

# **GEMS Wellington Academy, Silicon Oasis**

## **British Schools Overseas Inspection Report**

**Inspection dates**    18 – 21 November 2013

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**Team members**     Mike Hewlett  
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**Age group: 3-18**  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) Schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from CfBT Education Trust who spent four days at the school. CfBT is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools in England and overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

CfBT Education Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the United Kingdom (UK) and internationally. CfBT 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 Edubase.**

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas. 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 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 for parents, carers and others.
7. The school's procedures for handling complaints.
8. The quality of provision for boarding.
9. Leadership and management of the school.

The purposes of the inspections are to:

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

The BSO inspection was combined with an inspection carried out with inspectors from Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). The DSIB inspection evaluated the school's performance when measured against the quality indicators for schools in Dubai. The outcomes of the DSIB inspection are contained within a separate report which is available from Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai.

### Key for inspection grades

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

### Proportions used in the report

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

## Information about the school

Established in 2011, Gems Wellington Academy (Silicon Oasis) is a private, multi-national school in Dubai. At the time of the inspection, there were 2948 pupils on roll aged from three to 18 years. Four hundred and twelve pupils have been identified as having some form of special educational need including those with particular gifts and talents. A new Principal was appointed in January 2013.

The academy comprises pupils of 96 different nationalities, which gives the academy a rich cultural diversity. A quarter of the pupils are from the United Kingdom and 70 pupils are Emirati nationals. The teachers are well qualified with the great majority being trained in the UK. The academy's vision is encapsulated in its maxim: 'Learn. Aspire. Be'. Its aim for its pupils is that they 'will embrace the school's core values, embody a genuine desire and capacity for learning, and be truly internationally minded citizens capable of leading and influencing their own communities'.

The academy follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 was the first group at the academy who would be sitting international examinations. They will be taking IGCSE in the summer of 2014. There is a small

Year 12 consisting of 24 students studying for the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma and career-related certificates.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by three CfBT Education Trust inspectors. On this combined inspection, there were also eight DSIB inspectors. The two teams contributed to a shared evidence base. In total, inspectors visited 130 lessons. They held 60 meetings including those with the Principal and other academy leaders, staff and parents and a representative of the GEMS corporate management team. Inspectors talked with pupils in formal interviews, in lessons and as they met them around the academy. Inspectors also observed the work of the academy and looked at self-evaluation, improvement plans, pupils' reports, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Inspectors examined the results of questionnaire surveys returned by parents and followed up on issues that were raised.

## Evaluation of the school

This academy provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Many of its elements are excellent. It combines good British educational standards and methodology with an awareness of the local cultural and regional context. Pupils' attainment is above average and compares favourably with standards reached in British independent schools.

In English, attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and primary phase is above average and is high in the secondary phase. Progress is good in the primary phase and is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the secondary phase.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, almost all children are below the expected levels on entry but, by the end of this key stage, the development of most children is equal to, or exceeds, expected levels. All children enjoy their lessons and learn through song, activity and games. Most listen attentively to traditional stories like *Goldilocks* and respond well to challenging questions from the teacher. Writing skills begin to develop and children are eager to take part in the wide variety of tasks set.

Pupils' progress continues to be good in the primary phase. Pupils quickly learn to read and write using phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Pupils in Year 1 remember sounds learned earlier, assimilate new ones readily and almost all can write the words legibly. Pupils thoroughly enjoy literature and develop their skills in many ways including through the use of technology. By the end of this phase, pupils' writing considerably improves. Pupils in Year 6 can create complex sentences using conjunctions and demonstrate a wide vocabulary. For example, they write sensitive narratives describing a father's grief for his lost son.

Pupils' achievement and progress are outstanding throughout the secondary phase. Pupils in Year 7 can structure essays and show an excellent appreciation of literature. Those in Year 8 can discuss rhythm and rhyme in ballads and, in Year 9, relish the reading of *Noughts and Crosses*. Essays in Year 10 demonstrate an excellent understanding of *Romeo and Juliet*. By Year 11, almost all pupils can evaluate poetry. They can reflect upon complex ideas, understand the effectiveness of imagery and develop a personal response orally and in fluent, accurate prose.

