

# GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 31 January - 4 February 2022

Lead Inspector: John Hopkins

Team: Robin Attfield, Michael Gaunt, David Jones, Anne Yeomans,

Age Group: 2 to 18

Report Published: 28 February 2022

Report Reference Number: 02/010/2022



## 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 five inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the school. Education Development Trust is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Education Development Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally. Education Development Trust employs over 2,500 staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

**To be recognised by the Department for Education, a British School Overseas must have an inspection report which shows that their performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be registered on the UK Government's Get Information about Schools (GIAS) website.**

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

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

The Standards are as follows:

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

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

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

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

### Proportions used in the report

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

## Information about the school

GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis is an inclusive school for pupils from two to 18 located on two adjacent sites in Silicon Oasis. It is part of the GEMS Education group of schools and the subgroup of premium Wellington Academies. It has 3322 pupils, representing around 100 nationalities. It is similar in size to other schools in its group. The school prides itself on its inclusivity, with over 400 pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Fifty-three per cent speak English as an additional language and 3% are English-language learners. There are 276 teaching staff (including the senior team) of whom 81% qualified in the UK. The appointment of a new principal in 2021, coupled with the school's tenth anniversary, prompted the renewal of its vision, which is now: *'to empower every student to follow their own pathways and opportunities within our diverse environment. We inspire them to be open minded, empathetic, creative members of their global community'*.

The school follows the English national curriculum to GCSE level in secondary, with A levels, BTECs and the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) at post-16. The majority of students, some 54%, go on to attend universities in the UK. Other destinations include North America, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the UAE.

The school's online platforms were used extensively in the COVID-19 pandemic with pupils learning from home, including for 10 days in the month preceding the inspection. The school enforces robust and effective COVID-19 protocols.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by five Education Development Trust inspectors. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed and the inspection dates were agreed with the school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had excellent access to information about the school before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 80 lessons both in classes and live online. Six were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff.

Thirty-four meetings took place with leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, parents and carers and members of the school's governing board, including the GEMS Education Vice-Principal, who has responsibility for the school.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and the work produced digitally. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and operational and strategic plans. The school's safeguarding arrangements were scrutinised. The views of parents, pupils and staff were also considered.

## Evaluation of the school

Gems Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from two to 18. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the school maintained a full programme of online lessons, supported the well-being of pupils and ensured their successful reintegration back into face-to-face learning. Ongoing formative feedback from teachers to pupils, and from pupils to other pupils, contributed to effective learning. The school monitored pupils' progress against their own potential and against international standards, using a commercial testing programme. Teachers ensured that all assessment-board requirements were met.

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

In **English**, pupils' attainment and progress are outstanding across the school. IGCSE examination results are well above the average for English schools, and the results at A level and in the IB exceed international standards. Many pupils enter the school with English as an additional language and, supported by well-judged intervention, make rapid progress, particularly in speaking and listening. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), most children meet or exceed the expectation for their age. Initiatives such as the Accelerated Reading Programme and Core English, together with extending phonics teaching into Year 1, have improved attainment and progress. In EYFS, children can identify letter shapes and names and begin to read and write simple sentences. This good start helps them to read and write, including evaluative, descriptive and imaginative writing, with increasing fluency as they move up the school. By the end of key stage 3 most pupils can read and write fluently, using the appropriate tone for different audiences. Pupils of all ages take advantage of the wealth of books available in libraries and classrooms to read for pleasure. They develop very good research and comprehension skills. They enjoy discussing what they have read and do so with increasing insight. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils analysed both the meaning of a poem and the ways in which meaning was conveyed. Throughout the school, but especially at post-16, pupils take advantage of the small group sizes to engage confidently in discussion and develop their understanding of literature.

In **mathematics**, pupils' progress is outstanding and results at IB, A level and GCSE are well above UK and international averages with 91% gaining A\* to C in their GCSE examinations. Results in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies and in post-16 provision indicate improvement in standards over time.

---

In EYFS, children enjoy learning about numbers and shapes and make outstanding progress. Nearly all children reach or exceed age-related expectations by the time they enter the primary school. Through structured teaching and handling a variety of objects, they recognise and name different shapes.

