

# GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail, Dubai

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 16–19 January 2023

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Age Group: 2–19 years

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) Schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. 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 DfE, a British School Overseas (BSO) 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 added to the register, 'Get information about schools'.**

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

**The DfE issued a policy update in October 2018. The Department confirmed that 'our policy is now to accredit schools in countries where to meet certain standards would be in breach of the host country laws, as long as there is evidence to substantiate this and all other standards are met'.**

The standards are as follows:

1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment)
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff
5. The premises and accommodation
6. The provision of information
7. The manner in which complaints are handled
8. The leadership and management of the school
9. The quality of provision for boarding.

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

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

### **Key for inspection grades**

**Grade 1**                      **Outstanding**

**Grade 2**                      **Good**

**Grade 3**                      **Satisfactory**

**Grade 4**                      **Inadequate**

### **Proportions used in the report**

90–100% Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all

75–90% Very large majority, most

65–74% Large majority

51–64% Majority

35–49% Minority

20–34% Small minority

4–19% Very small minority, few

0–3% Almost none/very few

## Information about the school

GEMS Wellington Academy, Al Khail is a British curriculum, international co-educational school located in the Dubai Hills community in Dubai. It is one of four schools in the GEMS Wellington cluster and one of 43 GEMS schools across the UAE. The school opened in 2013. Enrolment has grown rapidly since 2020 from 956 to 2209 pupils. The school is continuing to grow and will be at capacity next year with 2500 pupils aged two to 19 years. It is larger than most similar all-through schools.

There are 103 nationalities represented in the school, who speak 42 different languages. Approximately 13% of these pupils receive support to develop their English language skills. It is an inclusive school that caters for the full range of abilities and needs in a personalised way. There are 252 pupils on the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) register, who receive targeted intervention. The school has identified 161 pupils who are most and exceptionally able and/or talented. Some are on an elite performance pathway for sports. Others receive personalised challenges to enhance their excellent progress.

The vision of the school is to 'empower students to aspire, create and excel in a world that is, so they can help build the world that will be'. It does this through a well-designed and tailored curriculum based on the English early years framework and the English national curriculum. This leads to multiple pathways at key stage 4 and 5 including GCSEs, ASDAN, BTEC and A levels. After A levels almost all students go on to universities in the UK, UAE, USA and Europe.

All COVID-19 restrictions are now lifted. In 2019/20 there was a dip in outcomes across core subjects, but these have now improved to pre-COVID-19 levels. The COVID-19 years had an impact on the first graduating cohorts, who did not take examinations. Last year was the school's first year of examinations and results for A levels. There were also positives to come out of this period, not least the school's work on well-being for pupils and staff. The school feels that this year it is almost back to normal.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by four Education Development Trust inspectors. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed 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.

Inspectors visited 101 lessons and five extra-curricular activities. Twenty of the lessons visited were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff.

There were 29 meetings which took place with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and carers and members of the school's governing board.

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. They inspected the school's safeguarding arrangements. The views of parents, pupils and staff were also considered in the BSO survey, which was sent to parents and teachers just prior to the inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

**GEMS Wellington Academy, Al Khail is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from two to 19 years.**

**The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. These are explained later in the report. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified in relation to these unmet standards and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

In **English**, pupils' attainment and progress are outstanding. A large majority of pupils reach standards above national averages in England.

In early years, attainment is outstanding as a result of excellent teaching. There is a great emphasis on developing communication and language skills. Children become increasingly confident and proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing English. As a result of high-quality provision, most children make rapid progress and achieve a Good Level of Development. Most children arrive in the early years with English as an additional language (EAL) or new language. However, they make rapid progress and

reach at least expected levels for their age. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

Pupils achieve well throughout the primary phase. Almost all pupils achieve above the expected standard in phonics in Year 1, due to the systematic and synthetic teaching of phonics from Nursery upwards. In Year 2 pupils learn to retrieve and use their inference skills to explore text. By Year 5, pupils are identifying and using the features that create an effective biography introduction. Attainment by the end of the primary phase is above England averages.

