



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection Report

GEMS Cambridge International School

**Sharjah
United Arab Emirates**

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for and students' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British schools overseas (BSO).

During the inspection visit, all teachers were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed, and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised. Discussions were held with the senior staff, the management teams, a range of teachers, parents and groups of students. Two and a half school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans. The team members were Hussaina Begum, Dalia Kamal, Sairah Shaukat and David Williams.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

GEMS Cambridge International School (GCS), Sharjah, United Arab Emirates meets all the requirements of the BSO standards.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school offers a high-quality British education that meets the needs of its students.

3.1 What the school does well

The school has many strengths:

- Welfare, health and safety in the school is of a very high standard.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is a major strength of the school.
- Students are respectful, positive, caring, very well behaved and are clearly proud of their school.
- Communication with parents and carers is excellent. Parents are very positive about the school, and about the way that information is shared.
- Parents feel that the school knows their children very well.
- The leadership team is outstanding: they pursue excellence vigorously, systematically and single-mindedly.
- Relationships between students and between students and staff are outstanding: all are positive and this is reflected in the school culture as well as in lessons.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding, and they are very supportive of their school.
- Concern for the welfare, health and safety of students is at the heart of the school: this reflects the strong emphasis on values-based education.
- The GCS premises are outstanding and are very well maintained, lit and ventilated: there is a very evident attention to the detail and to the ambience of the school - the school even smells fantastic.
- The large team of support staff keep everything well maintained, clean and the atmosphere is welcoming
- The display and decoration around the school are exemplary: it fully reflects the school's ethos and priorities
- The school provides an excellent range of opportunities outside the formal curriculum for holistic development (such as participation plan in expo 2020, *WeTel* Design Thinking Studio, Organic Garden etc)
- Students readily accept responsibility and leadership roles. They exhibit a sense of enjoyment and fascination about the school.

- The school promotes a friendly environment, several students new to the school reflected on how the curriculum and environment has helped them settle
- The high quality provision of welfare, health and safety policies, procedures, monitoring and risk assessments are well implemented and help to provide an excellent safe, healthy and child friendly environment for all students.
- Consistent curriculum planning and provision of both curricular and extracurricular opportunities to students of all groups, including those with special needs are excellent.
- Students exhibit impressive leadership skills especially with the provision of counselling support, e-safety and the student leadership summit to support staff and students.
- In the best lessons, the use of technology was outstanding: seamless and appropriate support for learning was evident.
- Identification of teachers in need of support is strong: modelling of excellent teaching by the senior leaders is a strength of the school.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- i. Support and develop middle leaders further, including creating succession plans for the next generation of leaders.
- ii. Embed assessment practices across the different key stages and improve the sharing of information between year groups/departments.
- iii. Further improve the quality of learning and teaching, so that all lessons are as good as the best, for example by:
 - a. discuss and record what outstanding learning and teaching looks like at GCS;
 - b. identifying and sharing best practice amongst staff e.g. in the teaching of reading;
 - c. ensuring curriculum planning and its delivery is consistent throughout the school, including cross curricular links in subjects taught in Arabic A;
 - d. develop even more the place of 'design thinking' so that innovation is embedded across the school consistently;
 - e. improve the level of challenge within all lessons, embedding personalised learning for all students.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school/college	GEMS Cambridge International Private School Sharjah				
Address	Muweilah School Zone Area - Sharjah				
Telephone number	+971 6 502 4800				
Website	www.gemscambridgeschool-sharjah.com				
Email address	a.huyser_gcs@gemsedu.com				
Head	Mrs. Albertha Huyser				
Chairman of Board of Governors	Mrs. Ranju Anand				
Age range	3 years to 18 years				
Total number of students	1,300	Boys	695	Girls	605
Numbers by age	0-2 years	0	11-16 years	172	
	3-5 years	423	16-18 years	0	
	6-11 years	705	18+ years	0	
Total number of part-time children	0				

GCS is a values-based international school located in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. The school was founded in 2019 and has seen significant growth with 1,300 students now on roll. The school provides for the needs of a diverse student population from Pre-KG (FS1) to Grade 8 (Year 9) with plans to open Grade 9 (Year 10) and Grade 11 (Year 12) in August 2021.