Pupils, including those with SEND and those who are learning English as an additional language, make outstanding progress in mathematics throughout the school. Both girls and boys perform well with many girls choosing to study the subject at the highest levels.

By the end of key stage 2, pupils are highly competent in using the four rules of number and increasingly competent in solving mathematical problems. Year 6 pupils, for example, calculate percentages of different amounts using strategies that they devise themselves. Pupils develop their independent learning throughout the secondary school with able pupils taking GCSE statistics exams at the end of Year 9 and achieving very good results. Post-16 students are enthusiastic and self-motivated, gain outstanding results and enjoy working with teachers on an increasingly personalised learning journey which prepares them well for their future.

Outstanding progress and standards arise from teaching of high quality which is supported by outstanding subject leadership. Teachers consistently demonstrate excellent knowledge of their subjects, their pupils and how to develop learning. Pupils' progress is monitored and evaluated very carefully.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding. The large majority of children in EYFS make more than expected progress in understanding the world. Science vocabulary and skills are developed rapidly through specific lessons and through the school's outdoor learning programme. In an early years outdoor session children made observations and deductions for materials they found in the natural area using specific scientific terms to describe them.

Pupils in primary, key stage 1 and key stage 2 make strong progress and by the end of each year achieve outstanding attainment. In a Year 2 class pupils were challenged to construct an investigation into how hygiene and germ detection can be improved to support frontline workers. In collaboration they design and carry out investigations that have scientific accuracy and validity and use scientific language to explain their work.

The large majority of learners in secondary continue to make strong progress and attain exceptional levels. In a Year 10 biology class, pupils used problem solving to explore how human characteristics arise from different genes. They demonstrated an advanced understanding of scientific concepts and specific vocabulary. In Year 13 chemistry, students describe organic reactions and how organic compounds are made. They work independently on tasks carefully matched to their needs, including carrying out challenging online work and producing flow charts demonstrating relationships between organic compounds. In these lessons teachers' robust subject knowledge and questioning skills support higher-order learning, such as critical thinking.

Across the school, which is non-selective and fully inclusive, pupils' progress is outstanding in a broad range of other subjects. In EYFS and primary, specialist lessons are taught in performing arts, modern foreign languages, physical education, outdoor learning, Arabic and Islamic education. In secondary the curriculum is built around an enriched key stage 3, and a key stage 4 that offers a wide array of option choices. Options are first taught in Year 9 in order to offer exposure, as part of a skills-based curriculum, to subjects which pupils have not studied before. At post-16 the school offers a wide range of pathways, including A levels, BTEC, IB, both the diploma programme (IBDP) and the careers programme (IBCP). As a result, they reach a standard in GCSE, A level, IB and BTEC which is better than expected in the UK. Significant value, typically a grade, is added to both GCSE and post-16 outcomes.

---

**Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:**

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding.
- 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).

**The school's key strengths are:**

- Across the school, talented teachers ensure, through teaching of personalised learning pathways, that pupils develop a wide range of strong learning skills.
- Comprehensive and robust analysis of a wide range of assessment information allows a bespoke, rich and varied curriculum which challenges pupils to reach maximum potential.
- Provision of exceptionally inclusive practice that prepares pupils with SEND well for life in a global society.
- The school provides an excellent environment for learning with outstanding facilities for pupils of all ages. Staff work very well together to ensure that pupils are safe at all times and the modifications made during the COVID-19 epidemic have been exemplary.
- The high calibre of leadership shown by the principal, her senior and middle leadership team ensures that all staff share a journey clearly focused on the school's mission and vision.
- Exceptionally effective and dynamic school self-evaluation and strategic-planning processes, a consequence of which was that the inspection found no significant areas needing improvement.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during February 2022, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas 2017 except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the United Arab Emirates. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK independent school system. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and is valid for a period of three years.**