In the secondary school, pupils continue to achieve well and make strong progress. By Year 7 they read increasingly complex fiction and non-fiction material and continue to develop their skills to evaluate texts critically. GCSE examination results are well above UK averages with the majority of pupils achieving grade 7 and above. Results at A level exceed both UK and international standards at A\* to B. Students are making excellent progress in relation to their predicted results particularly in English language.

While pupils in all phases are encouraged to write and teachers model writing well, they do not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length.

In **mathematics**, pupils across the school make outstanding progress and reach standards that are above those expected for their age in England. Not only are the pass levels considerably higher than the UK average at GCSE but a high proportion of pupils gain the very highest grades. For example, the number of 9 grades in the summer examination 2022 were three times the UK national average. Results in mathematics at A level place students in the top 25% of results internationally for summer 2022. Overall, results are well above England averages. All groups of pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make similar rates of progress from their different starting points. This is because teaching is highly effective, planning is forensic and questioning is excellent, resulting in pupils being highly skilled at solving problems.

In the early years, most children make consistently outstanding progress from their starting points. They quickly acquire skills in shape, measurement and number, through practical and investigative activities. For example, by the end of Reception, most children can confidently explore representations and composition of number 10.

The rigorous focus on fluency, automaticity, prove, explain and apply in primary ensures that pupils develop proficiency and understand the underpinning mathematical concepts. By Year 6, most pupils can apply their knowledge of ratio and proportion to solve a variety of complex multi-step problems. By the end of the primary phase, almost all pupils achieve standards which are well above the average in the UK.

In secondary and post-16, most pupils continue to make above expected progress. By Year 9, almost all can determine the equation of a straight line. By Year 11, almost all pupils can expand single, double and triple bracket expressions confidently. By Year 13, most students can convert an expression with linear factors in the denominator into partial fractions.

In **science** pupils achieve high standards that are above UK averages. Progress from starting points is outstanding across all phases of the school.

In the early years most children enter the school with starting points below those typical for their age. Skilled teaching in Understanding the World meets individual children's needs. As a result, the children make rapid progress to catch up. By the end of the early years almost all children have met the expected standard for their age, with the majority exceeding it, and move successfully to Year 1.

In the primary phase, pupils continue to make strong progress. Teachers successfully build upon prior knowledge and skills in each unit of science as pupils progress through Years 1 to 6. Year 6 pupils successfully investigate how to make electrical circuits to create traffic lights. The evidence from external and internal testing shows outstanding attainment over the last three years.

The sequenced curriculum continues very successfully into the secondary phase, building further pupils' knowledge and skills. In a carefully structured Year 9 lesson on radiation, pupils determined how quickly an object transfers heat energy. They then designed investigative work that would prove their hypothesis. Pupils achieve highly and make outstanding progress because teachers adapt lessons to meet their needs. They achieve highly against UK and international standards in GCSE. More than half the cohort achieved grade 7 and above in 2022 in GCSE science. Results have remained consistently strong over the past three years.

Sixth-form students are exceptional when engaging and discussing their learning in science. Prior to 2021, A-level results in physics, chemistry and biology were outstanding, but dipped in 2022 when students returned to taking examinations for the first time. However, results in biology remained above UK averages at the higher grades, but were lower in chemistry and physics.

Pupils make excellent progress in a range of **other subjects** across the curriculum. This leads to excellent GCSE results across a broad range of subjects which continue to improve year on year. On average, pupils achieve one grade higher than those predicted across their GCSE subjects.

In most non-core subjects, A-level results are above UK averages at A\* to A and A\* to B even though results have dipped slightly from teacher assessments last year. On average, students gain just under half a grade higher than predicted across A-level and BTEC subjects. BTEC students are performing better than those taking A levels.

In primary, pupils engage in Projects 4 Change. Teachers create innovative learning opportunities based on the English national curriculum, the school pillar of social enterprise and the UN sustainable development goals (SDG). Pupils discover, take action and make a difference on each of the assigned SDGs each term. They have excellent opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills and develop links with the local environment, charities and resources.

