

# Dubai Gem Private School Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Year 13

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## Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

**Outstanding** – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

**Good** – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

**Acceptable** – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

**Unsatisfactory** – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Dubai Gem Private School was inspected in January 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students), Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

## Basic information about the school

Located in Oud Metha, Dubai Gem Private School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 13, aged three to 18 years. The school follows the English National Curriculum. In September 2009, Taleem (an educational company) was engaged by the owners of Dubai Gem Private School to manage and develop the school. A seconded managing Principal had been appointed in order to create priorities for development and implement a whole school improvement plan. The existing Vice-Principal and supervisors continued to manage the primary and secondary departments. At the time of the inspection, there were 1356 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents who responded to questionnaires were positive about the school. A minority made suggestions for improvement. Parents said their children enjoyed school and were very positive about standards of behaviour. They said staff expected children to work hard and treated them fairly. Most thought their children were making good progress in English and mathematics. A minority did not think their children were making good progress in Arabic. They did not know how well their children were getting on in lessons, particularly in Islamic Education, Arabic and science. They did not think that the school gave children enough opportunities to be creative or physically active through extra-curricular activities and sports. A few parents said that they would like teachers to give them more information about their children's progress in learning. A few said they welcomed the recently introduced meetings where parents were encouraged to express their views. A few praised a

recent information evening about how to help their children to learn to read and wanted more such events. A majority of parents did not know about the school's links with the community or how the school was improving. A few raised concerns about the quality of food and hygiene in the school.

## How well does the school perform overall?

Dubai Gem Private School provided, overall, an acceptable standard of education. Attainment and progress in mathematics and science at the primary phase and in Islamic Education and Arabic throughout the school was of an acceptable standard. At the Foundation Stage, attainment and progress were at least good in mathematics and English. Progress at this phase, in English, was outstanding and at other stages, both attainment and progress were good. In science, attainment was acceptable at Foundation and primary phases and good at secondary post-16. Progress in science, whilst being unsatisfactory at the Foundation Stage was acceptable in primary, good in secondary and outstanding at post-16. Students were ambitious, confident and articulate. They reflected the moral code and values of their school in their relationships with one another, with their teachers, and in their diligent approach to their work. Their attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. They had a well-developed understanding of the economic and cultural context in which they lived and were ambitious to contribute to Dubai's future success.

Standards of teaching and learning had been improving, and were acceptable in the primary stage and good in secondary. Staff set very high standards for students' knowledge, accuracy and presentation skills in particular. Teachers had improved their approaches to helping students to learn more effectively by giving them more activities in lessons and encouraging them to work together in groups. Students were very well supported by their parents to extend their learning further by completing ambitious homework projects. The primary curriculum was acceptable. It gave students experiences in a range of subjects and, importantly, helped them to make connections between these subjects. A few subjects did not give students the full range of appropriate skills. Staff took care of students and made sure that their personal needs were met. The school was conducting a review of its facilities to improve health and safety and was in the process of ensuring that everyone understood their role in keeping students safe at all times.

The knowledgeable and skilled Principal provided strong leadership. She had quickly and effectively improved the school in the short time she had been in post. She was building the school's capacity by improving leadership at all levels and by training and deploying staff more effectively, but these measures were yet to have their full effect. Staff were helping one another to improve their teaching, which was already improving students' learning, and attainment in secondary. They were increasing their understanding of how to improve the school further by checking on standards regularly. The governors had taken appropriate action to bring about improvements in the school and had consulted parents on how the school should improve. Governors had insufficient information about the school's performance in order for them to be assured that the school was achieving its targets. Parents were pleased

with the school but wanted more regular information on what their children were learning. Staff used the local and wider community to help students to use their learning in real contexts. Many students had achieved success in high profile academic, sports and arts events. Those who had carried out service projects in Mumbai and other communities were a credit to their school. Older students took leading roles in an excellent range of opportunities to develop their personal and leadership skills and had become independent, innovative and ambitious. Staff were planning to develop such opportunities and activities for younger students. Staff and students made best use of the school's facilities.

## Key features of the school

- The students' courteous behaviour and their outstanding attitudes to learning;
- The positive and supportive relationships based on mutual respect;
- The outstanding experiences available to students in Year 12 and Year 13 which helped to develop their confidence and ambition;
- The high standards in examination results at International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and Advanced level in most subjects;
- The effectiveness of the Principal in improving the school.

## Recommendations

- Improve the curriculum and the breadth of experiences at the Foundation and primary stages;
- Continue to improve the quality and consistency of teaching for effective learning across the school. In particular, increase opportunities for independent learning and investigative approaches which help children to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Improve how teachers track students' progress in learning, and how they use this information to identify and meet the needs of those requiring additional support or more challenge;
- Improve the consistency and rigour of self-evaluation to take full account of all sources of information on the school's performance when planning improvement.