Pupils make good progress in mathematics during the primary phase. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2, they are reaching standards that are above those typically found in the UK. In 2013, the majority, 59%, exceeded the expected levels and this is an improvement on previous years. Strengths in mathematics include pupils' strong mental agility and their knowledge of mathematical facts and processes. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to use and apply the skills they gain in the core subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils confidently calculate the areas of irregular shapes. They can work out how much carpet they would need to cover the classroom floor. A few can then answer the 'challenge questions' which ask them to calculate the coloured areas found in the different national flags found around the school.

In the secondary phase, pupils build on this successful start and make outstanding progress towards their IGCSE examinations. In this growing school, only a small number of pupils have taken external examinations in mathematics so far. In 2013, all pupils who sat the examination attained A\*- B with 71% awarded A\* or A grades. This represents outstandingly high attainment compared to UK expectations with all pupils meeting or exceeding their projected scores. Similarly high standards are found in both the work of, and predictions for, the current Year 11 cohort. Mathematics is a real strength of the school and pupils take a great pride in 'getting things right'. For example, a Year 11 group confidently used and applied various circle theorems. Most pupils were able to explain just what more they needed to do to reach the next examination grade.

Science attainment is good in all phases. The skills of scientific investigation are strong throughout the school. However, understanding of the theory underpinning the practical work is not so secure. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have good skills of enquiry. The use of high-level language, such as 'dissolving', was encouraged.

Key Stage 2 teacher assessments for all pupils are only a few percentage points above the UK national average for level 5. However, almost half of the pupils who started the school when it opened, gained level 5 or above. At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils gaining level 7 or above is low and the school's self-evaluation recognises this as an area for improvement. Almost half of the pupils gained A\*-B in core science in the Year 10 IGCSE exams, well above UK averages. Most Year 11 pupils can investigate the deposition of copper from copper sulphate during electrolysis and understand the scientific theory underpinning the practical work.

Children make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as do pupils in Year 1. Their language skills develop from a low level to the point where they use scientific vocabulary such as 'freezing', 'transparent' and 'opaque'. They acquire practical skills and develop very well their ability to describe what happened and to predict what might happen. Pupils continue to make good progress in both primary and secondary phases, although not as rapidly as in the early years. Their skills and understanding in scientific investigation develop well and pupils at the upper end of the secondary phase can plan, carry out and evaluate investigations, explain their thinking and identify possible errors. However, their factual knowledge and understanding, and the ability to apply these, do not improve as rapidly. For example, pupils in Year 8 could use the idea of particles to explain evaporation but they had difficulty in applying the idea of particles to other situations.

Pupils studying other subjects in the curriculum achieve similar levels of attainment and progress. The curriculum is outstanding. Its content excites the pupils' imagination and challenges them to develop their core competencies and to make links between subjects. In the secondary phase, pupils have a wide range of choices at IGCSE and, throughout the academy, the enrichment programme is outstanding. This combination of curricular breadth and extra-curricular richness reflects the best of British education.

Teaching is good across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons which interest pupils and improve their learning skills. Teachers and pupils engage well with each other and share enthusiasm for the subject. Most teachers know pupils' abilities well and tailor their teaching to these abilities. On occasions, the more able are not given sufficient challenge. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is, in the main, regular and the 'what to improve' culture in assessment helps pupils to understand how to reach their next target. Occasionally, this high standard of assessment by teachers is not apparent in pupils' work. Effective use of technology in lessons encourages pupils to build upon their knowledge and to develop research skills which lead to a high level of independent learning. The challenge for the future is to bring all teaching up to the level of the best.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Behaviour is of a high order and pupils' excellent cultural awareness is reflected in their knowledge of British heritage and their interest in learning about other cultures. The management of pupils' welfare, health and safety, safeguarding and behaviour, including bullying, is excellent. Policies are compliant but, more importantly, are seen to be effective in practice in the best interests of pupil care.

Information for parents is of high quality and easily accessible. The academy rightly prides itself on its rapid and effective response to parents' concerns and this was confirmed by parents.