## Standard 1. The quality of education provided by the school

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met except for the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The curriculum is outstanding. A clear philosophy emphasises breadth and balance and provides an immense range of opportunities for pupils to follow individual pathways. The school has forged links with many local bodies, including businesses, universities, advisory and support organisations and local schools. These links enhance careers education and work-experience programmes. The school regularly uses guest speakers and local organisations to enrich the curriculum. For example, the use of visiting technology companies to run robotics classes. There is an emphasis on exploring the links between subjects and reflecting on learning. Built into the structure and content of the curriculum are core British values and attributes of a British school and community. Aspects such as the study of British authors, learning about British history and geography, British customs and traditions and exposure to day-to-day aspects of British life provide the context for learning based on modern life in Britain. British values such as democracy and the rule of law are strongly emphasised in moral education and highlighted in history and literature. All pupils develop an understanding of the world around them with empathy, respect and tolerance for the values of others, including the protected characteristics of age, disability, beliefs, race and pregnancy and maternity. This is both in the general curriculum and in the school's outstanding blend of moral education and pastoral support, exemplified in programmes such as Learning to Learn and World Studies.

This excellent general education is extended by a wide range of enrichment activities, taught during the school day so that all pupils can experience them. Knowledge and understanding of the UAE are enhanced by a wide range of visits and special events. Pupils are outstandingly well prepared for the next phase of education, including re-entry to the British system where appropriate, by a dedicated careers and university programme, including mentoring. Because the range of curriculum choice is so broad, pupils benefit from working in small groups and from close contact with their teachers.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed, using assessment information, to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND and/or with English as an additional language.

The early years curriculum is very well planned and successfully promotes children's development in all the areas of the EYFS programme. Its close links to the Year 1 curriculum strengthen transition and provide continuity in children's learning and personal development. In the primary phase, the English national curriculum is fully incorporated in a well-planned, integrated 'concept curriculum' which delivers the full programmes of study while enabling children to see their learning as forming a coherent whole. The use of a considerable amount of specialist teaching adds to the rigour of learning as pupils move through the primary phase.

An outstanding feature of the school is the range of choice provided increasingly from key stage 3 onwards. In Year 9 a mini-options programme allows pupils, guided by staff, to begin to design their future pathways. In key stage 4, pupils choose from an unusually large number of subjects, in addition to a core of learning. Pupil groups are carefully organised, with similar subjects, so that a balanced curriculum is preserved.

Highly individualised learning pathways support pupils with SEND. Provision includes life-skill development programmes for older pupils and carefully devised plans to improve accessibility to the whole curriculum for disabled learners. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported through a spectrum of effective initiatives and programmes, including well-planned

individualised intervention. The school's exceptional inclusion practice has ensured that all pupils make accelerated progress across all core subjects.

At post-16 there is a wealth of provision: 15 A-level subjects and 30 IB subjects, including a wide range of language options. A range of BTEC options provides for those students for whom a vocational programme is more suitable.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the school was highly successful in adapting its curriculum to support learners at home. Outstanding online provision enabled lessons to continue as scheduled and helped to develop pupils' resilience and independent-learning skills. The school has very successfully prioritised pupils' well-being during the return to face-to-face lessons.

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

Across the whole school, the quality of teaching and learning, both face to face and online, is outstanding. Lessons are very well planned, leading to extremely high expectations and learning which is very well suited to the needs of each pupil. Teachers are very knowledgeable, both about their own area of expertise and about the pupils in their care, as well as the English national curriculum and examination requirements. All pupils are supported, in a truly bespoke sense. As a result, they thrive and make excellent progress, usually achieving very well indeed. The use of well-trained support staff and proficient use of high-quality information-technology systems contribute significantly to effective outcomes for pupils.

Teachers employ a wide range of techniques, typical of those seen in British schools, which open the door to high-level learning. Teachers ask open questions, encourage debate and challenge pupils' views. As a result, pupils display impressive learning skills. They reflect on their own learning, think critically about issues and solve problems. They routinely assess their own work and that of others against a marking rubric. Practical skills are also highly developed as a result of a learning environment which is orderly and productive, ensuring that pupils are completely engaged in their learning. In a Year 13 BTEC performing arts lesson, for example, students worked with a ballet professional and a teacher to devise and evaluate a ballet phrase which could then be adapted as mood changed.

Pupils successfully take responsibility for their own learning. They navigate complex learning pathways with aplomb and, consequently, they learn most effectively. In a lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils decided which learning experiences suited them best and challenged themselves appropriately.

Pupils collaborate and engage in very productive group work, where discussion is of the highest order.