## How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

Overall, progress and attainment in Islamic Education were acceptable. Most students were achieving at the levels expected for their age. Most primary students had good knowledge about the Five Pillars of Islam and the daily prayers. However, their recitation of The Holy Qur'an was still underdeveloped. Recitation skills improved slightly in higher years. At the secondary stages, most students had sound knowledge about the life of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). They could also explain the role of mosques in the Muslims' life. They had acceptable knowledge of Islamic values but only a few of them demonstrated the ability to link what they learnt to their daily lives.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable throughout school and in line with expected standards. Students made good progress in Year 3 and Year 8, but in the early years, students' listening skills were underdeveloped. In Year 1, students could use single words correctly to form sentences and had acceptable speaking skills. By Year 3, they could describe pictures using one or two sentences but, by the end of the primary stage, students' reading and writing skills were relatively underdeveloped. However, their speaking skills were much better. By the end of the secondary stage, most students could read paragraphs and could express themselves orally in real-life situations. However, they had a limited capacity to write in an extended way. Their knowledge of grammar was in line with expected standards.

Attainment in English was good across the school. Progress was outstanding in the Foundation Stage where children made rapid gains in their early reading and writing skills. Progress was good at other stages. By Year 2 most students were reading simple texts with accuracy and understanding and writing independently in full well punctuated sentences. By the end of the primary stage students spoke with confidence and expression, and written work showed an above average level of maturity. In literature, students could analyse text for themes and complex characteristics. Secondary students demonstrated a very strong grasp of grammar and an extensive and sophisticated vocabulary. In A-level examinations students achieved above average results and in IGCSE their attainment was well above expectations.

In mathematics, attainment and progress was good overall. The rapidly developing confidence of Foundation Stage children in number, shape and measure led to good levels of attainment and progress. For example, four year-old children were able to measure and record the heights of sunflowers on graphs. In Years 1 to 6, attainment and progress were as expected for their age. Attainment and progress throughout Years 7 to 13 were good. Results of IGCSE and A-level were consistently well above average. Students' growing mathematical maturity enabled them to solve problems systematically, practically, and they were able to successfully apply their mathematics skills to their science work. Insufficient use was made of computers and investigative approaches to problem solving.

Attainment in science was acceptable at the Foundation and primary stage and good at the secondary stage. Students' progress was unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage, good at the primary and secondary stages and outstanding at post-16. Children at the Foundation Stage

demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge about their world, but did not develop this knowledge fully through lessons. Students at some primary stages had an impressive knowledge of science facts and a few used this knowledge to explain their world. At the secondary stage students could use their knowledge to solve problems and explain contemporary scientific issues. Attainment at IGCSE was well above the international average and, by A-level, attainment in most measures was above international standards. At all but the post-16 stage, students did not have well developed skills in designing and carrying out scientific investigations.

### How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' positive attitudes towards learning were an outstanding feature of the school. Their behaviour was exemplary. There were very positive relationships between students and amongst students and staff which helped to ensure effective learning. The school promoted positive moral values well. Students were self-disciplined and many, particularly those in Years 12 and 13, took significant leadership responsibility within the school. The newly established students' council had resolved problems and participated effectively in the decision-making processes in the school. Students' attendance during the inspection was outstanding, though acceptable during the last semester.

Students' civic understanding was good. Primary students could identify the unique features of Dubai. They appreciated living in a multi-cultural society. They realised that this was a strong and distinctive feature of Dubai. Daily morning assemblies, the planned curriculum and field trips deepened their civic appreciation and broadened their global understanding. Students made good contributions to the community by organising a blood drive, fund-raising campaigns, and supporting a project which involved working with street children in Mumbai. The school's focus on moral values made students value their religion and respect it.

Students throughout school had outstanding understanding of the economy of Dubai and how tourism, trade and real-estate were the main sources of the national income. Students appreciated the importance of the Metro as an energy-efficient mass transit system. Senior students understood the impact of the world recession on the success of Dubai. Students talked about their responsibility for saving energy, recycling, and re-using items to improve the environmental situation in Dubai. The Green Warriors club raised environmental awareness throughout school.

### How good are the teaching and learning?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in Foundation and primary stages and good in the secondary and post 16 phase. In the Foundation and primary classes most lessons were well-planned and the pace of learning was appropriate to students' needs. In most lessons, the use of resources reinforced by activities, games and stories helped students understand what they were learning. In a few lessons students spent too long listening and were not fully engaged in purposeful active learning. Across the school, almost all teachers had good subject

knowledge. At the primary stages, not all teachers provided opportunities for students to learn in different ways. In the secondary and post-16 classes teachers demonstrated a good understanding of how students learn and lessons were varied and active. Teachers used questions to encourage students to express their ideas. Some secondary teachers were particularly skilled at asking open and probing questions to help students apply their knowledge to solve problems. Teachers had high expectations of their students. They emphasised correctness and high standards of presentation.

The quality of learning was acceptable at all stages of the school. All students had positive attitudes to learning. Although their learning was very often related to familiar contexts there were too few opportunities for younger students to find things out for themselves and develop independence. In most primary classes students discussed their work together when completing activities. This helped them to understand by explaining their thinking and solving problems collaboratively. In secondary classes students had regular opportunities to investigate the links between theory and real life. They were developing learning and life skills well through working together on challenging tasks in lessons. They presented their work with confidence. Staff made particularly good use of homework tasks to enable students to extend their learning beyond the syllabus.