The successful development of the academy is supported by outstanding leadership and management. The new Principal has given focus and direction to the academy and is strongly supported in this by committed leaders at all levels. This is complemented by the good support of the members of the governing board, who are cognisant of the challenges of a rapidly developing school. Self-evaluation is a strength of the academy, supporting improvement at all levels. This extends to the monitoring of teachers' performance and their pupils' attainment and progress. The emphasis on self-evaluation is indicative of the academy's capacity to improve.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during November 2013, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas. 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 curriculum is outstanding across the academy. The academy has moved to a new curriculum across all phases which will lead to IB examinations in the final years. The curriculum leaders, together with all teachers, have planned meticulously and imaginatively for this change. As a result, all phases of the school are incorporating the IB skill competencies into the planning and delivery of lessons. This is leading to a structured and coherent curriculum that spans the whole school, enabling pupils from the earliest ages to develop the skills to make them life-long learners.

All pupils experience a broad and balanced education. Last year, the academy introduced the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework, placing a greater emphasis on free-flow provision. This has highlighted child-initiated learning and given greater emphasis to personal, social and physical development and communication and language and numeracy skills. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a rich and varied programme of activities leading to excellent opportunities for children to communicate in English and to make progress in all areas of learning. There are exceptional opportunities for recreation, outdoor learning through play and personal, physical and musical development.

In the primary phase, pupils learn through thematic approaches with an emphasis on enquiry skills which develop curiosity and self-reliance. The study programmes are carefully planned and enable pupils to engage in team working, reflection, communication and risk-taking. A strong feature of the curriculum is the encouragement given to pupils from an early age to question. For instance, in science in Year 1, pupils sorted materials into groups and asked each other why they had made their decisions. The use of technology enhances pupils' experience. From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, pupils are encouraged to use information and communication technology, including applications and smart boards, and one of

the features of the academy is the ease with which pupils use this technology. During the inspection, pupils in a Year 2 class were creating high-quality posters on ancient Egyptian customs using a publishing programme

Pupils in the early years of the secondary phase follow a broad curriculum which has the unique feature of cross-curricular links built into the main curriculum framework. The three main curricular areas of mathematics, science and technology (MST), language and communication (LC) and arts, humanities, sport and leisure (AHSL) give pupils a real understanding of how academic subjects connect to each other. In discussions, both pupils and parents confirmed the benefits of this structure. The school offers a very wide range of subjects at IGCSE in Years 10 and 11 and a small group of students in Year 12 have started studying for the IB examinations. These prepare pupils and students for further education and enable pupils of all ages to enter and re-enter the UK system at an appropriate level.

Following a British curriculum, all lessons, other than language lessons, are taught in English. This enables pupils, whether their first language is English or not, to acquire facility in speaking, listening and writing. These skills, together with the numerical abilities they acquire, mean that pupils are well prepared for the modern workplace.

The academy is inclusive in its admissions and enables all pupils to follow courses appropriate to their ages and aptitudes. For those pupils identified as having special educational needs, the support is of a very high order and is tailored to the needs of individual pupils. The support includes individual attention from teachers in lessons and high-quality support from trained teachers or assistants as well as coursework adapted to cater for pupils' individual special needs.

The enrichment programme is another key feature of the academy. This programme is in its early days but has already been strongly embraced by the school community. In essence, the former, after school, extra-curricular programme has been brought into the curriculum and has been merged with the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the academy's tutoring support. It enables all pupils to follow assigned and chosen courses and to broaden and deepen their experiences within the extended school day. The huge variety of options includes creative needlecraft, applications, master classes, Italian, debating and many more. Pupils' personal, social and health education is an essential element in the new house and tutorial system. Older pupils enjoy service in the community, work experience and high-quality careers advice that helps them to think maturely about their future.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good; this results in pupils making good progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge of the English National Curriculum and they successfully employ a good range of teaching and learning strategies.

