

GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 10 to 13 March 2025

Lead Inspector: Valerie Dunsford
Team: Paul Fletcher
Sally Lane
Dee Russell-Thomas
Kaushi Silva

Age Group: 1 to 18 years

Report Published: 10 April 2025

Report Reference Number: 4/60/2025

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 (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 (BSO) accreditation. 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 updated the standards in August 2023. The new standards aligned the BSO standards with the Independent School Standards (ISS) and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding applied to schools in England; clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.

The British Schools Overseas standards are as follows:

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).

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

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

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation.

Part 6. The provision of information.

Part 7. The manner in which complaints are handled.

Part 8. The leadership and management of the school.

Part 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 carers 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 (WSO) is a co-educational school for pupils aged from one to 18 years. The academy opened in September 2011 and has grown year on year. The age range was extended in 2022 with the opening of a nursery for children aged one to three years. There are currently 4403 pupils on roll making it one of the largest all-through schools in Dubai. The academy is part of the GEMS Education group of schools, a group of 44 schools in the UAE, and is one of seven GEMS premium-rated schools.

WSO is a diverse community representing 116 different nationalities. The largest group represented is Indian at 22%. Around 13% of the pupil population is British. Half of all pupils attending WSO are Muslim. The majority of pupils speak English as a second language although only 278 (7%) require additional support in school. The academy prides itself on being highly inclusive. Six hundred and seventy-three pupils have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and receive support from an experienced and dedicated team of specialists. This commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in the academy's mission: "To embrace differences and ensure the best possible outcomes for every student. A story for every child."

Children in the early years follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. In the primary and lower secondary phases pupils follow an enriched National Curriculum for England (NCfE) which prepares them for personalised qualification pathways including IGCSE, GCSE, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and functional skills qualifications. Post-16 students benefit from an exceptionally wide range of blended options, including the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), the IB Career-related Programme (IBCP), A-level and BTEC

pathways and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications.

WSO is the GEMS Centre of Excellence for performing arts and theatre technology, as well as being recognised as a performing arts flagship school in the Middle East. As part of the sport and well-being provision pupils can take part in the GEMS WSO Sports Leadership training programme.

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 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 84 lessons, including 11 which were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. There were 30 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's local advisory board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and strategic plans. They inspected the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and staff expressed in the BSO survey, which was sent just prior to the inspection.

Evaluation of the school

GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from one to 18 years.

The academy 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.

Attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding across the whole academy.

Across the foundation stage the emphasis is on developing children's strong communication and language skills. Many children begin from low starting points, and most go on to make outstanding progress in reading and writing. The well-structured phonics programme enhances their understanding. By the end of foundation stage, most children can read and write short sentences and retell familiar stories accurately. Girls attain slightly higher levels than boys in reading and writing skills.

In key stages 1 and 2, almost all pupils meet curriculum standards and a large majority exceed them. These outcomes are higher than England and international averages. Pupils make significant progress over time, with language interventions accelerating the development of English Language Learners (ELL), those of lower ability and those with SEND. Almost all achieve expected grades in GCSE English language and literature and most exceed expectations. Almost all A-level and IBDP students exceed expectations, achieving results which are higher than England and international averages, demonstrating outstanding progress.

There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls but the department encourages boys to read more by providing books that align with their interests. There are weekly timetabled library lessons for pupils up to key stage 3 and a dedicated reading corner for Emirati pupils. These initiatives enhance reading for pleasure while improving reading-for-purpose techniques. The recently established ELL department provides specialist support and training for all mainstream teachers. This helps close the gap and enables new arrivals to gain access to the curriculum faster.

Foundation stage children eagerly engage in phonics activities such as blending and segmenting. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils compare and contrast similar stories and apply phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words. They enjoy guided reading classes and confidently recognise language features in texts. In Year 6, pupils explore themes in Shakespeare preparing them for secondary English lessons where they analyse, predict and identify underlying concepts in preparation for external examinations. Year 7 pupils analyse examples of writing and appreciate quality over quantity. Year 13 students particularly stand out for their depth of critical-thinking and ability to explore the structure of historic language.

Pupils across the academy demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning in English. They work effectively in groups, in pairs and independently. They demonstrate impressive oral skills. Well-presented books are marked regularly by teachers, pupils and peers.

Digital platforms are used effectively for submitting work, marking and tracking progress. Work scrutiny evidence supports an outstanding judgement.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding throughout the academy. Across all phases, boys and girls perform similarly. Pupils with SEND and English as an additional language (EAL) make excellent progress in relation to their different starting points as a result of the high-quality targeted support they receive in lessons.