#### **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 are 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).

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during January 2023, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas (2017 updated) except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host**

**country. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK independent school system. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by 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 quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding. The curriculum is broad and balanced, allowing pupils to explore their passions and interests. The different pathways give pupils the skills and qualifications needed for the next stage in their education.

The school has a well-planned and coherent curriculum which aligns with the English national curriculum within an international context. The curriculum is highly ambitious and staff teach it skilfully across the school. Purposeful and discrete cross-curricular activities deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Careful planning supports the youngest pupils. The play-based curriculum and early years foundation stage (EYFS) pedagogy continues as the children move from early years into Year 1, allowing all children to make rapid progress from their starting points.

The school curriculum offers a broad range and choice of 20 different GCSEs and IGCSEs, two ASDAN awards, seven BTECs and 13 A levels. The quality of the personalised curriculum has a positive impact on all pupil progress and attainment, preparing all pupils well for the next stage in their education. As a result, pupils with SEND and EAL make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

Pupils are well equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding to enter or re-enter the British system. There is a highly effective transition programme between the Reception Year and Year 1, from Year 6 to 7 and from Year 11 to 12. The school's Step into Sixth Form Programme includes 'subject talks' and 'market stall' events organised by the students themselves. Alongside these events, individual meetings with senior leaders and up-to-date advice from the careers counsellor ensure an effective and appropriate transition. This personalised support ensures that all pupils are well

prepared and understand the demands of the A-level and BTEC qualifications. The school guides sixth-form students through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service application process and over half go to UK universities.

The British focus of the curriculum is evident throughout the school. This prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. For example, pupils discuss the campaign for the right of women to vote in the UK in history and gender equality in politics and economics.

The enhanced curriculum is values driven. The school's core values bring a breadth of vision to the educational programme with over 150 extra-curricular activities. These are carefully reviewed and adapted so that all pupils in the school participate fully, developing their leadership, communication, creative and innovative skills.

The unique Swimming Centre of Excellence, Elite Tennis and Golf and Football Performance Centre programmes provide bespoke sporting and academic support. These meet pupils' training and dietary needs and have a positive impact on their performance both in and out of the sporting arena.

The curriculum policy and plans pay due regard to the protected characteristics outlined in the UK Equality Act 2010. However, the school does not address equality in relation to marriage and civil partnerships, sex and sexual orientation or gender reassignment due to the laws in the UAE. Equality issues related to maternity and pregnancy are interwoven through the curriculum.

The school celebrates the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, abilities and skills of all its pupils. Pupils demonstrate tolerance, respect and empathy in every aspect of school life.

The school makes excellent use of its local community and the resources available within it. For example, strong links with Kings College hospital, the Jumeirah hotel chain and the Burj Al Arab provide opportunities for Year 10 and 12 internships.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** is outstanding across the whole school. It contributes to pupils of all ages and abilities making rapid progress and achieving consistently high standards in all subjects. School leaders show commitment in their drive continually to raise teaching quality through well-established and rigorous quality-assurance processes. Teachers are well qualified, with strong subject knowledge and an understanding of how pupils of different ages learn. Research-informed practice underpins the school's nine teaching principles, which support teachers in providing high-quality teaching across the school. Limitless Learning underpins the school's ethos and practices across all phases.

Opportunities are provided for pupils to review and retrieve information from previous learning through highly effective teacher questioning. Modelling and detailed feedback help pupils to learn in small steps, enabling them to think more deeply and critically about their responses. Teachers' clear explanations of learning intentions and success criteria sharply focus pupils' minds on their learning and motivate them to succeed in lessons. Pupils with SEND are very well supported by learning support assistants (LSAs) within the classrooms through curriculum adaptations. This contributes to them making similar rapid progress to that of their peers.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning. They listen, concentrate and focus on their learning. They work well together using well-prepared resources to enhance their learning. Effective teaching encourages them to apply their knowledge and skills, to show interest in their work and to learn and think for themselves. The use of technology enhances learning.

