



دائرة التعليم والمعرفة  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
AND KNOWLEDGE

# Inspection Report of Gems American Academy

**Overall Effectiveness: Very good**

Academic Year 2017 – 2018

Iqraa



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## School Information

General Information	Inspection date:	from	10 Safar 1439	to	13 Safar 1439
		from	30-Oct-17	to	02-Nov-17
	School name	Gems American Academy			
	School ID	86			
	School address	Khalifa City A, Abu Dhabi			
	School telephone	+971(0)2 557 4880			
	School official email	adamericanacad.pvt@adec.ac.ae			
	School website	www.gemsaa-abudhabi.com			
	School curriculum	American and International Baccalaureate (IB)			
	School phases	KG – High school			
	Fee range and category	AED 50,300 – AED 70,100 (Very high)			
	Number of lessons observed	121			
Number of joint lessons observed	12				
Staff Information	Total number of teachers	176			
	Turnover rate	25%			
	Number of teaching assistants	56			
	Teacher- student ratio	1 : 11			
Student Information	Total number of students	1865			
	% of Emirati Students	32%			
	% of Largest nationality groups	1. American 16%			
		2. Korean 6%			
		3. Canadian 6%			
	% of SEN students	2%			
	% of students per phase	KG: 21%	Middle: 18%		
Primary: 41%		High: 20%			
Gender	Boys and girls				



## The Performance of the School

<b>Performance Standard 1</b>  Students' Achievement  <b>Very good</b>	<b>Performance Standard 2</b>  Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills  <b>Very Good</b>
<b>Performance Standard 3</b>  Teaching and Assessment  <b>Very good</b>	<b>Performance Standard 4</b>  Curriculum  <b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Performance Standard 5</b>  The protection, care, guidance and support of students  <b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Performance Standard 6</b>  Leadership and management  <b>Outstanding</b>



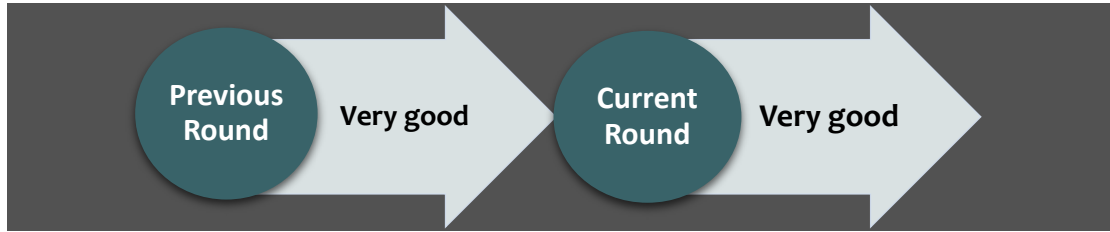
## Evaluation of the school's overall performance

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- The overall performance of the school is very good. Gems American Academy prides itself in being fully inclusive. The school has a high turnover of students. About a third of new students receive support with learning or language development, particularly those whose first language is Arabic.
- The quality of students' achievement is very good. The very high standard of their English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills supports their achievement across the curriculum. Students' achievement in Arabic as a first language has improved, but needs to remain a key focus of the school's development plan.
- The overall quality of students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills is very good. All students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Students take significant levels of responsibility for their own learning and are very well prepared for the world beyond school.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is very good. Teachers plan students' learning thoroughly, based on a sound understanding of each child's existing strengths and next steps in learning. They make careful use of assessment to ensure that students know how to improve their work.
- The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It is carefully designed to fuse the International Baccalaureate (IB) and American curriculums. Its highly effective implementation prepares students to be 21st century global citizens.
- The quality of the protection, care, guidance and support of students is outstanding. Staff provide excellent pastoral care and support for students' learning. There are ample opportunities for students with talents to excel.
- The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. High quality, ambitious leadership at all levels characterises the school and ensures a high capacity for continued improvement.



## Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve



- The school has made very good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report.
- Students' attainment in subjects taught in Arabic has improved. Teachers now provide learning opportunities that are more consistent with students' experiences in other subjects. Additional support is provided to new students who have limited prior education in the language.
- Teachers have ensured that the best practice evident at the higher phases of the school is now more consistent across all phases. Approaches to delivering the curriculum have been carefully planned to be continuous and progressive. Most teachers use high-order questioning strategies skilfully to engage students in deep and critical thinking. Teachers design lessons that ensure that all students can work at their own pace. The school now provides enhanced opportunities for the most able students to excel.
- The quality of self-evaluation has continued to improve. Senior leaders regularly walk through classrooms and give feedback to teachers. Overall school leaders' capacity to improve the school is very good.



## Key areas of strength and area for improvement

### Key areas of strength

- Students' curiosity, creativity and initiative.
- The culture of innovation and the use of technologies to enhance learning.
- The use of assessment to develop students' independent learning.
- The rich curriculum which prepares students very well as 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizens.
- The caring environment that supports students' accelerated progress.
- Visionary leadership.

### Key areas for improvement

- Continue to raise attainment in Arabic by:
  - i. giving the Arabic language a higher profile around the school and in daily school life
  - ii. continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning in lessons.
- Build on existing high-quality practice in mathematics and science by:
  - i. embedding investigation and enquiry in students' learning in kindergarten
  - ii. ensuring that the highly successful approaches to developing students' skills in science, technology, innovation and mathematics at the secondary phase are developed consistently at other phases
  - iii. increasing real-life links between learning and its application in society at the primary phase.



## Provision for Reading

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- The school is developing students' reading skills across their learning. In kindergarten (KG) and the primary phase, students read regularly for pleasure as well as for gathering information.
- The school library is an inviting setting and has a substantial collection of books and texts in all genres including periodicals and reference materials. The library has an extensive Arabic section which includes resources that pertain to Emirati and UAE culture. Commendably, the library stocks books in a wide range of languages which actively encourages students to maintain their literacy skills in their first language.
- Students visit the library once a week for independent reading. Children in the KG enjoy activities related to the story they are reading. Independent readers are guided to books that are aligned with their most recent assessment scores. The library apprenticeship program helps students to learn library science. The Digital Citizenship program teaches students ethical guidelines when using the internet. In Key Club, older student volunteers read to younger students. The 'Read Around the World' program enables parents to read to students in different languages.
- Students maintain digital portfolios and track their own progress in developing reading skills. Coaches support students who have weaker Arabic and English skills in lessons.





## Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Arabic (as additional Language)	Attainment	N/A	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	N/A	Good	Good	Good
Social Studies	Attainment	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
	Progress	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
English	Attainment	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Attainment	Good	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Good	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Attainment	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Outstanding
	Progress	Good	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	Attainment	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Learning Skills		Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding



### Overall achievement

- The overall quality of students' achievement is very good. Their learning skills are very good in KG and outstanding in other phases. Attainment evaluated against curriculum and international standards is very good overall. In lessons in a few subjects, new students' attainment is lower than that of existing students. The school can demonstrate that those students who entered the school with low levels of English or Arabic, or with attainment well below curriculum standards, are making accelerated progress.

### Subjects

- Students' achievement in **Islamic education** is good in all phases. Students understand Islamic culture, laws, and concepts. Younger students know how to carry out ablutions for prayer. Older students can explain the importance of knowledge of their religion.
- Students' achievement in **Arabic as a first language** is good in KG. In other phases their attainment is acceptable, but they are making good progress. Students listen carefully and answer questions about texts. By grade 5, students read clearly with expression. Secondary students write stories using appropriate grammar, but have difficulty talking in standard Arabic.
- Students' achievement in **Arabic as a second language** is good in all phases. Students in the primary phase hand-write plural words correctly. By the middle phase, students can introduce themselves and their families in a few sentences. Those in secondary grades can find the main idea in short texts and use a dictionary to find new vocabulary.
- Students' achievement in **UAE social studies** is good in all phases. Students respect and understand the role played by UAE leaders. They can identify the key geographical features of the Arabian Gulf and explain the factors that affect the distribution of the population in UAE.
- Students' achievement in **English** is very good in KG and outstanding in other phases. Students at all levels of the school speak fluently, confidently and persuasively. They have well-developed skills in analysing texts critically. Older students' essays show deep understanding of different writing styles and their purposes.
- Students' achievement in **mathematics** is good in KG, very good in the primary phase and outstanding in the middle and secondary phases. By the primary phase students can manipulate numbers using the four key operations and measure accurately. Older students discuss complex mathematical problems



which enables them to make outstanding progress.