In mathematics, across the early years phase, children make outstanding progress from their starting points. Almost all attain the expected level of understanding by the end of the foundation stage and more than half exceed expectations. In lessons, opportunities for practical work and problem solving are plentiful. Children can identify the properties of three-Dimensional shapes, compare them with two-Dimensional shapes and confidently measure shapes to identify which is longer.

Across the primary phase, pupils deepen their understanding of mathematics through a focus on problem solving, reasoning and logical thinking, prompted by the skilful questioning of their teachers. Pupils use appropriate mathematical vocabulary to explain their answers. For example, when partitioning two-digit numbers, Year 1 pupils used the term 'commutative' accurately when explaining how the order of numbers can be changed without changing the sum. By the end of Year 6, results from progress tests in mathematics indicate that almost every pupil achieves the expected level for their age and a very large majority of pupils exceed expectations.

Pupils continue to make very strong progress across the secondary phase. As a result of innovative strategies to assess prior knowledge and understanding, teachers adapt their planning to ensure that tasks are personalised to each pupil's ability and learning needs. In Year 9, pupils show excellent problem solving and reasoning skills when tackling quadratic equations, supporting and challenging each other's understanding. By the time they complete their IGCSE examinations, Year 11 pupils achieve results which are well above England and international averages.

In the sixth form, mathematics is a popular option. Students are attracted by the high level of challenge and teaching which encourages collaboration and critical thinking. Results in IB examinations have improved year on year with over a third of students achieving the top grades in mathematics in 2024, well above international averages. A-level mathematics students achieved fewer top grades in 2024 than in previous years, although this trend is on target to return to previous years' high attainment in

the current year. All students who entered for further mathematics at IGCSE and A level achieved the top grades in 2024.

Pupils of all ages experience a very wide range of opportunities to extend their interest and achievement in mathematics through competitions such as the Dubai Maths Super league, UK mathematics challenges and the academy's 'Smart Start' business challenge, where they apply their mathematics to a real-life context.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding across the academy.

Boys and girls make similar rates of progress, with no significant differences between both groups. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent progress relative to their starting points, due to high-quality targeted support for both their academic and personal development.

By the end of their time in early years, almost all pupils develop a strong understanding of the world around them and make outstanding progress from their starting points. Almost all pupils attain the expected levels with more than half exceeding expectations. In lessons, pupils confidently talk about the solar system, identify planetary characteristics, and explain which planets are the hottest based on their proximity to the sun. During outdoor learning, pupils engage in hands-on activities, such as planting tomato seeds under the guidance of skilled Forest School teachers, enriching their understanding through active participation.

In primary, pupils learn science through the conceptual curriculum which connects their learning with literacy and cross-curricular topics. There is a strong focus of working scientifically. For example, in Year 4, pupils use a decibel meter on their tablets to investigate how sound changes with distance from the source. They write high-level predictions using accurate scientific vocabulary.

By the end of Year 6 almost every pupil meets the expected standard in both internal and external progress tests and almost all exceed the expected standards for their age. External results improve year on year across all groups of pupils. Strong teaching and an effective curriculum drive this continued improvement.

In key stage 3, results remain strong with most pupils exceeding the standards expected for their age and improving their outcomes each year. In lessons, pupils plot linear graphs from their investigations into spring deformation from the previous lesson. At GCSE, most pupils achieve the top grades of 9 to 7 in biology, chemistry,

physics and combined science, performing well above England averages. On average, pupils attain one grade higher than their predictions.

At A level, the large majority of students secure A to B grades, again surpassing England averages, although none achieved an A* grade in 2024. On average, students attain more than half a grade higher than predicted, marking an improvement over the previous two years. In the IBDP, science results exceed international averages. Physics results are the strongest at the top grades of 7 and 6. Students in biology attain over a grade higher than predicted, showing an improvement from the previous year, while those in physics and chemistry attain more than half a grade higher than predicted.

The sixth form now offers BTEC applied science, although there are no previous years' results as students transferred to this course after one year of a different course. Current BTEC students are making strong progress toward their predicted grades. They work on personal projects, designing and conducting their own investigations. Examples range from studying the effects of different detergents on bacterial growth to analysing response speeds to tasks with different background noise.