Teachers develop pupils' independence skilfully, while challenging or supporting them in a timely way to ensure that they develop their knowledge and skills effectively. For example, in Year 6, pupils grappled with choosing the most relevant evidence to support their argument that single-use plastic should be banned since it pollutes the oceans.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are extremely positive, respectful and trusting. Pupils' behaviour in all lessons is exemplary. This enables pupils to take risks in learning to deepen their understanding. Teachers ensure that lessons are orderly and productive and that there is no waste of learning time. This is typical of the high expectations that teachers have and those that pupils have of themselves.

The school has a clear assessment policy which sets out how teachers' assessment and formal external examinations ensure that monitoring of pupils' learning is continuous over time. Online assessment systems allow teachers to track pupils' attainment and progress continually and rigorously. Assessment opportunities are planned into the learning sequences. Teachers intervene at the point of learning to give concise written and oral feedback to enable pupils to improve their work. Pupils take greater responsibility for their learning through self- and peer-assessment, which encourages engagement and reflection on their own performance and that of their peers. Teachers ensure that learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs based on reliable information. Support for the least able and challenge for the most able are routinely planned for in lessons. Teachers plan challenging activities to support English language learners (ELL) so that the cognitive challenge remains high while their language needs continue to be supported.

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

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

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

The school's vision is to 'empower students to aspire, create and excel in the world that is, so they can help create a world that will be'. Inclusive and creative learning environments encourage independence, curiosity and choice. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have high levels of confidence in their learning. Pupils' leaders enthusiastically deliver weekly assemblies linked to cultural events, well-being, British and Islamic values and sustainable development goals.

There is a strong community spirit. Pupils and staff are supportive, caring and respectful of each other. At the heart of everything they do are the school's three pillars of The Science of Learning, Social Enterprise and Student Agency. These empower pupils to be the builders of a better world through empathy, hard work and resilience.

Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. The behaviour-for-learning policy is highly effective. As a result, pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and their impact on others. Pupils are encouraged to use 'reflection zones' staffed by mental-health trained staff and two school counsellors. Staff skilfully use restorative approaches and resolutions to address conflict or misunderstanding. Rewards and incentives are set around behaviour, with reward days, house points and house competitions embedded within the culture of the school. For example, pupils can pick which trip to go on when they achieve the highest house-point total.

The views of the pupils are frequently collected through student voice, curriculum subjects and students' council. Almost all pupils say that they feel listened to by the school. For example, a 'worry box' has now become 'a positive post box' to empower all pupils to write their gratitude. Pupils' feedback has meant that food technology is now on the curriculum, making this the only school in the UAE to offer this subject at A level. The debate club enables pupils to express their political opinions.

Pupils have good knowledge of public institutions both in the UAE and in the UK such as Russell group universities, British politicians and the monarchy. Teachers effectively identify and make links between British and Islamic values. The school promotes the

rule of law through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum where pupils compare government in the UAE and in the UK. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 lead assemblies on tolerance and mutual respect. The diversity of the school population is a strong feature of the school. Pupils celebrate occasions and festivals from different world cultures, including Remembrance Day, Ramadan and UAE Flag Day.

Tolerance is a continuous part of the curriculum through the primary Projects 4 Change and through the personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils' leaders and year groups put on whole-school awareness and charity events, including International Peace Day, Mental Awareness Week, Pink Day and bake sales. Pupils' understanding and progress in citizenship and British values extend further through all aspects of the curriculum, in the primary Grow Well and in the comprehensive tutor programme in secondary.

The school places equality and democracy at the heart of its work. All pupils can apply for leadership roles such as head boy and girl and their deputies, prefects and senior champions, encouraging their independence, self-esteem and self-confidence.

All pupils participate actively in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, exploring new interests, enhancing their talents and building essential 'real-world' life skills. There are many other enriching opportunities for all pupils to benefit from, including local visits and educational visits to other countries, for example the Duke of Edinburgh expedition to Nepal.

The school's values policies, ethos and curriculum promote respect for the protected characteristics outlined in the UK Equality Act (2010) in relation to age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief. However, the school is unable to meet fully the requirements in respect of sex and sexual orientation, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership due to the laws of the UAE.

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

Welfare, health and safety are outstanding across the school.