Assessment arrangements are robust and thorough, resulting in comprehensive analyses, which teachers use to ensure that learning experiences meet the needs of pupils at an individual level. Additionally, ongoing formative feedback from teachers to pupils, and from pupils to other pupils, ensures that learning moves on rapidly in a productive and positive environment.

Leaders and teachers throughout the school routinely use data to discuss and describe potential, progress and achievement in a most informed way, showing that they have a deep and thorough understanding of each learner.

---



Pupils' behaviour for learning in lessons is excellent. Relationships with their teachers and with each other are warm and respectful. They are most tolerant of each other, especially when dealing with each other's views and opinions, and care about each other. This serves to create a very productive climate for learning.

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

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Inspection evidence from the scrutiny of curriculum plans, pupils' work and discussions with inclusion leaders show that the school promotes respect for the protected characteristics outlined in the UK Equality Act (2010) in relation to age, race, belief, disability and pregnancy and maternity. Promotion of the protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation is precluded by the laws of the host country. The school actively promotes fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, respect and tolerance and individual liberty. Pupils feel they have a strong voice through their 'student leadership team' consisting of head boy, head girl, house ambassadors and class representatives elected by pupils.

The school promotes highly inclusive practice. Pupils from a diverse range of faiths and cultures are fully supported, including those with SEND and English as an additional language. The school allows pupils to follow personalised development pathways, so that all succeed. This operates at all levels across the school and is further supported by pupils' leaders such as peer mentors and inclusion champions. A student in Year 12 serves as an inclusion ambassador leading campaigns and workshops to improve accessibility for disabled pupils. The school strongly supports pupils of all ages in taking positions of responsibility. The student leadership team is proactive in enabling pupils to lead school initiatives and contribute ideas to improve the school and give support in the wider community. To further develop responsibility and resilience in older students the school participates in internationally recognised award schemes, field trips and visits to foreign countries to support communities.

The school actively promotes gender equality through pupil-led events, such as International Day of the Girl. Racial equality has been promoted by pupils, leading to a successful Black History Month. Across the school pupils' behaviour is excellent. They have caring, supportive and respectful relationships with each other and with adults. This contributes to a school climate of calm, enjoyment and high aspiration. The school's Jewels of Kindness programme and anti-bullying initiatives ensure that pupils know right from wrong and understand citizenship.

Pupils' self-esteem, confidence, resilience and awareness of healthy living are supported through a range of age-appropriate programmes, including the school's bespoke Growell programme, assemblies and guest speakers who provide support on online safety. The school has a high-quality dynamic and well-organised range of enrichment programmes to promote pupils' engagement and development. Attendance at extra-curricular activities is high and pupils greatly value the opportunities provided by the school.

Celebration of the different religions and cultures of the school occur throughout the year. These include Ramadan, Diwali, Lunar New Year and Armistice Day. The understanding of cultural diversity

---

is further enhanced through the school's own New World Studies curriculum. This supports pupils in developing a deeper appreciation of the perspectives of different cultures and the importance of cultural competence as a measure of personal success.

British values are woven deeply into the school's work. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of democracy, exemplified in student leadership campaigns and elections where pupils listen carefully to others' views and cast their vote. Democratic values permeate the school and are evidenced by the school's culture of respect and tolerance. British values are explored in the school's English literature and history curriculums and are always addressed carefully through balanced argument. British life and culture are taught through science, literacy, geography and history. Pupils in science learn about the contributions made by leading British scientists. The school's house system reflects a fully British approach. High rates of attendance have been strongly maintained, even during online learning.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard. Its provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. It meets all UK and local requirements and secures an environment in which all pupils enjoy learning. Rigorous safety systems and supportive supervision ensure that pupils are safe. Courteous security staff play a valuable role in checking movement on the site and are alert to potential issues. The school has created a positive culture through its preventative approach, in which staff and pupils take personal responsibility for their actions and support each other well. Pupils know and respect the behaviour policy and have a good understanding of how to keep safe on the way to and from school, in their daily life and when online.

All relevant aspects of health and safety are addressed through comprehensive policies developed by the school with the support of GEMS Education. These are communicated well and reviewed regularly. They include pupils' behaviour, anti-bullying, attendance and safety online as well as issues relating to the building. Excellent use is made of electronic systems to store relevant data, thus facilitating excellent planning, communication and evaluation of practice. Regular fire drills and other safety checks take place and a detailed annual audit of all safety is undertaken in collaboration with GEMS Education. There are also regular external audits of specialist areas such as swimming pools. Hazardous materials are stored safely.