The school uses the concept of *design thinking*, a process that encourages innovative thinking and creative problem solving and enables learners to expand their knowledge continually.

Across the school, there are students from 47 nationalities. Egyptian students are the single largest group (34%) followed by Pakistani (15%) and Indian (15%). A very small minority (4%) of the students are Emirati. Almost all students are identified as speakers of English as an additional language (EAL). EAL screening and interventions, language development and specialist English teachers play a key role in students' progress.

Within the school's first year of opening, May 2020, the school was graded as 100% Developed in all areas of the Distance Learning Review conducted by Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA), part of a national initiative to evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning provision in schools.

4.1 British nature of the school

All students at GCS follow the National Curriculum for England. The school's interpretation of it has been carefully designed to reflect its British nature, but also take into account demographics. Consequently, students can enter schools in the UK without significant disruption. The school's assessments are UK sourced and benchmarked against UK standards. It also closely follows the national statutory requirements and are committed to providing a curriculum that is in line with the expectations of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and SPEA.

GCS promotes British values through the school's vision, curriculum activities, displays and events. The school is well resourced in materials that are in use in British curriculum schools. The school has a uniform policy, like many English schools. The school's house point and rewards system reflect those used in UK schools.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at GCS fully meets the requirements of the BSO framework.

5.1 Curriculum

The school meets the standard.

GCS provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum. It offers EYFS Framework in Pre-KG and KG 1, National Curriculum for England and MOE curriculum from year 1 to year 9. Students are well served by the curriculum including those with special needs or who use English as a second language. The curriculum ensures that local requirements are met fully. Arabic language is taught to native and non-native speakers. The curriculum policy is well written.

The curriculum is well planned across all year groups. In almost all subjects, subjects are facilitated by teachers to provide child-led activities. Students are provided with many opportunities to learn about phonics, reading, communication, critical thinking, ICT and innovative research skills. Curriculum plans demonstrate very clear progression across all year groups and key stages. There is evidence of effective curriculum review and monitoring in the different development plans for each phase.

The Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum provides many opportunities to develop communication through a daily phonic programme, and promotes investigative skills in a child-led environment. Cross curricular links are evident through the thematic approach in the primary curriculum which meets the needs of learners. This creative approach is beginning to be evident in books, teaching and planning. In secondary, a special focus is given on a wide range of subject options provided at Key stage 4. The school has *Pearson Edexcel* accreditation for GCSE and A-level.

The curriculum policy includes provision for students in a wide range of areas of learning, including English, mathematics, science, Arabic, ICT, the arts, and music: all are well established. This is evident through the students activities during the lessons, newsletters, lesson observations. Education for personal, social and health education is excellent, as are the opportunities provided to students such as assemblies, sports activities, enrichment clubs and e-safety clubs. Curriculum planning is good and it underpins the progress made by students. Teachers are well supported with resources and they make the best use of them during their lessons.

Optional homework is provided for students and this provides opportunities for students to assess themselves. Challenges are provided to most able learners and they perform well. Special needs students are well supported with personalised resources and specialist teachers. Curriculum choices are provided with the support to students through options webinars, information booklets, individual meetings with parents and students, and bespoke career counselling. Good support is provided for students who speak EAL.

Specialist teachers deliver art, modern foreign languages (MFL), music and PE so that planning for specialist curriculum areas considers students' prior learning and the curriculum delivery is very well matched to students' needs.

English as the medium of delivery is used throughout GCS. Many planned opportunities for speaking and listening activities are provided within the curriculum. Collaboration and communication skills are developed in lessons.

Transition within the school and into the secondary schools is positive and well established. Parents felt very well informed about the process of moving through the school.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The school meets the standard. The quality of teaching and assessment across the school is good with outstanding practice evident in some classrooms in all key stages.

Teachers are confident and have warm and effective working relationships with students. There is a lot of praise and encouragement. Management of students' behaviour is very effective, because lessons are interesting. Class time is well managed and pace is appropriate. In a Year 2 English lesson on writing postcards, the teacher used a variety of techniques to enthuse the students, and many wanted to carry on at the end of the lesson. In a Year 5 lesson on prefixes and suffixes, there was very good use of prior learning and strong scaffolding to help those students who needed a little more assistance.