Across the early years and primary phases, pupils achieve high standards and make excellent progress in a broad range of **other subjects**. Specialist teachers challenge them in performing arts, modern foreign languages, physical education, outdoor learning and Arabic, ensuring these subjects match the rigour of core subjects. Adaptive teaching methods support accelerated progress, and pupils engage in creative and open-ended activities that allow them to apply these diverse learning skills to new situations. For example, in a Year 2 performing arts lesson, pupils choreograph their own dance moves in preparation for a performance for the wider school. They also develop skills and excel in both indoor and outdoor physical education and sports through lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The comprehensive key stage 3 curriculum allows pupils to investigate a wide range subjects, enabling them to make well-informed decisions in Year 10. In Year 7, pupils make very good progress in speaking Arabic as a second language as they talk about their daily routines using times of the day for greater clarity. They have developed excellent handwriting over a short period of time.

Attainment and progress are outstanding across all subjects in IGCSE, GCSE, BTEC, A level, and IBDP examinations with most pupils achieving at least one grade higher than expected and with little difference between the outcomes for boys and girls. In 2024,

the overall proportion of pupils achieving GCSE at the higher grades of 9 to 7 was 31% for other subjects, substantially higher than the England average. In food preparation and nutrition almost three-quarters gained a high grade and in history, media studies and psychology high grade achievement was significantly higher than the England average. At A level for other subjects, 29% of all grades were A* and A, in line with the high England average, with 60% at A* to B, just above the England average. One-third of students taking psychology gained a high grade, while two-thirds achieved A* to B. For the IBDP in other subjects, the proportion gaining a high grade of 7 to 6 was 57%, significantly above international averages. Overall 90% of students completed the IBDP with an average point score of 35, above the international average. Students perform particularly well across most subject groupings of the IBDP framework.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

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

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during March 2025, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards 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 independent school system in England. This judgement is endorsed by the British government, quality assured by Ofsted and is valid for a period of three years.

Part 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.

WSO delivers an engaging and aspirational curriculum that upholds the values and ethos of both the UK and UAE. It fulfils its vision to ensure pupils are 'World class. World ready' preparing them admirably for the next stages of their education and employment.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with carefully designed and structured progression from early years to the breadth of opportunities available in the sixth form. Through the statutory early years' framework, NCfE, GCSE, IGCSE A Level, IBDP, BTEC, ASDAN and functional skills qualifications, the academy fosters academic and personal excellence. It meets the needs of all pupils, highly effectively. Those with SEND and ELL make outstanding social, emotional and academic progress due to the adaptive teaching and tailored support from skilled learning support assistants (LSA) and specialist inclusion leaders.

WSO serves as the GEMS centre of excellence for performing arts and theatre technology and is recognised as a flagship school for performing arts in the Middle East. Partnerships with internationally renowned theatre and dance companies provide pupils with unparalleled opportunities in the performing arts. WSO holds the distinction of being the only accredited Forest School in the region. The curriculum extends beyond the classroom into the local environment. For example, early years children visit the local hospital to explore job roles; Year 12 students benefit from strong business links that provide valuable work experience.

In the early years systematic planning fosters active learning, exploration and creative and critical thinking. The primary conceptual curriculum introduces 'Big questions,' encouraging cross-curricular exploration and project-based learning. Year 9 functions as a skills year, allowing pupils to explore optional subjects, ensuring informed GCSE choices, from the 33 available, aligned with their aspirations. Sixth-form students select from IB, A levels, BTEC or a blended pathway with some following bespoke timetables that may include ASDAN awards and life skills programmes. The academy is highly responsive to pupils' interests and goals, offering extensive personalisation to nurture their potential.

Regular curriculum reviews, involving teachers, pupils and parents ensure relevance, engagement and academic rigour. Transition planning is embedded within the curriculum, exemplified by Year 6 pupils presenting their Shakespeare project to an audience of secondary teachers and parents.

British values are purposefully integrated into all key stages. The primary conceptual curriculum embeds these values, while secondary subjects such as business, economics, history and psychology reinforce them further. Democracy thrives through pupil leadership elections. Year 2 pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities and that they have to be the best version of themselves, while Year 11 examine business ethics and the rule of law. In Year 5, pupils investigate individual liberties, and human rights through research on refugees and the United Nations' conventions on children's rights. Themes of mutual respect, tolerance and diversity permeate the curriculum.

The academy provides outstanding careers guidance with two dedicated counsellors supporting pupils, particularly in the sixth form. In Year 3, pupils present their careers research to parents who frequently visit to share insights into their professions. Career discussions begin in key stage 3 and careers education is systematically delivered through the GroWell curriculum.

The exceptional GroWell programme, alongside the Moral, Social and Cultural (MSC) curriculum, prioritises pupils' social and emotional well-being while equipping them with life skills. These lessons adapt to the results from surveys of pupils' views and emerging trends, covering relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making. The programme ensures compliance with UAE law while respecting the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the academy from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

Enrichment activities provide pupils with opportunities to pursue their interests and develop new skills beyond the classroom. Primary enrichments take place within the school day while Years 5, 6 and secondary pupils participate in a wide range of on- and off-site programmes. Sixth-form students take a leadership role in organising and initiating some of these activities, further enhancing their personal development.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** is outstanding and results in pupils of all ages and abilities making rapid progress and achieving consistently high standards in all subjects.