Pupils' well-being is prioritised. Arrangements for new pupils, and those with particular needs, are constructed and implemented well. Pupils' views inform the school's detailed approach to safety and emotional development and the school's own Growell curriculum plays an important role in ensuring pupils' understanding of safety issues. It develops self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, self-management and social awareness. The school keeps thorough records of attendance and behaviour. Levels of attendance are consistently high at 96%. Good behaviour and kindness are celebrated widely. No pupil has ever been excluded.

Designated child protection officers hold current certificates of advanced training with many pastoral staff also taking additional training. There is regular safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers; fire, and health and safety training are also provided in line with host country and UK requirements. The school has many trained first aiders and fire marshals and detailed plans for evacuations, including for those who are vulnerable at such times. Risk assessments are thorough. The manager of school operations leads a group of key personnel from across the school in addressing safety. She coordinates the rapid response to all accidents and incidents.

Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily; standards of food hygiene are well established. The school's medical team works closely with the school's leaders and pastoral staff.

The school has made detailed responses to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing all local requirements. Thermal cameras have been installed and the school is cleaned diligently. Throughout periods of remote learning, close attention has been given to the emotional and physical well-being of pupils and staff. Parents and pupils alike believe that the school provides a safe, secure environment.

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

The school meets all the requirements of the standard. Effective procedures ensure that employees are not barred from regulated activity relating to children. GEMS Education carries out initial recruitment and ensures that appropriate checks such as identity, verification of qualifications, previous employment history, character and professional references are carried out either prior to appointment or before an individual takes up post. The right to work in the UAE and medical fitness are assured through the UAE visa-issuing process.

Checks on all staff who work in the school are recorded on the single central record, which is updated weekly by Human Resources and the principal and audited by GEMS. There is a dedicated safety officer and 17 staff involved in the recruitment of staff are trained in safer recruitment. Other staff are being trained as part of the succession-planning process. There is a dedicated safeguarding officer at GEMS head office who carries out an annual safeguarding audit and provides external support to deal with any issues. Child protection training is given during induction then annually along with online refresher courses.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard enabling all aspects of the national curriculum and examination requirements to be provided to a high standard. Pupils, parents and staff are rightly proud of the school and its two buildings, which provide a modern, highly attractive, safe environment, which supports learning well. Its many well-designed features support innovative ways of learning. Pupils enjoy using extensive specialist facilities in all areas of the curriculum, supported by outstanding resources and technology. Both buildings have excellent 'learning plazas' for class, independent and collaborative learning. Extensive sports facilities include three sports halls, three swimming pools and a splash pool. Recreation areas have shading to protect from the sun. Three attractive libraries are well stocked. Facilities for post-16 and early years are excellent, with outdoor learning areas for children and suitable study and relaxation areas for students.

The school is safe, well maintained and welcoming to pupils, parents, staff and visitors. Signage across the school is very good. There is plentiful office space and teachers enjoy generous areas in which to prepare work and relax. There are plenty of meeting rooms and smaller rooms for group and individual use.

Classrooms are airy and of a good size. They are equipped with electronic boards, which are used well by teachers to provide stimulating lessons. In the primary school, pupils benefit from learning in the many adjoining areas, working collaboratively or independently. Corridor displays create interest, emphasising the school's values in practice. Electronic displays at entrances currently celebrate the school's 10th anniversary.

All areas of the school are accessible, with lifts to the upper floors and medical rooms in both buildings. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, thermal cameras have been installed and isolation bays created in each building. Carefully implemented measures have been introduced to limit the spread of the virus.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard. It regularly surveys parents and responds rapidly, sensitively and effectively to any concerns raised. There are regular meetings for parents and they regularly undertake surveys on aspects of school life. The overwhelming majority report that communications are excellent. They were strong in their praise of the manner in which the school continued lessons online during the COVID-19 pandemic, their quality and the high levels of support and care for pupils' well-being.