Teachers have secure knowledge of the English National Curriculum and they plan purposeful lessons which sustains students' interest and challenges their thinking. Classrooms are attractive, and are environments that really support learning and promote high standards. Resources are used creatively by teachers to enable students to grasp concepts quickly and make good progress.

IT is used effectively in many lessons. Year 6 students researching Tom Thumb using iPads and in MFL where the teaching of French career effectively engaged students through confident use of the interactive whiteboard. Students spoke enthusiastically about 'TT Rockstar's' which has been introduced to support the learning of multiplication through IT.

Collaborative learning and discussion are encouraged. In the best lessons, there was clear and overt use of the concepts of *design thinking*, and students were given ample time to think and to discuss, such as in a science lesson with Year 4 and a mathematics lesson in Year 7. In the latter, students talked about drawing and interpreting scatter graphs: as they talked to each other and to the teacher, their understanding clearly developed.

Nearly all teachers use questioning effectively to check students' understanding and to prompt deeper thinking. Ongoing verbal feedback is provided to the whole class and individuals. In a Year 8 girls English class, for example, the teacher's trust in the students' abilities promoted their confidence and they were able to answer really thought provoking questions.

In the most effective lessons, learning activities and resources are differentiated to appropriately support and extend students. However, in some cases differentiation was more limited. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide enough challenge for the most able students.

In the best lessons, the use of technology was outstanding: seamless and appropriate support for learning was evident. Teachers clearly had a strong notion of what outstanding learning would look like, and were able to share this with the class.

Curriculum planning and its delivery is fairly consistent throughout the school, but some cross curricular links are at an earlier stage of development. Some teachers are not yet as adept as others, at developing students' independent creativity and research skills. In these lessons, the level of challenge within lessons is not as good, and personalised learning not as evident.

Internal and external assessment and student progress evaluation processes are consistent across the school. The data provides valid, reliable and comprehensive information that is usually used well to evaluate students' progress against the school's curriculum standards and expectations. GCS has detailed information regarding students' academic progress, and their personal and social development. Whole-school as well as individual targets are set, and students' performance is monitored to ensure they are meeting short- and long-term targets. Regular progress meetings with staff and parents ensure that standards of achievement and progress are communicated effectively.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and attain relevant qualifications.

5.3 Standards achieved by students

Standards are good.

In the majority of year groups, students' attainment is in line with the UK expected standards. Where this is not yet the case, there are rigorous systems in place that show consistent improvement. Moderation with other schools and the quality assurance exercises implemented by the leadership team inform professional development at the school and are ensuring that the systems are in place to raise standards.

The school runs termly student progress meetings to ensure that standards for different groups of learners is monitored and evaluated. The progress of different groups of learners is tracked and reviewed regularly. External and internal data is used to identify children who are not meeting curriculum standards or require extra support. Students are given manageable targets and support through the use of the student progress documentation and this is reflected in planning.

In the foundation stage, students are assessed using an external benchmark test on entry and at the end of the year. This is used to help inform teacher assessment and to identify gaps in learning for individual students. Children in the foundation stage are now beginning to access continuous and enhanced provision in classrooms and this is showing signs of making a positive impact on standards. In pre-KG, children are able to connect ideas and skills that they have been taught through a cross curricular approach.

In primary, the majority of students are working at the expected standard in phonics. This is evidenced through lesson observations, guided reading sessions, phonics and the end of year phonics assessment. The majority of children can read at the expected standard and provision is in place to support learners with comprehension. In secondary, external and internal assessments are used to ensure that students are appropriately challenged in lessons. The lessons' success criteria is consistently shared to ensure that students know the expected standard for the lesson. Technology is used to ensure that there is consistency in the information shared and the challenge available to the students in order to raise standards. There is a focus on developing careers advice for the students in Years 7, 8 and 9, and two online careers days for the students have taken place so far.

Throughout the school, the students' behaviour is outstanding. Students are polite, respectful and caring towards others. Attendance is above UK standards (for 2018/19) and there are robust systems in place to monitor attendance. Currently, some are still accessing online lessons.