Most teachers are confident and skilled practitioners who know well the individual needs of pupils in their class. Throughout the school, there is a consistency of approach in producing high-quality planning for lessons which takes account of pupils' earlier achievements. Plans also make very clear what each group of pupils in a class will be expected to learn. In the very best lessons, teachers use this planning to very good effect and respond flexibly during the lesson when a change of direction is needed. For example, in a very successful Year 8 mathematics lesson, the degree of difficulty was increased as it became clear to the teacher that even the individually set 'challenge' tasks provided at the start of the lesson were not hard enough. In the subsequent questioning and paired work, the teacher ensured that pupils of all ability levels were stretched and encouraged to attempt to solve more open-ended problems. Consequently, pupils made outstanding progress and rapid gains in their learning and understanding during the lesson. In lessons where teaching is not as effective, teachers do not respond as quickly or spot the needs of individual pupils as accurately. As a result, some higher attainers mark time.

In their discussions with inspectors, pupils confirm that the quality of teaching is good. They particularly enjoy the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and teachers which mean that they are confident enough to ask questions if anything is unclear. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary as a result of the teachers' strong planning of lessons, pupils' commitment to learning and their desire to make progress.

Teachers' ongoing assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and are well used to plan future work. This is especially the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage where the quality of teachers' assessment is outstanding. Most marking of pupils' work is of high quality and provides pupils with a clear view of what they need to do to improve and how they can reach the next level. Occasionally, and more often in the secondary phase rather than in primary, marking does not reach these high standards and there are some inconsistencies in relation to the school's own expectations. For example, some books feature work that has been unmarked for extended periods with few comments that will assist pupils with their future learning.

Teachers make very good use of the extensive resources and facilities that are available to them. Technology is viewed very much as a tool for learning and is used successfully in many of the lessons observed. Staff and pupils have high levels of proficiency in using technology so interactive whiteboards and personal computers, for example, are well used by both.

Teachers provide numerous opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding of a subject in other curricular areas. This reinforces pupils' understanding and keeps their interest levels high. In a Year 9 geography lesson, for example, pupils were able to use their research skills to investigate the features of an earthquake. They successfully used this information and their own imaginative skills

to create 'an earthquake survival kit'. Similarly, pupils studying ratio made rapid progress as they applied their numerical skills to problems that centred on calculations needed to produce a recipe.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent throughout the academy during lessons, when pupils are moving around the building and at break times. Almost all pupils show good levels of self-discipline even when there is little adult supervision. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and this is strongly promoted by the academy. For example, during the daily tutor-group meetings, pupils from Year 7 to Year 12 meet to discuss issues that matter to them such as how to deal with any behaviour that troubles them or resolve disagreements. Pupils show positive attitudes to school through their good attendance and punctuality. In addition, almost all pupils arrive to lessons with the necessary equipment and complete their homework on time. They are eager participants in the exceptional range of enrichment opportunities that the school offers. Parental surveys confirm just how much pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils come from a very diverse range of cultural backgrounds and the school is a harmonious multi-national community. The school is justifiably proud of the numerous ways in which it demonstrates its 'Britishness', celebrates the local culture of Dubai and recognises and values the uniqueness of each child in a community that represents almost 60 different nationalities. Plans for National Day are well advanced and pupils take a lead in organising such events. Remembrance Day featured in all classes and assemblies and reminded pupils of the sacrifices made by people in conflicts in countries around the world. Furthermore, the school has a strong commitment to encouraging good relationships and tolerance among people of all backgrounds and cultures. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of its values' system and discrimination in any form is rare and is not tolerated. This reflects the school's vision which expects pupils to be 'truly internationally minded citizens, capable of leading and influencing their own communities'. As a result, pupils respect other people's beliefs and values and pupils of all nationalities play and work well together. They offer a genuine welcome to newcomers, a regular event in this school where pupil numbers are growing rapidly.

Pupils are self-confident and have high levels of self-esteem. They are proud of their school and, in their view, bullying is very rare. A feature of the school is the encouragement for pupils to develop and then practise their leadership skills. House ambassadors, school council members and sports leaders are just some of the ways in which pupils can contribute to the experience of others and learn about leadership. Pupils' growing self-confidence and independence are illustrated by their willingness to take on such responsibilities and to make decisions about their future. For example, options meetings at the end of Year 9 involve pupils and their parents in discussions with teachers about subjects to be pursued at Key Stage 4. However,

pupils themselves and school leaders are adamant that decisions about future courses and examinations must rest ultimately with the pupils.