Teachers are well qualified and demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned to ensure that every pupil makes progress. Teachers demonstrate a strong grasp of the curriculum and, in higher year groups, a precise understanding of examination requirements. Leaders at all levels actively enhance teaching, learning, and assessment through innovative interventions and rigorous quality assurance.

The focused development of High Performance Learning (HPL) equips pupils with exceptional learning and essential life skills. The use of adaptive teaching strategies is highly effective in supporting this ambition. Almost every lesson begins with planned and measurable checks for understanding (CFU), allowing teachers to guide pupils towards the most effective learning pathway. Throughout lessons, teachers use sophisticated questioning techniques to refine pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Advanced technology tools track individual progress with precision, ensuring tailored support and preventing any pupil from falling behind. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils apply different strategies to determine unknown angles in shapes. Some relied on drawing and measuring whilst others were challenged to apply their prior knowledge of angles to create algebraic formulae to solve the problem.

The identification and support for pupils with SEND is exemplary. Skilled LSAs provide tailored challenges and targeted support. Adaptive teaching consistently offers high-achieving pupils enrichment opportunities, including science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) events, mathematics competitions, and national curriculum challenges, ensuring maximum progress for all.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are highly motivated, and ambitious to achieve well. They persist through challenges and demonstrate resilience. Their exemplary behaviour fosters a school culture focused on learning, allowing them to take risks, think critically, and enhance their understanding. Clear guidelines encourage them to take pride in the quality and presentation of their work.

Innovative technology and creative teaching methods enhance learning across subjects. Classrooms reflect dynamic learning spaces for thinking and collaboration. Tables and walls are routinely used to capture pupils' thinking and to extend it. In a Year 13 literature lesson, pupils recorded and expanded on each other's ideas about an author's perspective on social change, creating a more sophisticated collective analysis. Pupils' confident use of personal electronic devices for research and collaborative learning, makes a significant contribution to their independence as learners and enables them to work at their own pace.

The school employs robust assessment systems, integrating formative teachers' assessments, internal and external summative evaluations, and cognitive tests. These are effectively used to track pupils' attainment and progress continually and rigorously. Pupils take ownership of their learning through peer- and self-assessment, fostering reflection and accountability. Regular, focused pupils' progress meetings support these processes and are systematically used to adapt the curriculum and for planning. One of the most effective features of many lessons are the 'respond and make progress' (RAMP) sessions. This encourages pupils to analyse their own development and take charge of their learning. Most pupils actively use oral and written feedback to refine their work.

Assessment data also enables precise tracking of attainment against international benchmarks. This insight allows teachers to plan targeted interventions and to refine the curriculum, ensuring all pupils achieve outstanding progress.

Part 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** (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding across the whole school.

The academy ensures that every pupil's story is heard, encourages thoughtfulness and fosters a shared understanding of the core principles: being ready, respectful and safe. It is built upon a culture where kindness and inclusivity prevail.

Staff and pupils fully embrace the bespoke Growell programme, which is embedded across the academy. It has significantly improved pupils' confidence, behaviour, commitment and well-being. Whether pupils have attended the academy for years or have recently arrived, they consistently describe the warm welcome, strong sense of belonging and inclusive environment. Blended learning is extended to blending in with the community and it is this feeling of 'fitting in' that is valued by pupils, parents and staff.

From the moment of entry, there is a strong emphasis on celebrating diversity, of embracing uniqueness and recognising all cultures. National and World Culture days are organised by pupils, parents and staff. Over 100 different nationalities are represented in the academy and it is a feature that promotes great pride. The commitment to inclusivity extends to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender and faith.

Leadership opportunities are extensive and modelled on the British system of democratic election, canvassing and equality of opportunity. The Students' Council mirrors the adult leadership structure with a Student CEO, Student Principal and Student Vice Principals. The academy ensures all pupils, including Emirati pupils, English language learners, and those with SEND, have opportunities to participate. Additionally, pupils take on roles as eco warriors, sports captains, and trained mental health first aiders.

Displays of Britishness, unity, integrity and aspiration are across the whole academy and practical examples are also evidenced in the MSC classes. Year 5 pupils learn to express empathy through role play; foundation stage children share different faith festivals; older pupils attend assemblies on Commonwealth Day and develop self-help techniques alongside lessons in compassion.