6. Standard 2

Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development of students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent: it is a significant strength of the school.

There is a clear focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students throughout the school, starting with the vision statement which is about fostering an environment for respect and trust. This is central to life at GCS. Students are offered a wide range of spiritual and cultural experiences through assemblies, after school clubs, and charity work.

Overall, personal development and behaviour are outstanding. The school effectively enables and encourages students to distinguish right from wrong, and to show respect for the school values and ethos. Students are very open-minded, respectful and accepting of each other. They speak articulately about GCS being a safe place.

Students are respectful, well-mannered and welcoming. They demonstrate positive relationships with their teachers and with one another. Older students spoke appreciatively of various leadership opportunities such as captain, vice-captain, sustainability ambassador, digital ambassador, arts and culture ambassador, and welfare ambassador for example. The school places great emphasis on older students accepting additional responsibilities onsite and offsite.

The school participates in a range of initiatives outside the formal curriculum for holistic development, such as Expo 2020, *WeTel* Design Thinking Studio and the excellent organic garden. During a grade 3 assembly, all the students involved gave remarkably confident performances, and the audience of their peers and teachers, were spellbound. Towards the end of the period, students led deep discussions about the real meaning of e-safety and the concept of privacy: a very spiritual experience. There are many other opportunities such as health and fitness week, international day of tolerance, and a virtual iftar that allow students to give back to their school community. Over 200 events to promote student self-independence have been completed throughout the academic year. Student led projects, workshops and events have contributed to students becoming responsible adults. GCS is a pilot school for the Child Friendly School Initiative led by SPEA, in collaboration with UNESCO.

The school promotes a general knowledge and understanding of modern British values including attitudes towards tolerance, democracy, respect for freedom of expression and other human rights. Tolerance and respect are covered in the PSHE curriculum. High quality pastoral guidance and support throughout the school enables the students to make strong and well-informed choices about moral perspectives and how they would like to live their lives. Students are self-disciplined, respond very well to their peers and adults,

and resolve difficulties in mature ways. They show genuine concern for, empathy towards and tolerance of, others. Students take the lead in relating to others, including those with special educational needs, both socially, in their school work and within the school society.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for welfare, health and safety is outstanding.

Students are very well cared for. Provision for safeguarding students is excellent. The school provision is continuously monitored and guided through regular inspections and trainings. All policies and procedures are in place to promote the welfare, health, and safety of all students. These are fully compliant with local government authorities and with GEMS HQ.

Staff are provided with mandatory safeguarding training yearly as well as at the time of the appointment. The students are provided with regular webinars and are encouraged to exhibit healthy lifestyle and their own safety through their clear rewards and sanctions. Behaviour is a particular strength of the school as high expectations are shared consistently alongside the behaviour policy. The school stance is a positive approach through values-based learning which is embedded in the school's everyday life. There is strong reinforcement of positive behaviour through celebration of GEM of the day, GEM of the week, GEM of the term, and the Head of School and Principal's GEM .

The school is an inclusive community in which students feel safe and valued. They are confident, feel safe and happy at school. Students provide trainings and also took part in student leadership summit to support students and parents. Students especially the house captains are confident and well aware of the responsibilities of SAFE and SMART Team goals. The student safety ambassadors have the ability to monitor and provide support to other students. If they are not able to resolve then it is directed to the safeguarding lead. Parents are well communicated about the policies and procedures. They are guided and supported by the school through vigorous trainings. Staff have to immediately inform the safeguarding lead about all safety related issues identified and there is a mandatory protocol to be followed. The student ambassadors are aware of child rights and together designed an app called "My Rights, My Responsibilities", a game to communicate child rights to all students: it won first place in the UAE Hackathon competition.

There is a strong culture of vigilance where students' welfare is actively promoted. The school works effectively with external partners to support students who are at risk or who are the subject of a multi-agency plan, for example the health programmes delivered by medical and well-being team, as well as outside agencies such as Lighthouse Arabia. Students work hard with the school to prevent all forms of bullying and prejudice, including misuse of electronic and social media. Staff and students deal very effectively with the rare instances of bullying behaviour and/or use of derogatory or aggressive language.