The school uses multiple platforms to ensure that parents are well informed. The school website can be easily navigated to locate important information such as: school address and contact details, the principal's welcome, leadership profiles, the school's vision and mission, the school calendar, key policies (safeguarding, admissions, complaints, behaviour and inclusion) and previous inspection reports.

As well as the school website, parents of primary pupils have access to information via class pages where teachers keep parents up to date with specific information in relation to their child. Social-media platforms inform parents of past and future events and learning experiences, with important information and updates. There are weekly letters from the principal/CEO and either the primary or secondary principal, giving updates to families and the community.

Members of the leadership team warmly greet pupils and parents at the school gate each morning. Monthly contact with parents is expected and this is recorded in a central system enabling a full picture of the interactions between school and home to be scrutinised. Teachers are very accessible to parents. There is a 24-hour email reply policy and all requests for personal meetings with parents are facilitated.

All parents receive termly reports on pupils' progress. The primary school holds two consultation evenings and the secondary school has three academic-review days when teachers and parents discuss progress. Parents all greatly value the online access to learning ladders in EYFS and Years 1 to 6, which enables them to check progress regularly. In secondary, as well as termly reports, half-termly reviews of assessment data and attitudes to learning are communicated to parents.

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

The procedure for handling complaints meets all the requirements of this standard. There is an effective complaints procedure readily available to parents on the school website with links to the GEMS Education website. The school pre-empts complaints by regular surveys and responds rapidly, sensitively and effectively to any concerns raised. Scrutiny of the well-kept records demonstrated positive responses made to parents alongside actions taken to resolve issues and the response of parents to the actions. No complaints have ever escalated beyond the school's internal processes.

---

## Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school

The school meets the requirements of this standard. Leadership and management are outstanding.

The principal has worked in the school since its opening and was promoted to her current role of principal/CEO in 2021. This, coinciding with the school's 10-year anniversary, led to a detailed review of the school's mission and vision. The principal, ably supported by her leadership team, has developed and communicated a vision that is actively shared by all, showing a very strong commonality of purpose. Leadership at all levels is exemplary in all aspects and has successfully led to an ethos that sets high expectations and achieves high standards in all aspects of school life.

The overwhelming majority of staff and parents are immensely supportive of the school's leadership and hold it, and particularly the principal, in very high regard. Surveys show that the vast majority of staff are proud to work in the school and that they feel well supported and valued. Pupils report that they feel safe, valued and, in the words of one pupil, 'privileged to be at the school'.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. The school has a very strong ethos of inclusivity.

Leadership is in complete harmony with the school vision. This has contributed to a high-quality curriculum and to classroom practice that provides pupils with choices to suit their learning styles. The principal has successfully inspired leaders to take a whole-school view rather than concentrating only on their own phase of the school.

Day-to-day operations, including the timetable, are very well managed. Teaching and non-teaching staff are well deployed. Leaders quickly responded to COVID-19 absences and ensured that effective learning continued. A calm atmosphere permeates the school. Performance management of staff is robust and effective. There are excellent processes for professional development linked to the school development plan. The school makes good use of external providers, GEMS Education training and its own expertise.

Self-evaluation is very systematic and involves all stakeholders. It reviews progress against all host-country and BSO standards with a high degree of accuracy. It effectively measures the impact of actions on pupils' outcomes. The school's strategic plan is developed from self-evaluation and strategically focuses on improving already high standards of performance. The outcomes of the school's review process are such that the inspection team could find no significant aspects for improvement that had not already been identified and addressed.

Governance by GEMS is supportive and effective. School leaders are effectively held to account for ensuring safeguarding, meeting regulations, applying the financial policy and maintaining BSO standards.

The local advisory board structure, which includes GEMS leaders, school staff and parents, provides an additional strong layer of support and challenge. There is a clear distinction between the roles of governance and the school's leadership.

The school was well prepared to move to online learning when COVID-19 restrictions were imposed. Teachers provided very effective remote learning, which was highly valued by parents. The school is able to switch rapidly from face-to-face to remote learning. This was observed during the inspection when some classes in EYFS and lower primary were sent home and were seen to participate in outstanding online learning. On-site COVID-19 protocols are robustly implemented. The school's

---

distance learning provision was rated as developed (its highest grade) by the Dubai School Inspection Bureau.