- Students' achievement in **science** is good in KG and very good in the primary phase. Their attainment is very good in the middle phase where they are now making outstanding progress. Students' achievement in science in the secondary phase is outstanding. At all stages, students demonstrate impressive skills in researching and designing scientific investigations.
- Students' achievement in **other subjects** is very good in KG and outstanding in other phases. Students demonstrate highly developed skills in a range of creative and expressive arts. Older students have outstanding knowledge across a broad range of elective subjects including other languages, psychology and philosophy.

### Learning skills

- Students are developing a broad range of learning skills through regular opportunities to lead and assess their own learning. They are conscientious and ambitious learners who can draw on their knowledge. They use technology naturally, to produce creative and innovative independent work. Students' critical thinking skills are developed progressively through the stages. By the middle and secondary phases, this is supporting outstanding achievement in many key subjects.

### Areas of Relative Strength:

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- The high quality of students' communication skills in English at all phases
- students' use of Mathematics and Science to solve real problems, particularly at the middle and secondary phases
- students' progressively increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning which is preparing them for learning beyond school
- students' outstanding skills in critical thinking and innovation, and their natural use of technologies to develop their learning.

### Areas for Improvement:

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- Students' skills in using formal Arabic, particularly when Arabic is their first language
- Provision in KG for learning through discovery and enquiry in mathematics and science.



## Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Outstanding
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very Good	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills are very good. Attendance is very good at 96%. Students have very responsible attitudes to learning, Students' are developing initiative and self-reliance. On occasion, KG provision does not build fully on children's ability to make responsible choices about their learning.
- Students make positive behaviour choices and exercise empathy towards others.
- Students demonstrate respect for Islamic values and an awareness of Emirati and world culture. Those who organise charitable activities are gaining authentic entrepreneurial and project management experience.
- Students develop a global mindset and examine situations through multiple perspectives. Older students are developing their understanding of inter-relationships in global communities through the Global Initiatives' Network Club. Participation rates are very high in the broad range of sports. Several student-initiated clubs promote positive relationships and friendship.
- Students develop considerable skill in learning through inquiry and innovation in classrooms. They carry out investigations and research linked to commercial applications, and use innovative technologies in creative arts.

### Areas of Relative Strength:

- Students' very positive attitudes to learning
- Students' global mindsets
- Students' positive mental and physical health.

### Areas for Improvement:



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- Enhance KG provision to give children more choice about their learning.



### Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Assessment	Good	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is good at KG and very good at other phases. The quality of assessment is good at KG, very good at primary, and outstanding in the middle and secondary phases. Teachers at all phases have well-developed understanding of how students learn effectively.
- Almost all teachers plan challenging and engaging activities. They develop students' skills through research and discussion. Teachers make outstanding use of technology as a learning tool.
- Almost all teachers use questions to extend and develop students' thinking. The most skilful teachers adapt lessons to provide support or challenge to individual students. Teachers of Arabic do not adequately promote the target language through signage and display.
- Teachers ensure that students consistently understand what they are expected to learn. They train students to demonstrate their own achievement and evaluate the quality of their own work.
- The school monitors students' progress and tracks their development closely. Diagnostic assessment informs personalised planning for students who require support or additional challenge. Teachers use data to engage students in discussion about their learning.
- The school benchmarks students' academic outcomes rigorously against a range of external, national and international standards. School leaders use this information to identify promptly any trends that need to be addressed.

#### Areas of Relative Strength:

- Teachers' use of assessment to plan appropriate support and challenge
- Secondary students' independent use of assessment to direct and improve their own learning
- Senior leaders' use of assessment data to develop a clear understanding of the impact of teaching.



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### Areas for Improvement:

- The promotion of the Arabic language in the school environment.
- Teachers' planning of children's learning in KG.



## Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum adaptation	Very Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The quality of the curriculum is outstanding overall. The curriculum provides students with knowledge, skills and qualifications that prepare them for the global workplace. This is achieved by blending carefully the American and International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculums.
- At KG and primary, the curriculum purposefully develops the learning strategies of inquiry, innovation and creativity. Students entering the middle phase are confident risk takers, and pioneering thinkers.
- The curriculum enables students to take progressively more responsibility for their own learning, and make choices about the depth and direction of their studies by grade 12.
- The curriculum supports students to develop high standards of information literacy in all subjects. Project-based learning enables students to apply their learning to real contexts including UAE society and economy. The curriculum is enriched by a broad range of opportunities for students to excel and take leading roles in sports, visual and performing arts.
- Rigorous curriculum reviews analyse the effectiveness of the curriculum both within and across grades. This has accelerated progress for groups of students and raised standards of achievement. Collaborative planning ensures consistent and progressive expectations across the school.
- The school is integrating Moral Education into the existing very high quality personal development programmes.

### Areas of Relative Strength:

- The design of the curriculum to meet the learning needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizens
- The integration of literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation.

### Areas for Improvement:

- Continue, as planned, to develop students' skills in innovation through





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embedding design and technology across their learning.



## Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/safeguarding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Care and support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The school's arrangements for the care and support of students are outstanding. Everyone understands the school's child protection procedures. Students use technology responsibly both for their personal safety online, and to ensure the integrity of their work.
- Maintenance records are thorough and staff ensure risks are addressed promptly. An extensive range of play facilities, clubs and sports coaching fosters students' positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles.
- Respectful relationships characterise the school at all levels and behaviour is exemplary. The pervasive 'Culture of Kindness' ensures that bullying is prevented. Timekeeping is rarely an issue; many students arrive early at lessons to engage in discussion with the teacher.
- The school is proud to be fully inclusive. Students with a range of needs and those with talents are identified through comprehensive diagnostic testing. Highly-skilled support teams plan personalised support packages that help students to engage fully in classroom learning and make outstanding progress.
- The school's approaches to supporting personal development are exemplary. Skilled counsellors build strong relationships with students and promote positive mental health. Thorough personalised support is provided during periods of transition, including guidance which helps students to make successful transitions to universities.

### Areas of Relative Strength:

- High quality pastoral care and learning support
- The progress of students with learning and language support needs

### Areas for Improvement:

- Build on the highly successful approaches to supporting English language



learners, to further enhance support for those learning Arabic.

## Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Very Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

- The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The school's ambitious vision inspires and drives its innovative approaches to education. The Principal and senior leadership team demonstrate considerable educational expertise and outstanding leadership skills.
- Distributive leadership empowers leaders at all levels to research, innovate and share best practice. The school sustains high capacity for improvement by providing quality professional and leadership development. All staff are critical, reflective and continually seek to improve.
- The school's rigorous and systematic self-evaluation processes involve all stakeholders. The sustained focus on the quality of students' learning has been a key driver in preparing students for 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizenship.
- The School's improvement plans are clear, focused and ambitious. Leaders promote solution-focused action through research, innovation and measured risk-taking. The evaluation of the school's work has not yet been fully extended to include representation from the student council.
- The school is highly successful in engaging parents in their children's learning. Parents understand both what and how their children are learning. They can access their children's progress records and targets at any time online. A 'Wellness Plan' supports parents, particularly those who are new to the school and the country.
- The school is governed by GEMS organisation. The recently established Advisory Board is increasing local accountability. GEMS Education systematically evaluates the quality of education and provides support.
- The school is very efficiently managed by teams whose activities contribute



to the school's overall effectiveness and the outstanding quality of student care and support.

- Specialist facilities promote the development of students' skills and talents in expressive and creative arts.

#### **Areas of Relative Strength:**

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- Visionary leadership that drives innovation
- Arrangements for involving parents in their children's learning
- Accountability mechanisms which drive a culture of ambition.

#### **Areas for Improvement:**

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- Extend student council representation in the senior leaderships' evaluation of the work of the school.