Students are well aware of what healthy eating habits are, of the importance of physical fitness through PE lessons, and of the role of emotional and wellbeing support. E-safety policy and practice are devised in collaboration with other GEMS schools and communicated clearly to parents.

Risk assessments are effective and monitored daily, weekly, monthly, termly and annually. The school operations manager and safeguarding lead ensure that all risk assessments are in place. The school is also monitored by internal GEMS and external local authorities inspections. CCTV cameras are monitored by three people including security, school operations manager and the IT Head.

Fire safety checks are regularly done, fire drills are also conducted which is evident from the logs as well as the student interviews. Fire evacuation plans are signposted with information to the nearest available exit, with safety instructions available everywhere. Staff are provided with medical information of all students during emergency to support through QR Code posters stuck in every classroom. These identify clearly and precisely any issues which might prove hazardous and prompt highly effective action to minimize risks to students.

Every care and attention have been given to promoting students' welfare, health and safety in school and on trips. Risk assessments identify clearly and precisely any issues which might prove hazardous and prompt highly effective action to minimize risks to students. There are more than enough staff provided to support and take care of the students in the corridors, when using toilets or the bus area, and while using staircases, play areas and classrooms.

Cleaning is done regularly including sanitisation of areas at regular intervals with all Covid-19 precautionary measures and they are monitored regularly to avoid any unnecessary risks. Cleaning logs are in place. Maintenance logs are available. Weekly disinfection is done through an authorised company which is approved by the local government Health Department and the school receives weekly disinfection certificates.

More than 40 members of the school staff have successfully completed the approved first aid training. First aid posters are displayed clearly throughout the school and staff are placed strategically across the school to ensure that there is access to a first aider in various parts of the school building. The school has two clinics with two nurses and one doctor: all medical records of students are in order and available. Medicines are stored safely with its date of expiry checked weekly. Medical waste bins are available at all places and medical waste discarding systems are in place. An isolation room which is specially designated to support any suspected case during an emergency.

8. Standard 4

The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standards required for BSO.

GCS is owned and operated by GEMS Education, founded as Global Education Management Systems (GEMS). GEMS is an international education company and is the largest operator of kindergarten-to-grade-12 schools in the world, with well over 45 schools in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, with many more in other countries.

The school has sufficient teachers and ancillary support to enable good learning. Staff are fully qualified and go through a rigorous interview process before they are appointed. They also have to receive SPEA approval to teach, which is mandatory for all teachers in Sharjah. All teachers in the EYFS and KG2 (Year 1) as well as primary specialist English teachers and secondary English and mathematics teachers are native English speakers.

The school's staff training and professional development programme has been carefully designed to meet the needs of staff members including those who are not from the UK. This includes a robust and detailed induction programme, specific training sessions, self-directed reading and research, learning walks, book scrutiny and team teaching. Teachers and teaching support assistants work well together in teams. The senior leadership team add an additional layer of quality assurance to the high standard of planning, teaching, and learning across all year groups.

The school follows safer recruitment procedures and has a safer recruitment policy in place. A designated safeguarding lead ensures all staff remain vigilant regarding their suitability to work with and around children. Annual safeguarding and child protection training takes place each year for all teaching staff and teaching assistants. They complete online training programmes and details of staff completing this are recorded.

9. Standard 5

The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation meet BSO standards

Students benefit from an outstanding learning environment. Buildings are scrupulously clean and tidy; they even smell fantastic, because of a very effective ambient scent management system. They are maintained to a high standard by a big team of support staff and external specialist contractors. Buildings accommodate for students and visitors with special physical needs. Ramps and lifts allow access to all levels of the school.

The decoration of the school and many displays are inspirational. They are neat and visually appealing. Wall art focuses on the school values, priorities and the school house system, to create a feeling of unity and sense of belonging. The calm music playing in the school corridors enhance the students' sensory experiences. Such attention to details creates an enjoyable school ambience that increases students' motivation and engagement.

The excellent specialised facilities and resources support students' participation in a wide range of academic and physical education indoor and outdoor activities. Though not currently in use because of the mandatory social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic, various advanced specialised rooms like science laboratories, technology labs, libraries and the auditorium serve the different needs of students in Early Years, primary and secondary schools.