## EYFS Provision

By the end of the Reception Year, most children exceed UK expectations for their age in all areas of learning. This represents outstanding progress as the great majority of children do not have English as their first language and had few opportunities to interact with others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In English, most children can identify letter names and sounds and write simple words and sentences. They correctly sequence stories showing good levels of comprehension. In one FS2 class children created a story map about pirates using pictures, phrases and short sentences. One child wrote, 'The pirate is wearing a purple and pink dress', using mostly correct spelling. In mathematics, children are becoming familiar with the concept of number. Almost all recognise numbers to 20 and can complete simple sums. In science, they develop strong skills of observation and investigation, for example acting as explorers and explaining which animals and plants they would find in a jungle.

The leadership of the early years team is excellent. Leaders set high expectations and a clear and inspirational vision for development. They have established a strong sense of harmony and unity of purpose among staff.

Teachers have a deep understanding of how children learn and develop and provide them with a safe and secure environment with excellent opportunities to become active learners, to play and explore and think critically and creatively. They assess children through close observation and form a holistic picture of their progress. Parents receive daily feedback on their child's learning and activities through annotated pictures and videos.

Children's personal growth is impressive. Their behavior is exemplary and respectful. They share and take turns and take responsibility by following the rules of social distancing. They are exceptionally well prepared for transition to Year 1.

## Post-16 Provision

Post-16 provision is outstanding. The school offers an exceptional range of courses and flexible pathways which enable students to pursue their individual talents, interests and academic aspirations. They can select accreditation from the IBDP, the IBCP, BTEC, A-level courses and a blended, more bespoke pathway. This year no students chose the IBCP course. Outcomes are high across all routes, with results above English and international expectations, A-level outcomes being slightly better than those of the other courses.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Students are well supported in their academic, social and personal development by the leadership team and tutors. Students take full advantage of the excellent opportunities offered to them and show excellent attitudes to learning. Behaviour is exemplary, mature and self-regulated. Students accept full responsibility for their own learning, displaying fine qualities of determination, focus and application so that they can meet their self-generated targets. Most accept leadership roles and make positive contributions to the school and wider community. They are articulate, confident, caring and empathic leaders who are wonderful role models for younger pupils.

---

Teachers demonstrate outstanding subject knowledge. They are very familiar with the requirements of examinations and enjoy highly positive relationships with students. High expectations contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and to excellent student outcomes. Teachers allow students to learn well as their skilful questioning probes understanding and challenges thinking. They rigorously track and monitor students' progress. There is excellent support and guidance regarding university applications, interviews, auditions, work-related learning, internships and placements. The majority of students, some 54%, go on to attend universities in the United Kingdom. Other destinations include North America, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe, as well as the UAE.

## **Standard 9 the quality of the school's provision for boarding**

Not applicable

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

Gems Wellington Silicon Oasis Academy meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country's laws. It cannot fully meet the standards set out below that relate to the UK Equality Act 2010.

2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;

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

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

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

The inspection team considers that the school's existing improvement processes are sufficiently robust to ensure that they will continue to improve existing outstanding standards. As a result, the team has not identified specific points for improvement.

## Summary of inspection judgements

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

### The quality of education

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

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

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	y			
--	---	--	--	--

### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	y			
--	---	--	--	--



## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	<b>GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Private</b>
<b>Date school opened</b>	<b>September 2011</b>
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	<b>2-18</b>
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	<b>mixed</b>
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	<b>3322</b>
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	<b>36,540 – 82,511 AED</b>
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Address of school</b>	<b>Dubai Silicon Oasis PO BOX 49746</b>
<b>Telephone number</b>	<b>+971 4 516 9000</b>
<b>Email address</b>	<b>principal_wso@gemsedu.com</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Sarah O'Regan</b>
<b>Proprietor</b>	<b>GEMS Education</b>

## GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Leadership** – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

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

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

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

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

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

**Standards** –

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

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

With 40 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust exists solely to provide education for public benefit.

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train. As one of the top 30 charities in the UK, we work for and with individuals and communities in order to help them reach their potential

Education Development Trust has built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services to national organisations such as Ofsted, the Teacher Training Agency and to schools in the north of England. Our main aim is to improve schools through high quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges.

Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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

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

Report reference no: 02/010/2022