The school meets the requirements of the standard and the regulatory requirements and cultural obligations of the UAE. School leaders ensure that the safety and welfare of staff and pupils have a high priority and that all health and safety policies are effectively implemented.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school which is firmly embedded into routines. Policies to protect and care for pupils and staff are well thought out. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are continually updated to reflect changes in UK legislation and guidance. They reflect the school's commitment to inclusion and its aim to meet the needs of all pupils. There is regular training for all staff and they have access to an electronic system to register any concerns about pupils' safety. Consequently, staff know exactly what their safeguarding responsibilities are. The experienced and qualified safeguarding leaders deal appropriately with all concerns.

Pupils say they feel safe and happy in the school, including new pupils who say they settle into school quickly because of the support available. They know that they can talk to any member of staff, including the school counsellor if they have a concern or worry. Secondary pupils report their feelings once a week through Upstrive, which is checked by form tutors, who intervene as necessary. The school doctor and three nurses provide timely and effective first aid in a purpose-built clinic.

Keeping pupils safe when using the internet is a priority, with security on the school's internet and age-appropriate training. There are rigorous risk assessments for all appropriate aspects of school life, including when pupils take part in off-site activities. Leaders undertake fire-risk assessments and take appropriate steps to ensure that the school complies with UK and local fire-safety regulations. Regular fire drills and other safety checks take place and a detailed monthly audit of all safety is undertaken in collaboration with GEMS Education. Senior leaders also watch concerns via the Near Miss online reporting portal.

Leaders make sure that the premises are healthy and safe. Security guards monitor the school site, 24 hours a day. Security staff check visitors at entry points to the site throughout the day. The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is excellent and reinforced through the behaviour-for-learning policy. This exemplary behaviour in lessons contributes significantly to their sustained progress. Instances of bullying are rare and records are kept of all misbehaviour. Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with English averages and pupils arrive punctually at school and lessons.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Background checks and the required staff safeguarding training comply with up-to-date UK expectations to ensure the suitability of adults working with children and young people in the school. The school keeps a very detailed and comprehensive single central record of all staff that includes checks on identity, medical fitness, right to work, qualifications and criminal-record check. The data in the single central record of staff is secure and updated when required. All the required checks are made before confirming an appointment and issuing visas and work permits. Locally recruited staff are thoroughly police checked. Thorough checks are also in place for outsourced companies and the local advisory board. All new staff receive a thorough induction. New staff who inspectors spoke to felt they had settled into school well.

Designated safeguarding leaders, as well as the majority of senior leaders, are appropriately trained in what to do regarding safeguarding concerns. Those involved in the recruitment of staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. The governing body has appointed a dedicated, suitably trained safeguarding governor, who oversees this key aspect of the school's work to ensure compliance and a commitment to keeping children and young people safe. A colour-coded lanyard identity system is in place so that all adults are identifiable as staff, parents or visitors.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school is a bright, spacious and inviting building. The early years, primary, secondary and sixth-form areas of the school are carefully designed to give a community feel within a large school. They are successfully tailored to the needs of the different age groups in designated areas for each phase. The libraries for each phase are fresh and welcoming spaces, appropriately stocked and staffed. All classrooms have suitable modern technology that is used to great effect in all lessons.

Classrooms are in good decorative order and well maintained. They provide plenty of space and light and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. There is an impressive range of facilities and resources to enhance the curriculum and an extensive range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. These include a purpose-built gym, three swimming pools, music suite and specialist teaching rooms.

There are highly effective systems in place to ensure the security of the grounds and premises. A one-way, traffic system, staffed by several very efficient security staff, reduces congestion and ensures that pupils arrive safely into the school building. Car

parking facilities are also available for drop off. Security cameras and outdoor lighting ensure that pupils, staff and the school site remain safe.

There are sufficient washrooms that are clearly labelled for adult and pupil use, including for those with disabilities. Standards of hygiene are high because of the work of the support staff who are diligent and well trained. Air conditioning and soundproofing are always effective.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Parents who responded to the BSO survey and those who met with inspectors confirmed that the communication they receive from the school meets their requirements. Parents are highly positive about the school. They made comments about their children loving being at the school, the wonderful sense of community and environment for learning and amazing, kind and enthusiastic teachers. The inspection team agrees with their views.