Pupils make good overall progress in developing personal qualities that will enable them to contribute effectively to the community and eventually to transfer to working roles and adult life. Pupils are thoughtful and caring and many have a strong commitment to raising funds to support local charities such as 'Dubai carers' and the 'Safe and Sound' campaign.

Pupils develop a good basic knowledge of public institutions and services in Dubai and in the UK. For example, pupil displays about the UAE National Day and the Queen's Jubilee were detailed and confirmed pupils' awareness of different, but complementary, cultural mores. This prepares them very well for the next stage of their lives.

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

The academy's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is outstanding and pupils feel safe and secure. Relationships between staff and pupils are harmonious and mutually respectful. Tutors are very supportive and ensure that their tutees' needs and concerns are handled promptly and sensitively. This support is enhanced by the availability of the senior leaders, who spend a good proportion of their time around the school talking with pupils and parents. In addition, the introduction of vertical tutor groups has led to greater support of younger pupils by their seniors. Pupils report that the school counsellor is also someone to whom they can turn for advice and support.

In a school with nearly 3000 pupils, robust supervision of movement is vital. It is notable, however, that this is conducted in a calm and unhurried manner. Standards of behaviour are high and pupils develop, from an early age, a quality of self-discipline in line with the academy's behaviour policy. The academy has a strong reward culture, which is being further enhanced by the house system. Thus, although sanctions are known and, at times, imposed, pupils display a strong sense of responsibility, as reflected in their enthusiasm for putting themselves forward for the new roles of house ambassadors.

The medical facilities are excellent. The medical team of a doctor and three nurses work closely with staff to ensure that everyone is fully aware of pupils' individual medical conditions. Procedures for handling medication and the keeping of medical records are extremely thorough. Healthy living and healthy eating are strongly promoted through PSHE and guidance to parents.

The quality of the new buildings is very well maintained and the academy's security systems are robust. In its desire to enhance security even further, the academy is

investing in a swipe-card system for parents and pupils. Procedures for evacuation are regularly practised and lock-down procedures in the event of unauthorised intrusion are comprehensive. Pupil transport is very effectively managed, including regular checks to ensure compliance. Excursions and visits are subject to rigorous planning and safety requirements.

Safeguarding and child protection are high priorities for the academy and conform to the best of UK practice. The policy is well understood by staff and parents and staff have received the appropriate training and know how to respond to any concerns brought to them by a pupil. In a school where pupils use information and communication systems so widely, correct emphasis is placed on internet safety and cyber bullying.

Pupils with special educational needs, including gifted and talented pupils, are very well supported to maximise their potential. A combination of awareness by teachers of the needs of these pupils in mainstream lessons and tailored individual support enables them to make good progress. Guidance on future careers and higher education has been given to pupils through a partnership with another GEMS school. As more pupils will be aiming for university education as the academy grows, a full-time careers' adviser is being appointed. Pupils are enthusiastic about coming to the academy and attendance is high. This is carefully monitored, as is punctuality, to identify any issues.

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

This standard is met. GEMS corporate support services support the school well in ensuring that all the required checks are in place. Scrutiny of records confirms that staff have the right to work in Dubai and that they are suitable to work with children. Volunteers are carefully checked and supervised, with detailed records maintained.

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

The academy's premises and facilities provide pupils with a high-quality learning environment. The academy is being built in four phases. Currently, pupils are working in phases one and two with phase three coming on stream at the end of January 2014 and phase four in September 2014. The buildings and facilities are 'state of the art' and contribute significantly to pupils' progress. Disabled pupils have full access to the school campus, reflecting the academy's commitment to equality of opportunity.

The facilities include science laboratories, libraries and specialist teaching rooms for art, dance, drama, information and communication technology (ICT), music and photography. In particular, the learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage classes is exceptional. Sporting facilities include a range of artificial pitches, sports halls and swimming pools. When phase three opens, pupils will have access

to a fully-equipped 700-seat theatre, additional laboratories and design technology workshops. A notable feature of the design of the buildings is the wide areas between classrooms. Much wider than corridors, these spaces are used for 'break-out' groups of pupils working on individual or group projects and are also used for the support of pupils with special educational needs. The sense of space is palpable and contributes to the ease of movement of pupils around the school.