The design of the Early Years playgrounds is pleasant to look at and stimulating to play in. The playgrounds support the development of gross motor skills and enhance physical activities as they include slides, a climbing wall, monkey bars, as well as a water and sand area. The outdoor play areas also include basketball courts and football fields. The outdoor areas are safe and well maintained. Rubber tiles, impact absorbent surface and appropriate guarding is evident.

The buildings are in an excellent condition with good lighting, cooling and ventilation. They are inspected several times daily by the operational leaders. Learning walks and maintenance logs are kept up-to-date.

Classrooms are of a good size and well resourced. This enables teachers to meet students' learning needs in a variety of ways. The premises are very secure. Surveillance cameras are spread throughout the campus and playgrounds. Access controlled doors and security staff play a major role in ensuring the students' safety. Students are always supervised by adults especially during drop off and pick up times. Fire-safety procedures and maintenance are included in the risk assessments, which are completed for all areas of the school. Forty members of staff are trained fire marshals and first aid providers.

Records of health and safety procedures are up-to-date and appropriate risk assessments are completed in relation to visits and potentially hazardous activities. Routine fire drills and other evacuation procedures take place. There are sufficient medical staff to carry out routine checks. There are two purpose-built clinics with all the necessary equipment and resources to ensure all students' medical needs are met. Medication is kept locked away: staff know how and by whom it can be administered.

The accommodation is well suited to the age and gender of the students. A big canteen is available to serve different students' needs, though it is currently not in use due to Covid-19 restrictions. Students take their lunch breaks in class while being supervised by adults. Medical facilities and support are provided by a team of three medical staff who run the school clinics.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is excellent.

Parents were extremely positive about the level of information that they receive from the school and the way in which they receive it. They described the school as a positive place where their children were safe and are able to make good progress. Parents said that the school had made their children more confident individuals, and that it gave them new life skills and opportunities that they had not previously had access to.

Weekly curriculum overviews and bulletins are sent via email to ensure that parents are aware of the learning taking place in the classroom. The website is informative and all policies are easily accessible to parents. In case of an emergency, parents are aware of the procedures in place and receive both an email communication and an SMS message.

Regular parent and teacher meetings take place at the school and in recent times, teachers have been using online platforms to have 1-1 meetings where appropriate. Parents reported that any concerns they have are answered quickly and they know who the relevant member of staff is that they should contact. The school council is a popular part of the school community: it has added to the school's strong communication practices such as the implementation of an Arabic group for those parents who are non-native speakers. The school publishes a weekly newsletter to celebrate events and achievements at the school.

The school provides webinars on a number of topics including e-safety, which the parents found very helpful and informative. The school calendar is shared with parents and updates are communicated in a timely manner.

Students written reports are age appropriate, clear and allows parents and children to understand the next steps and targets for their learning. Reports are published to parents termly with an in-depth report published at the end of the academic year. Parents feel that the school staff know their children well and used words such as 'welcoming', 'positive' and 'safe' to describe the way the school cares. Parents stated that they felt like the school was a family and that it has allowed their children to flourish.

Homework is appropriate for the age level it is aimed at and is project based. Parents and children were happy with this format as it allowed children to develop deeper understanding and interests alongside speaking, listening and presenting skills. Children and parents can access content from lessons that have been taught through an online classroom.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets BSO standards.

There is a written complaints procedure that is shared with parents. Information on the procedure is available to parents and pupils through the parent portal. The school deals with all concerns seriously and action is taken within 24 hours of receipt

Parents are well aware that GCS has an open-door policy. They are confident speaking to senior leaders and/or executive team, instead of letting things escalate into a complaint. There are also many forms of communication that parents have access to which prevents a situation becoming a formal complaint.

Wherever possible, face-to-face meetings are set up, but in the current pandemic, virtual meetings or phone calls are also used. The normal communication strategies are embedded in school culture, ensuring parents are informed and given opportunity to discuss their child's learning and progress.