The academy encourages pupils to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Senior pupils mentor younger ones and everyone is encouraged to contribute to their local and global communities. Some travel to Kenya to help build schools, others support an orphanage in India or contribute to various charities. Year 8 English language learners use persuasive argument to discuss the importance of different voluntary organisations. In Year 4, pupils consider the gains and losses of development in Dubai over the years.

The academy effectively manages pupils' behaviour and attendance through regularly reviewed policies. It implements rewards, sanctions and restorative justice

while displaying positive behaviour charts in every classroom. Surveys indicate that pupils feel safe and happy, supported by a whole school philosophy, individualised guidance and personalised support. Pupils captured this sentiment saying, “the school community is exceptional. They care about us as people not just as students. They want to get to know us, accept us and they are genuinely interested in everything we do!”

The house system reinforces British values and the curriculum incorporates the study of British poets such as Carol Ann Duffy and Wilfred Owen. Older pupils study ‘Macbeth’ and ‘An Inspector Calls’ in English lessons, whilst drama pupils explore ‘Blue Stockings’ by Jessica Swale and consider the Victorian-era clothing of the time. The academy’s vibrant libraries feature a diverse selection of books from around the world, reflecting its multicultural body of pupils.

Pupils know where to turn to for help, whether to tutors, the pastoral team, counsellors, nurses, doctors or mentors. The academy prioritises personalised care using robust tracking systems, surveys and data analysis to ensure exceptional care and protection. The academy’s key mission, “A story for every child” is not just a slogan it is a reality. As one pupil summed it up, “They focus on the little things that are big to us!”

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

The **welfare, health and safety** of pupils and staff are outstanding, meeting all UK and local requirements.

Almost all parents confirm that their child feels safe at school and that staff show concern for the safety, care and welfare of their child. Highly visible and friendly security staff, and a wealth of teachers on breaktime duty, ensure the smooth and safe movement of pupils on site.

The academy exudes a strong culture of safeguarding. It has very clear safeguarding procedures for child protection, known by all staff, pupils, and parents, supported by an online system to record and monitor concerns about pupils. The full-time designated safeguarding lead (DSL) holds level 3 certification, along with seven other senior staff, and 30 staff in pastoral roles have been trained to level 2. All staff benefit from regular safeguarding training, including volunteers and members of the local advisory board and the well-being team. Pupils have ready access to a team of well-trained counsellors who operate a well-coordinated referral system for advice and support, especially for pupils’ mental health and well-being, that links seamlessly with

wider safeguarding processes. As a result, the academy effectively protects pupils from abuse, including bullying and online abuse.

The well-being of pupils is central to the work of the academy. Its Growell curriculum underpins the development of pupils' life skills such as self- and social-awareness, relationship skills, decision-making, and self-management. This, together with the WSO Way of being ready, respectful and safe, ensures that pupils are well prepared to respond to challenges in an emotionally mature way. It also helps to guarantee pupils' safety, maintains good behaviour and contributes to their consistently high levels of attendance which are above the England average at 96%. As a result, pupils' behaviour across the academy is exemplary as they demonstrate mutual respect and care for each other. On the occasions where the academy instigates its behaviour policy, it adheres to each stage, involving parents closely throughout the process, preferring a restorative approach.

Being part of GEMS Education, the academy benefits from the comprehensive policies that it has specifically adapted to reflect the needs of its pupils and setting, including first aid, fire, risk-assessment, health and safety, attendance and punctuality and behaviour. All staff understand these policies well, which are subject to regular audit and update so that they remain pertinent and keep pupils safe. The risk of fire is taken seriously and regular fire drills have led to improvements in evacuation times and the relocation of assembly points in response to the growth in the number of pupils. Highly detailed pupil emergency evacuation plans are in place with identified fire marshals for all parts of the building. Thorough risk-assessments, which are updated in accordance with each activity, ensure that pupils remain safe. About one-fifth of staff are first aid trained across all phases with their re-training dates and locations closely monitored.

The academy helps pupils joining during the year through a range of interventions and the sharing of key information from previous schools. This enables them to become familiar with school routines and levels of support quickly, encouraging peer-mentoring wherever possible.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The academy meets the requirements of this standard.

The academy conducts thorough checks to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. Its rigorous recruitment practices align with UK best practice and undergo

regular review by the Principal CEO and GEMS audit teams. Senior leaders, the inclusion team and human resources (HR), who all play a role in recruitment, have completed safer recruitment training. All staff participate in annual safeguarding training. Regular safeguarding audits have consistently recognised the academy's evolving best practices, awarding it a 100% rating.