Classrooms are of a good size and are well maintained. All are equipped with interactive whiteboards, which both teachers and pupils use effectively to enhance learning. Display at the academy is of a high order and, almost exclusively, is pupils' own work. This enables curriculum subjects to be illustrated, some of which reflect the British nature of the academy. From Boudica in Year 4 to the Tudors in Year 8, pupils' displays illustrate their understanding of a subject and, also, their personal interpretation of the topic. This was particularly notable in displays of Year 6 musical compositions on the theme of 'Journey into Space' and the 'young artists' group exhibition based on the work of the twentieth-century British artist, Gillian Ayres. The display boards of each house confirm pupils' pride in belonging to their house.

The school site is well maintained by a team of dedicated ancillary staff who share the pupils' pride in the school. The site is clean and, relatively, litter free. The support staff who work 'behind the scenes' are as committed as the teaching staff to the success of the school and are as equally valued by the academy's senior managers. Resources are of high quality, plentiful and well deployed.

Security is a high priority for the academy. The security team is well trained, supports pupils' movement around the campus by separating pupils and vehicles and monitors all visitors. Parent access is well monitored and, after bringing their children to school, parents enjoy the parents' café where they can meet other parents or have conversations with teachers. The fire evacuation practices and lock-down drills are correctly recorded. Currently, the canteen offers a limited range of meals, but this will be improved with the opening of phase three of the buildings. Currently, the premises and accommodation fully meet the local requirements as set out by the Dubai authorities

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

The academy provides parents with very good information. Most is available from the well-designed website but parents also receive joining information and regular newsletters. All the academy's policies are electronically available. The academy is aware that its growth has been at a fast pace and senior managers have responded to this by ensuring that communication is as much as possible at a personal level. Teachers' email addresses are sent to parents and a weekly email informs parents how they can support their child's learning and progress. An immediate source of support for parents is the parent relations executive. Occupying a prominent position

in the school's entrance foyer, two members of staff dedicated to parental support are available to parents to help with any enquiry about the school. Parents report how much they value this service.

Responses to the parental survey, sent out by the inspection team prior to the visit, confirmed that the overwhelming majority of parents were happy with the academy and with the education their children received. Almost all agreed that their children enjoyed school and that they found the work interesting and challenging. Similarly, those that responded to the statement in the questionnaire felt that the academy prepared pupils well to enter, or re-enter, the UK system without disruption to their education. At the meeting held with inspectors, parents were clearly keen to support the academy in its development. They were realistic about the challenges faced by such expansion and reported that the arrival of the new Principal had given a real focus to the academy. His parent consultation meetings on the future of the academy had been well received, as had been the election of parents to the parents' consultative committee, which meets regularly with the Principal to discuss the operation of the school.

Parents receive reports three times a year. The interim reports give clear guidance on pupils' progress and include target grades and guidance for improvement. The annual reports are comprehensive with detailed comments on each subject and, as is the school's ethos, always link progress to targets which are fully explained in the Parents' Handbook. Through these means and a strong 'parental engagement programme', parents feel that they are regarded as essential partners in their children's education.

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

The school meets all the requirements of the standard. The complaints' procedures are clear and information is available on the school's website. In addition, when parents register their children they sign to confirm that they are aware of all procedures and protocols. School records indicate that the complaints' procedures is rarely used and parents confirmed that direct access to school leaders means that most issues can usually be addressed informally.

## **Standard 8. The quality of provision for boarding**

Not applicable.

## **Standard 9. Leadership and management of the school**

The academy benefits from excellent leadership and management. This high quality of leadership contributes significantly to helping pupils meet the aim of developing 'a genuine desire and capacity for learning' and becoming 'truly internationally minded citizens capable of leading and influencing their own communities'. There is a clear vision for the school based on the core values of the GEMS group of schools. This is reflected at all levels of leadership and by all staff, so that pupils experience this

strong ethos in all their school activities. The Principal's influence in the last calendar year since his appointment has been highly effective in giving the school its purposeful direction and confidence. The introduction of elements such as the enrichment programme and vertical tutoring has improved the educational experience for all pupils. The Principal would be the first to acknowledge that leadership is strong at almost all levels of the academy, with the leadership teams being committed and innovative. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are significantly strong and contribute to the good start made by children as they join the school. A hallmark of leaders at the academy is their commitment to excellence as the academy grows, confirming that there is an outstanding capacity to improve.