All complaints received by the school in writing, email, phone or from SPEA, are overseen by the complaints committee. The complainant will receive a confirmation of receipt of the complaint within 24 hours. The school proceeds under the close monitoring of the complaints committee and take the necessary action, replying to the complainant with 1 working day of the initial complaint.

If a parent is not satisfied, the matter is referred directly to the senior leadership team and escalated appropriately to the principal. If a complainant is not satisfied with the process as managed by the principal and wishes to take the matter further, the principal contacts a GEMS senior education officer to mediate. Recommendations arising from formal complaints are communicated in writing to all parties.

The complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations. The procedure stipulates that a copy of these are given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Where there is a panel hearing, one member is independent of the running of the school. Appropriate written records are kept of complaints. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential, except in cases where local legal requirements permit access. Details of complaints are included in principal's monthly report to GEMS head office.

Overall, parents and students felt that any occasional complaints were dealt with very effectively and resolved quickly.

12. Standard 8

Leadership and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management of the school is strong: it easily exceeds the BSO standard.

The vision and leadership of the principal and her senior team are outstanding. The school reflects the personality of the principal, and all adults in the school, from the support staff to the senior leaders, exemplifying positivity and enthusiasm. The school provides a cohesive happy environment for its stakeholders with a clear purpose and direction.

The executive leadership team, led by the principal, are dedicated, ambitious and highly effective. She, with her team of enthusiastic leaders, strive to successfully implement sustainable school wide improvements based on their accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Since the recent establishment of the school in 2019 and all through during the challenging pandemic situation, the executive team has successfully earned the trust and loyalty of the stakeholders. The team has managed to launch many incremental improvement initiatives, each of which adds to the overall quality of the school's provision. Achievements are celebrated, school priorities are highlighted and conspicuously displayed everywhere around the school.

The school ethos is very cheerful and welcoming, with students' health and welfare at heart. Students have positive relations with each other and with their teachers, owing at least in part to the consistent modelling of respect and tolerance by the adults around them. Leaders are a real and visible presence in the school. Their attendance in lessons as well as at daily activities, is highly commendable. They have high expectations from staff and students. This is cascaded to the teachers who attempt to challenge students in lessons, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own actions as well as their own learning. This positive school ethos is a real support for students' progress.

Good resources for learning and teaching, are purposefully and strategically deployed in accordance with the school priorities. The school made significant investments in technology like the learning management system as well as in professional development and educational platforms to raise the students' achievement. There is a strong and effective focus on raising attainment levels in English for EAL students. The full impact of these initiatives is yet to be seen; the capacity of further improvement is very secure. The leaders are well-versed in the use of these resources. They are currently working on embedding these best practices across all subjects in all grades.

The leadership team has a precise and accurate view as to the quality of education at the school, including through an effective performance management system. The principal and her team very regularly visit lessons for both formal observations and on quick learning walks. The leaders conduct student progress meetings with teachers. All teachers have

performance development plans with three targets related to students' attainment, teaching and learning, as well as the teacher's own personal development.

Performance management data is effectively used to develop the teachers' capacities and ingrain new initiatives, like Design Thinking, in all lessons. Teacher support plans are created on need basis by leaders. They involve mentoring, coaching, and independent learning. Leaders' believe that "teaching and learning is everyone's responsibility". Leaders encourage peer support via a plethora of CPD initiatives like "Trio-Teach Try-outs". As a result, teaching, which is consistently good, is rapidly improving.

Through a values-based approach to learning, the school ensures that the British values are intertwined with the shared values of the school community. This is depicted everywhere in the school display as well as staff and student's decorum. Safeguarding is effective. Extensive measures are taken to ensure the students' protection and safety on campus and during distance learning. The e-safety campaign promoted by the school leaders is a good example of such measures.

A focus on effective communication with parents is evident. The large majority of parents participate in school surveys. Leaders conduct regular check-ins on parents through weekly drop-in visits. They feedback to parents on their children's progress providing them with the information they need to help improve their children's performance. The school has an open-door policy which is appreciated by parents.

Systems are in place for comprehensive improvement planning, yet they are somewhat reliant on the executive leadership team. Development of succession plans for the school's middle leaders are at an early stage of development, but it is commendable to see how much the leadership team has accomplished since the opening of the school, less than two years' ago.