Assessment strategies were acceptable at all stages in the school. Staff collected regular performance data from class work, homework and testing. This was discussed with the students to help them to improve their work. From Foundation Stage through to Year 6, staff observed and recorded students' development against agreed criteria, using their findings to address any difficulties, and passing information on to subsequent teachers. Older students knew the criteria by which they were judged, and were skilled at self- and peer-assessment. This helped them to set personal targets and goals. Teachers marked students' written work regularly but they seldom provided comments which students could use to improve their work.

## How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum was based on the English National Curriculum. It was acceptable at both primary and secondary stages. Although approaches to the curriculum had improved in the Foundation Stage, it did not yet offer the full range of early learning experiences, particularly in physical and creative areas. Across the school, staff used textbooks and schemes appropriately to ensure that students experienced continuous and progressive learning as they moved through the year groups. They added variety to their courses by linking learning between subjects and introducing practical tasks. In particular, students' English and mathematical skills were well developed across the curriculum. In most subjects, activities were well planned to take account of what the students already knew. Staff were in the process of reviewing the curriculum and planning improvements to the breadth of opportunities it offered. For older students, the curriculum, particularly in science and English, offered challenge and rigour. Although specific skills in information and communication technology (ICT) were taught, there was insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum. A range



of extra-curricular activities and events for older students extended opportunities for learning. For younger students, such opportunities were limited. The school gave students opportunities to learn about the local and global community through environmental projects and visits.

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students were acceptable. The school provided a clean, hygienic, environment and arrangements for the safety and security of students and staff were under review. Students were closely supervised at all times. Arrangements for students' movement on and off the school buses were effective but some students did not use seat belts. A doctor and two nurses provided high quality medical attention to students. They maintained a well equipped clinic, stored medicines safely and regularly updated students' records. Evacuation procedures were in place and practised annually, though evacuation times were too long. Recent improvements in the arrangements for child protection had brought the provision to an acceptable level.

The quality of support for students was good. Teacher-student relationships were always positive. Students spoke warmly about the care and support they received from their teachers. Teachers knew their students very well. They identified students' strengths and weaknesses through regular monitoring of tests and classroom performance, and supported those who needed help with their learning. High performing students in Years 9 to 11 were challenged by alternative work which extended their thinking but this was less evident in lessons elsewhere in the school. Year co-ordinators provided a good level of pastoral care and tracked students' progress closely. Senior students had good access to counselling and advice. There was scope to improve arrangements for counselling of students and careers guidance in the lower school. Teachers rewarded good behaviour and always handled the rare behaviour issues robustly but sensitively. Arrangements for monitoring attendance and punctuality were very effective and involved parents at an early stage. Parents received regular reports which contain good quality information about their children's progress and learning targets. Staff had held a popular information event about the Foundation Stage curriculum. There was scope to give parents more information about approaches and curriculum content. Staff communicated well with parents through personal diaries and a weekly newsletter from the Principal. Staff were approachable and responded well to queries and complaints.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The Principal had well developed leadership skills and a sound understanding of successful education practice. She had sensitively considered how to move towards best practice without losing some of the school's unique strengths. She provided instructional leadership to staff, setting and expecting high standards. Organisational management systems were in place but the pace of improvement was restricted by a limited understanding, across the school, of the features of best practice. There was a collegiate approach where staff supported one another

to improve. A few co-ordinators had been very pro-active in seeking ways of improving. Overall, the leadership team was not yet consistent in its effectiveness.

The school knew its strengths and weaknesses well. The Principal had carried out a thorough audit of the school which accurately identified the main priorities for improvement, but detailed systems for self-evaluation were still at an early stage of development. Annual department reviews of results and teaching approaches had engaged staff effectively in considering their responsibility for improvement. Whilst managers used attainment data to identifying major issues to address, they did not yet use such evidence to identify further improvements or to hold staff accountable for attainment. Senior managers visited lessons and used what they learned to shape staff training opportunities. The feedback they gave to teachers did not always help them to see how to improve their work. However, teacher peer observation had had a positive impact in improving the consistency of best practice and sharing new approaches.

The school had good partnerships with parents and it used its community well in relation to providing appropriate learning contexts to improve the quality of the curriculum. Students had regular opportunities to understand their role in society by participating in excursions in the local and wider community as part of their learning and personal development.

Founders and governors were personally committed and valued the work of staff. They were improvement-focused and had taken decisive action to raise standards. However, in order to develop their role in accountability, they should be provided with detailed attainment data and critical analysis of the school's performance. The board had yet to develop mechanisms for regularly taking account of the views of stakeholders, and sharing with them the school's improvement plans and targets.

The staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. A full complement of qualified and experienced teachers was well deployed. Most teachers were proud of and committed to the school community. There was, though, no specialist teacher to provide learning support for students experiencing difficulties in their learning. The school premises were fit for purpose, but there was very limited space for the collection and despatch of children from buses and cars. There were sufficient resources to meet minimum curriculum requirements. Teachers produced many of their own learning resources.

## Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress over time	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

## Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau  
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: [inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae).

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae).

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