The Principal has guided improvement through an unflinching commitment to self-evaluation. The ethos of leadership in this area is to analyse robustly and honestly, to listen to all involved with the academy, including parents, and to develop strategies which are constantly tested against the aims of the academy. The prime area of evaluation is the quality of the pupils' education. Pupils' performance is central to all discussions and evaluation. Thus, staff at all levels are carefully monitored with regard to their performance and that of their pupils. A key element in this is the focus on targets. Staff are well aware of the data the school logs on pupils' performance and teachers use this to stretch pupils in lessons and written work. Pupils confirmed in conversations that they were well aware of their targets and how to meet them.

The recruitment of appropriate staff is central to the academy's success. Appointment, training and monitoring processes are excellent and contribute to the good quality of teaching and learning. New staff confirmed the supportive and informative nature of the induction programme, vital to settling large numbers of new teachers in their first weeks. The appraisal system is supportive as well as being searching and teachers' professional development benefits from classroom observation being at the heart of appraisal. Stemming from appraisal is an extensive programme of training opportunities using GEMS courses and also drawing on other training to improve teaching. Almost all teaching staff are British trained and qualified. This enables them to teach confidently the UK curriculum and to prepare pupils well to enter or re-enter the UK education system. A significant strength of appraisal is the identification of future leaders. The academy identifies those with leadership potential and trains them. Thus, the academy is developing a cadre of 'home grown' leaders to support the growth of the school in future years.

The school leaders, at all levels, are excellent role models for pupils. Their physical presence around the school, particularly at pupils' free time, encourages pupils to converse with the leaders and understand the qualities of mature adults. The school is strongly committed to equality of opportunity and safeguarding. The equality of opportunity at the school is palpable and all pupils, whatever their ability or background, are encouraged to develop their skills and talents. The safeguarding of pupils is given high priority, not only by physical systems, but through staff training and the teachers' awareness of the needs of their pupils.

Governance of the school is good. The board of governors gives good support to the new Principal in his vision for the school and provides appropriate challenge for the school's improvement. The governors complement this support through clear financial policies which underpin the school's development. Through discussion with the senior team and regular monitoring and, through engaging with the views of parents, governors are very aware of the particular challenges faced by the school as it rapidly expands its pupil numbers. The governors work closely with the school in meeting these challenges and make a good contribution to the school's development.

Parents confirm the strength of the leadership and management of the academy. In discussion and in their responses to the questionnaire, almost all agreed that the school is well led.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

Gems Wellington Academy (Silicon Oasis) fully meets the requirements for British Schools Overseas.

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

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

- Address inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by continuing to promote approaches which ensure all pupils are challenged and receive constructive feedback on how to improve.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

<b>Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	√			
<b>The behaviour of pupils</b>	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

<b>The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils</b>	√			
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The quality of provision for boarding

	N/A			
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Leadership and management

<b>Overall effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	√			
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## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	GEMS Wellington Academy – Silicon Oasis
<b>Type of school</b>	Private
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2011
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	2948
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 31,000 to AED 70.000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	N/A
<b>Address of school</b>	PO BOX 49746, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 4 342 4040
<b>Email address</b>	Contactus_wso@gemsedu.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Gernon
<b>Proprietor</b>	GEMS Education

## **GLOSSARY**

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

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

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

**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.

**CfBT Education Trust** – CfBT is 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 CfBT 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 CfBT Education 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 CfBT Education 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. CfBT 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

CfBT 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.

CfBT 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. CfBT Education Trust has been successful in bidding for the recent tender to manage inspection services on behalf of the office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). CfBT is currently responsible for delivering inspection services in schools (both maintained and independent), the learning and skills sector and initial training education.

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