The turnover of staff is around the average for international schools, at 16%, with 53 new staff joining this year. The academy successfully recruits highly qualified teachers, primarily from the UK. Many teachers transition from other GEMS schools, while others leave and later return. Succession planning is a key focus, leading to frequent internal promotions to leadership positions.

The HR team meticulously maintains a single central register (SCR) for all required employee checks covering 670 staff members. Governors complete safeguarding training and sign a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement. A separate SCR is maintained for outsourced companies, parent helpers, contracted workers, visiting specialists, transport and ancillary staff. HR or school leaders check two required references. Qualifications, personal details, verified passports, work permits and police checks conducted within the previous three months are all verified. Mandatory criminal record checks cover UK nationals through the Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) and International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) while all staff must also obtain a UAE police check. Medical fitness certificates are necessary for KHDA approval and visa processing. Social media checks are conducted as part of the hiring process.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The academy meets the requirements of this standard, enabling the successful delivery of the early years' foundation stage, NCfE and the sixth-form curriculum. Pupils benefit from outstanding, world class facilities on both sites which provide them with excellent opportunities to learn, make rapid rates of progress, achieve highly and develop as individuals. Specialist facilities include three sports halls, three swimming pools, art and drama studios, auditorium with good acoustics, and shaded recreation areas. The well-stocked libraries are conducive to learning and independent research. Sixth-form and early years facilities are excellent, with inspiring outdoor play and learning spaces for children and high-quality study areas for students in the spacious sixth-form centre.

With over 4,400 pupils, the academy manages its accommodation exceptionally well. As a result of clearly understood procedures for pupils and parents, including the wearing of lanyards, morning arrival is well ordered, conveying a clear sense of purpose so that pupils are ready to learn. At all other times, the high visibility of duty staff ensures that all areas of the academy remain highly supervised, calm and safe for the orderly and courteous movement of pupils around the academy.

High quality toilet and washing facilities are provided for pupils of all ages. Three clinics cater for the short-term care of pupils. All have appropriate washing facilities and toilets. The provision of drinking water is abundant with plentiful well-used drinking stations on each floor. Pupils have access to well-appointed changing and showering facilities. Pupils with complex needs benefit from a dedicated area for additional learning and emotional support in the 'sunflower' room. Classrooms are bright and well equipped with smart boards that enhance pupils' learning and support innovative and adaptive learning methods with extensive specialist resources and technology.

The premises are maintained to a meticulously high standard. This is as a result of the team of highly dedicated operations and support staff, and a programme of carefully planned maintenance, supported by GEMS Education, that continually improves the quality of the accommodation. All buildings are accessible to those with restricted mobility, with lifts to each floor.

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

The academy meets the requirements of this standard.

WSO leaders and teachers work in very close partnership with parents and carers, with the shared aim of achieving the very best for every child. Parents feel that they are consulted and that their views are listened to and acted upon. In the pre-inspection survey and in meetings with inspectors, parents identified the academy's communication and welcoming atmosphere as a strength. They praise the quality and frequency of the information they receive and the availability and approachability of the academy's leaders and teachers in responding to their queries. They describe WSO as "a community – a place of belonging" and "like a second home".

Parents are appreciative of the opportunities the academy provides for them to meet together with teachers and other professionals in order to understand how best to

support their children at home. In primary, teachers are available for a quick conversation as parents drop off their children. Nursery and FS parents can attend sessions to understand the school's approach to positive behaviour routines, phonics and reading. Parents of children in the primary phase can engage in the popular Parenting Academy. The inclusion team organises Coffee and Care support and networking meetings for parents of children with SEND. Secondary parents meet with heads of year to learn what to expect in the year ahead. The informative monthly newsletter to parents includes 'Counsellor Corner' which provides well-being and mental health tips for families.

The academy's website provides a very comprehensive resource for current and prospective parents, pupils and staff. The website includes all essential policies such as admissions, safeguarding, curriculum, behaviour, bullying, inclusion, complaints and health and safety, including the administration of first aid and medicines. It provides links to the academy's most recent inspection reports, its mission, vision and values and contact details for the academy, the proprietor and local advisory board.

Parents receive very detailed termly reports on their child's attainment and progress. Formal termly parent and teacher meetings and academic review meetings provide the opportunity for more detailed discussion and feedback. Parents appreciate the instant online access to their child's test results which show how they are performing against the learning outcomes. Parents of children with individual education plans praise the detailed and sensitive feedback that they receive from the inclusion team which celebrates their child's development as well as providing targets for continued growth.

WSO welcomes the support of parents at academy events such as sports and performing arts, and in organising fundraising and community activities such as World Culture Day and the community Iftar.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The academy meets the requirements of this standard.