Parents receive regular and detailed reports as well as formal and informal regular updates about their child's academic and personal progress. They have access to live information regarding their child's attainment and progress and current information specific to their child's class. There are also regular parent-teacher consultations across the school year. Parents report being very happy with the frequent and detailed communication from the school during COVID-19.

The school's website is comprehensive and provides a range of easily accessible information about all aspects of school life. This includes basic information, contact details, admission processes, policies, examination results, university destinations, events calendar and news. Admissions staff are available to answer any questions and will arrange a visit to the school for prospective parents.

The parents inspectors spoke to said that leaders and teachers have an open-door policy which they appreciate. The school regularly seeks parents' views through surveys, coffee mornings and the parent council and these show very high levels of satisfaction with the school. Parents also say that the school responds very effectively to all reasonable requests for information. Parents feel their views are heard and taken into account through the Parent Council and the local advisory board (LAB). In the GEMS-wide parent survey in May 2022, the school received the highest parental

satisfaction rate of all GEMS schools in the UAE. Feedback from parents has also resulted in more workshops focusing on, for example, raising teenagers and supporting well-being and mental health. Consequently, they feel part of the school community and say that the school works well in partnership with parents to support their child's education.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The complaints policy is available on the website in the 'for parents' section and has annual updates. It complies with all requirements. The staged procedure outlines how complaints will be dealt with by different staff members within timescales and the training staff receive. A record of all contact with parents including formal and informal complaints remains confidential, but is monitored by leaders. There is a parent-relations executive which mainly deals with operational concerns. All complaints find a resolution swiftly to the satisfaction of most parents.

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

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are fully and consistently met.

The stable executive leadership team is now in its third year in role. The clear vision it created in consultation with staff, parents and pupils is wholly embraced by all who work in the school. Governors, parents and staff speak of the quality of the leadership team and the trust they have in the school. This suggests huge capacity for moving the school forward still further. It is evident that all staff are fully committed to the ethos of 'limitless learning' underpinned by cognitive-science approaches because they helped to lead its implementation. Staff and leaders have been well trained in the teaching principles which are evident throughout the school. All are excellent role models who inspire and share the aspirational culture of the school. Early years staff are extremely well led.

Accountability is evident at all levels through a process of self-evaluation and action planning based on reliable data. Highly effective academy leaders support middle leaders who are committed to improving their subjects, standards and the well-being

of pupils. Action plans are regularly revisited to assess progress and impact throughout the year. The academy improvement plan reflects accurate self-evaluation and monitoring by senior leaders and the LAB.

The management of staff performance leads to very high standards and a consistency in teaching and learning. Teachers create their own online portfolio, setting targets based on quality assurance and their intended professional growth. They receive support through professional development to meet both whole-school priorities and individual needs. There are opportunities for leadership development as well as peer support. Indeed, the sharing of best practice is valued by all staff, both in school and across the GEMS Wellington cluster.

All teachers who responded to the survey and who inspectors spoke to said that they are proud to be a member of staff and enjoy working at the school. This was very evident in their demeanour and confirmed by pupils who said they have excellent relationships with staff and can ask for support at any time. Pupils' views are always taken into consideration to support their needs and wishes.

Governance has two levels. GEMS Education provides corporate governance and takes responsibility for finance, resourcing, operations, human resources and safeguarding oversight. It ensures regulatory and legal compliance through external audit reports. The GEMS senior vice president of the Wellington cluster is the principal's line manager. She holds him accountable by appraising his performance against five categories in weekly meetings. The principal also has collegiate support from the Wellington cluster.

The LAB acts as a critical friend, holding leaders to account for school improvement against the development plan. The stable group of volunteers on the LAB currently includes the chair of the parent council, industry partners and colleagues in higher education. They know the school well and work in partnership with it. There is an understanding and respect for the separate responsibilities of the governors and school leaders.

