judged to be outstanding in the past 10 inspections. Specific audits, for example, health and safety, are carried out by school leaders and all issues quickly addressed.

The highly effective leadership team has excellent capacity to identify, plan and implement sustainable improvements and support GEMS Wellington International School as it continues to grow from strength to strength.

## **Early Years provision**

The early years provision caters for children from three to five years. The facilities include very well-maintained and spacious classrooms with access to well-designed outdoor provision. Resources to support learning are of high quality and help to motivate and engage young learners. Staffing is generous, and a high ratio of adults ensures that children are cared for and

supported very well by all staff. Welfare and safeguarding requirements are fully met. The early-years provision meets the UK independent school standards.

The curriculum follows the early years foundation stage. Children's progress is tracked in all areas of development against the early-learning goals. Significant emphasis is placed on children's personal development. Consequently, children grow in confidence and become increasingly independent. Their behaviour is outstanding. Curriculum delivery and the quality of teaching are highly effective, ensuring that children make outstanding progress. As a result, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is well above the average in England. Children are very well prepared to start Year 1.

Partnerships with parents are given a high priority and levels of communication are excellent. Appropriate management ensures that the early years is run smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

## **Sixth form provision**

The sixth form provision is outstanding. Students are provided with a wealth of opportunities to develop their academic and social skills. They are offered excellent support and guidance regarding university placements and employment. The majority of students go on to attend leading universities in the United Kingdom.

The IB programme is delivered to a very high standard. Lessons are characterised by teachers' outstanding subject knowledge and high expectations of what students can achieve. The use of excellent questions causes students to think deeply about their work.

Standards in English and mathematics are exceptionally high and students' very positive attitudes are a significant factor in the outstanding progress they make across a broad range of subjects.

Older students are excellent role models for others in the school and speak exceptionally highly of their time at GEMS Wellington International School. This is why so many students are keen to complete their sixth-form studies at the school.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

GEMS Wellington International 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) encourages 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:

Further embed the effectiveness of the recently extended leadership of the 'through-school approach' by:

- supporting all leaders in developing an even greater understanding of each phase of the curriculum and associated skills, knowledge and personal development as pupils move from the early years to post-16.



## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

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

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	X			
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### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	X			
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### The quality of provision for boarding

	n/a			
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## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Wellington International School
<b>Type of school</b>	International School
<b>Date school opened</b>	March 2006
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	2376
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Early years (FS1): AED 43,941 FS2, KS1 and KS2: AED 55,246 KS3: AED 76,312 KS4: AED 85,870 Sixth Form: 95,597
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	n/a
<b>Address of school</b>	Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, UAE
<b>Telephone number</b>	+9714-348 4999
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:reception_wis@gemsedu.com">reception_wis@gemsedu.com</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Maryssa O'Connor
<b>Proprietor</b>	GEMS Education

## GLOSSARY

**Achievement** – Progress made by a pupil taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

**Accreditation** – The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and if deemed as having achieved the standards required is provided with some form of official certification or recognition.

**Accreditation Board** – The body responsible for the strategic direction, operation and conduct of the accreditation service provided by Education Development Trust

**Assessment** – The process of finding out how well pupils have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

**Attainment** – The level pupils reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

**British Schools Overseas Inspection (BSO)** – Inspection framework and standards defined by the DfE for British schools overseas to opt to be inspected against.

**Education Development Trust** – Formerly CfBT Education Trust, we are one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally.

**Central Support Team** – Personnel based in Education Development Trust Head Office who are responsible for the administration of the various educational services provided to international schools.

**Combined or Joint Visit** – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

**Cycle of Inspection** – The period of three years between BSO inspection visits.

**Curriculum** – The educational programmes or courses of study taught by a school including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extra-curricular enrichment programmes.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB)** – All private schools in Dubai are required by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority to be inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). A joint DSIB/BSO inspection may be requested through the KHDA's strategic partner Education Development Trust.

**Leadership** – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work

effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

**Learning** – Pupils’ gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

**Management** – The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of a school’s work in an efficient and useful way.

**Ofsted** – The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in England and is responsible for school inspections in England.

**Progress** – The gains in learning made between two points in time. A pupil can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

**School self-evaluation** – The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school’s work on the outcomes for pupils.

**Standards** –

- (1) The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils and a school demonstrates at a particular point in time.
- (2) The evaluation requirements to be used in the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

**Teaching** – All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing pupils’ learning.

With 40 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust 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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