The complaints policy is available on the academy's website and is regularly updated. It complies with all requirements. The well-established procedures are comprehensive and robust. Staff take all concerns seriously, no matter how minor, and resolve them

swiftly to parents' satisfaction, either in person or in writing. Leaders at all levels actively address and resolve any concerns raised by parents. A panel, including members of the GEMS corporate team, handles any serious complaints. However, no complaints have escalated to this formal stage. The school meticulously records all complaints, documenting the concern and its resolution. It stores these records confidentially and retains them appropriately for future reference.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

The quality of **leadership and management** across the academy and at all levels is outstanding. Leaders ensure that the BSO standards are consistently met.

The clearly articulated mission, vision and values are understood by all within the WSO community. The mission "A story for every child", which staff describe as the golden thread that runs through every aspect of school life, sets a benchmark against which the school's provision can be evaluated. The core values of unity, integrity and aspiration complement the mission and, combined with the key pillars of the WSO way, provide a framework which underpins day to day academy life and ensures the calm and orderly environment which is palpable as soon as anyone enters the building.

The leadership structure which divides the large academy into smaller, manageable teams and communities, all unified under the same mission and values, means that all pupils are known as individuals and supported to ensure their unique needs are met. Common systems and processes ensure that there is consistency and a shared language for managing every area of school life. This structure helps to develop leadership capacity and potential, empowering middle leaders with trust and confidence to manage their own communities without feeling micro-managed.

The academy benefits from the support of a very experienced and highly skilled local advisory board, made up of parents, former parents, skilled professionals and representatives from the GEMS corporate team. The separate responsibilities of the board, GEMS Education and the academy's leaders are clearly understood and respected, and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge, while also ensuring financial stability and legal compliance.

WSO is a forward-looking academy which never stands still. Academy leaders foster a culture of continuous improvement which is driven by robust and accurate self-evaluation at every level. The performance of senior leaders is rigorously assessed

against key performance indicators which cover all aspects of the academy's provision. All stakeholders have an input into determining the priorities within the academy's development plan. Members of the students' leadership team attend local advisory board meetings and contribute their views to concerns such as managing traffic circulation around the academy. Staff praise the way that leaders initiate change, always explaining the rationale and ensuring that the needs of pupils are always at the core of any decision-making

WSO is a fully inclusive academy, where leaders are committed to ensuring every child has access to excellent support and provision whatever their needs or interests. Parents comment that, "Whatever a child wants to do, they will find their place, find their people and find their passion at WSO." Demand for places at WSO is high, as the academy's reputation for providing an environment where every pupil feels included and respected has spread throughout the wider community. The academy leaders' vision for inclusion is currently restricted by the capacity of the academy to provide additional specialist facilities to accommodate more pupils with the highest level of needs.

Senior leaders are committed to the continuous development of staff, at every level. Innovation is encouraged and excellent practice is celebrated and shared across the academy and the wider network of GEMS schools. Teachers and leaders are eager to develop their own practice through professional learning communities, leading professional development for colleagues and through the weekly online sharing of ideas thread. A robust appraisal system for all staff ensures high standards are maintained, using the Growth, Action, Performance, and Success (GAPS) programme. Leaders provide targeted and sensitively managed support if performance falls short of the academy's high expectations. With encouragement from leaders, staff complete additional qualifications and attend external courses across the region and within the wider GEMS community. In the pre-inspection survey, staff overwhelmingly said that they feel valued and well supported by the academy's leaders who show genuine care and attention to their needs, commenting that, "Leaders take time to get to know staff and their individual stories". It is not by chance that WSO is an outstanding academy, it is as a result of the consistency, high aspirations and positive behaviours modelled by leaders which set the example that every member of the school community then follows.

EYFS provision

Early years' provision and practice are outstanding, resulting in excellent attainment and progress for almost all children. Most children arrive in school with limited communication and language skills. A well-planned, well-resourced, and expertly delivered curriculum ensures they achieve a Good Level of Development that far exceeds expected standards in England.

The curriculum actively engages children meaningfully with the world around them, fostering independence through stimulating and purposeful play opportunities. Specialist lessons in performing arts, outdoor learning, and physical education further enhance their knowledge and skills, nurturing their curiosity. For example, children learn about how to plant seeds and what helps a tomato plant grow through first-hand planting experiences. These carefully designed and closely monitored activities, enable children to enhance their knowledge and develop impressive thinking and learning skills.