Governors seek the views of parents through regular surveys and the parent council. They have directly influenced aspects of the school's development including home-school communication and the curriculum. In the inspection survey, parents commented on how 'successful the school is at motivating pupils to be the best they can be'. They also spoke of how the school has 'gone from strength to strength due to great leadership'.

Leaders at all levels have developed a culture of tolerance, equality and understanding. There is a strong commitment to safeguarding. This is an incredibly

inclusive school where everyone belongs and is welcome. Pupils are accepting of one another and celebrate their internationalism. They grow in confidence in this safe school environment and appreciate all that is on offer to them.

## EYFS provision

Children in the early years make outstanding progress. The majority of children enter the EYFS with low starting points. Many of them have communication skills below that which is typical for their age. Early assessments allow teachers to identify the main areas of improvement and barriers to learning with a specific focus on communication and language. They then plan learning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests. This ensures that children remain on track to reach the UK Good Level of Development.

Almost all children in early years make rapid progress towards achieving the early learning goals as a result of the personalised adaptations within the planning and provision. By the time they complete their Reception Year, almost all have made great strides and are working above UK average standards. This provides a very secure start for the primary phase.

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. They feel confident, secure and challenged. They have daily access to highly stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments, with planned, fully inclusive continuous provision. Partnership with parents is a key aspect to ensuring appropriate care and support. Teachers are skilful in providing play-based learning to provide balanced opportunities for children to direct their own learning as well as engaging in adult-led activities to support rapid progress. If needed, children may continue to work on meeting the early learning goals as they move into Year 1. Here, the play-based curriculum continues to ensure sustained progress on transition to key stage 1. Teachers display an excellent understanding of how children learn and develop. Leadership of the early years is both strong and highly effective.

## Post-16 provision

There are currently 136 students in the sixth form. Approximately 90% progress from Year 11. This year 45 students were new to the sixth form from other schools. Transition is well supported by 'market stall events' where Year 11 pupils can gain information about courses from the students currently studying them. Retention is extremely high.

A wide range of subject options and pathways are available to students including A levels, BTECs and ASDAN. The school continues to build on these options in response to student needs and requests, including level 2 BTECs, law and further mathematics. In the future they will offer a foundation year for those who would benefit before taking up a university place.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and facilitate learning with enthusiasm. In response, students work hard and are able to lead their own learning. This leads to excellent outcomes, particularly in BTEC, but also A levels. Vocational courses are exceptionally effective in engaging students.

Attendance is in line with that of the rest of the school at 95%. Students said that they enjoy coming to this 'friendly' school and new students to the sixth form feel welcomed and quickly part of the group. Vertical tutor groupings support collaboration between year groups and give older pupils the opportunity to help those younger than themselves.

Students appreciate the opportunities for work experience and the 'amazing' careers support they receive on a bespoke, personal level from the highly experienced careers advisor. Last year just under half went to UK universities, the rest to the UAE, USA and Europe.

There is a wide range of leadership opportunities available, many, with democratic elections, initiated by the students themselves. The latter are excellent role models for other pupils. They feel comfortable speaking to leaders to pitch ideas. They understand that their individual choices and wishes will be seriously considered. They spoke of the care for their well-being as well as their academic progress.

Leadership of the sixth form is stable and strong. The relatively new head of sixth form was promoted from assistant head of sixth form. The previous leader is now assistant principal with responsibility for sixth form. They have a good understanding of the priorities for development and the sixth form continues to grow and be successful.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Wellington Academy, Al Khail meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws.

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

2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil

partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;

5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

At times, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. As a result, some pupils do not write with speed, depth and fluency. Leaders should train teachers to develop pupils' stamina for writing at length, in readiness for the next stage in their learning.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

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

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

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

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

	n/a			
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## School Details

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail
<b>Type of school</b>	Private
<b>Date school opened</b>	2013
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2-19 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	2209
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	n/a
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 48,000 to 86,760
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	n/a
<b>Address of school</b>	Exit 18, Marabea Street, East Dubai, UAE
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 04 512 9100
<b>Email address</b>	Principal_wek@gemsedu.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Campbell Douglas
<b>Proprietor</b>	GEMS Education. Mr. Sunny Varkey

## 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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