In the previous year, almost 75% of the girls exceeded age-related expectations in creating with materials, being imaginative and developing fine motor skills. Boys made most progress from their starting points, excelling in speaking skills, gross motor skills and understanding of number. A detailed assessment of data led to a curriculum review and adaptation that resulted in the introduction of topics more aligned with boys' interests.

Children show a strong commitment to learning and display exceptionally positive attitudes. They behave well in lessons and around the school, with almost all sustaining focus during continuous provision tasks. They are well supported by staff who encourage them to ask questions, take risks and extend their learning in new directions. For instance, in a lesson in FS 1, two children quickly transitioned from estimating the length of fish to measuring and comparing their peers' heights, using standard measures. Through diverse activities, most children develop high levels of self-regulation, social awareness, and resilience when tackling complex tasks.

Teachers and support staff demonstrate an excellent pedagogic understanding of how young children learn. Robust planning systems take into account children's individual needs and personal interests. Focused, observational assessments, regular progress meetings and individual tracking ensure that every child is supported and challenged appropriately. Robust interventions are planned to support identified gaps

in learning. Consequently, children make excellent progress and are well prepared for a seamless transition into the primary phase.

Leadership of the foundation stage is highly effective. Leaders possess extensive curriculum knowledge and implement innovative teaching methods. They are highly committed to creating a safe environment for all children and developing a learning centred environment for both the children and the professionals working in this phase.

From the moment children arrive in the early years, parents are encouraged to be active partners in their child's learning. Teachers share significant achievements through an online platform and provide regular updates. Parents meet with teachers frequently to discuss progress and receive detailed reports on their child's attainment and development.

Post-16 provision

The effectiveness of the **sixth form** is outstanding. Students benefit from a very wide range of study programmes that enables them to achieve their academic and vocational goals in equal measure. As a result of highly effective teaching, high grade achievement is higher than England and international averages on the IBDP and BTEC programmes and in line with the high England average on A-level courses. In 2024, almost all students in Year 11 continued into the sixth form, joined by 60 students from other schools. Students' retention between Years 12 and 13 is very high at 98.3%.

The sixth form is well managed and, as a result, it has increased the number of students three-fold since the previous inspection. It has also reviewed the entry requirements and students now need to have grades 9 to 6 in a range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics. Students can also choose a vocational route, including a mix of BTEC, IBDP or A level qualifications.

Students are well prepared for work experience. As a result, almost all students gain highly valuable work experience in a range of well-known company placements and internships that introduce them to work and potential careers. For example, students in Year 12 on the BTEC applied science course benefit from placements in a local hospital which enable them to work across departments to experience a range of medical disciplines.

Students demonstrate exemplary behaviour and act as positive role models for students in the lower years. The students' senior leadership team (SSLT) role develops

students' personal abilities and maturity so that they are better prepared for university and future careers. The multitude of leadership roles also helps the academy to make improvements to pupils' experience in other parts of the school. For example, SSLT projects have introduced research skills to the sixth form and secondary, and the established peer-mentoring programme empowers sixth form students to support pupils in the lower school.

Highly effective careers advice and guidance enable students to make the right choices about their futures with almost all students in the previous year progressing to university, with 25% attending the 100 top institutions across the world and about 40% of students attending universities in the UK and a growing proportion now remaining in the UAE.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards that relate to 2(2)(d)(ii) or 5(b)(vi). The academy encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; pregnancy and maternity; race and religion or belief, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

What the school could do to improve further

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

The academy has a limited number of places available to support pupils with the highest level of need. To align with the academy's mission, leaders should build on the inclusion department's existing considerable strengths to establish a regional centre of excellence for inclusion. This approach will expand capacity and enhance specialist provision to meet the growing demand for support for pupils with complex needs in the wider community.

Summary of inspection judgements

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

The quality of education

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			
--	----------	--	--	--

School Details

Name of school	GEMS Wellington Academy Silicon Oasis
Type of school	Private
Date school opened	September 2011
Age range of pupils	1 to 18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	4403
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	AED 39,414 – AED 89,001
Annual fees (boarders)	N/A
Address of school	Silicon Oasis, Dubai, P.O. Box 49746, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number	+971 4 515 9000
Email address	Contactus_wso@gemsedu.com Registrar_wso@gemsedu.com
Headteacher	Sarah O'Regan
Proprietor	GEMS Education

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Combined or Joint Visit – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards

against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

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

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

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

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

Learning – Pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

Ofsted – The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of His 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 50 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust's vision is a world in which all lives are transformed through excellent education. We strive to improve education for learners globally, grounding our work in research and evidence. We support leaders to raise standards, improve school performance, develop great teachers and open career pathways.

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.

We have built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services. One of our main aims 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: 4/60/2025