



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

## **Inspection Report**

# **GEMS**

# **The Cambridge High School**

## **Abu Dhabi**

## **United Arab Emirates**

Date **14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

Inspection number **20220314**

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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; 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.

During the inspection visit 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. Over 70 lessons were observed of which many were hybrid, with students taking part face to face and online.

Two and a half school days were monitored. The lead inspector was Nicola Walsh. The team members were Akin Alufa, Hussaina Begum and Kylie Cleworth.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The Cambridge High School, Abu Dhabi (CHS) meets the standards for British Schools Overseas.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school offers a good standard of British education that meets the needs of its' students and serves the community well. Teachers and students work hard and as a result, the attainment of students by the end of key stages 4 and 5 is excellent and well above standards in the UK.

Students are very respectful of one another, and relationships are strong across the school. There is a positive determination for everyone to succeed and do well.

The welfare, health and safety of students are excellent. Students talk about feeling safe and cared for. A culturally diverse school population enables students to learn about cultures other than their own. This combined with the promotion of British values, evident across the school ensures students are confident and articulate learners. Students are well equipped to enter UK education systems at an appropriate level.

The school was opened in 1994 on the current site. Since then, the school has become oversubscribed, and space is at a premium within the school.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

The school has many strengths which include:

- Excellent behaviour of students and attitudes to learning
- Consistently good teaching across the secondary phase
- High attainment in key stages 4 and 5
- Progress in Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Students who are articulate, confident and can talk about what they are learning to do
- Students who routinely self-assess their work and learn through making mistakes
- The feedback teachers provide to students in secondary lessons
- Relationships between staff, students and parents
- The strong desire of senior leaders to improve outcomes for students
- The school's principal, who has an inspirational effect upon the school's community

## 3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Develop quality of teaching across the school so that all teaching is consistently good or better, including looking at the deployment of teaching assistants so that they impact on improving outcomes for students
- Review the breadth of the curriculum (particularly at key stage three, to widen students' experiences and aspirations, and ensure it is providing challenge for students who are identified as more able
- Ensure that school accommodation meets the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum and is inclusive at all levels

## 4. The context of the school

Full name of school	Cambridge High School LLC		
Address	Sector 9, Musaffah, Abu Dhabi		
Main telephone #	02-5521621		
Website	<a href="https://www.gemscis-abudhabi.com/">https://www.gemscis-abudhabi.com/</a>		
Email	<a href="mailto:Info_chs@gemsedu.com">Info_chs@gemsedu.com</a>		
Principal	Stephen Brecken		
Chair of board of governors/proprietor	Kelvin Hornsby		
Age range	4-18 years		
Number of pupils	Total = 1801	Boys = 891	Girls = 910
Pupil numbers by age on date of entry	(0-2 years) 0	(3-5 years) 209	(6-11 years) 871
	(12-16 years) 617	(17-18 years) 99	(18+ years) 5
Total number of part-time pupils	0		

The Cambridge High School Abu Dhabi is situated on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi. The school is privately owned and part of the GEMS group of schools that are operational across the Emirates. The school retains its' own identity but draws upon the support of the GEMS network of schools and accesses a centralised office for administration.

The school offers a British education to students from age 4 to age 18 and is fully inclusive. Early years and primary students are in mixed classes. However, boys and girls are taught separately in year 6 to year 9, and for English, mathematics and MoE subjects in key stages 4 and 5. Teachers from a wide range of nationalities provide a good quality of education to students. The school is popular in the local community and oversubscribed.

The students on roll at the school represent over 59 nationalities of which 34% are Indian and 27% Pakistani. Almost all students on roll speak English as an additional language and enter the school at age 4 with limited preschool experience. During the inspection a small minority of students accessed the learning online and this was visible in the classes observed.

Staff enjoy working at the school and the mobility of staff is low. Most phase and subject leaders have been in post for 4 years or more. The principal was promoted to his role in 2019, after working in the school as vice principal. The principal, vice principal and assistant head are UK expatriates with UK qualifications and experience of working in UK schools. They support the development of 102 teachers and 29 teaching assistants, of which very few hold UK qualifications.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

The school

- delivers the English National Curriculum and follows EYFS guidance
- is organised into key stages and year groups
- uses assessments are UK sourced
- promotes British values through the school's vision, curriculum activities, and events
- is fully inclusive
- is well resourced in materials that are in use in English curriculum schools
- has a uniform policy, like many English schools
- has a house system, replicating that of many English schools
- has a system of rewards and sanctions in use by the school is closely aligned to those in use in English schools
- provides a personal, social, and emotional curriculum that embeds British values
- has displays that reflect British values and culture

and

- the academic calendar replicates that of a British school

## 5. *Standard 1*

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by The Cambridge High School is good and meets the requirements of the BSO Framework.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

The school has in place a clear curriculum policy for both the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, which is in place for students aged 4 and 5 and the English National Curriculum (ENC) for primary and secondary students. The curriculum is also adapted to fully incorporate the requirements of the Ministry of Education offering Arabic, Islamic Studies, and UAE social studies. English is the medium of instruction except for Arabic lessons taught by specialist Arabic teachers. This provision is well suited to meet the school's vision, 'Cambridge High School will equip all students with the skills and attributes of high performance, nurturing and supporting them to reach their highest potential and beyond.'

A bespoke personal, social, and emotional (PSE) curriculum is delivered daily across the school. The subjects offered in key stages 1,2 and 3 are mathematics, English, science, geography, history, ICT, physical education, library and art. In addition, in the primary section, social studies and music are also offered. In key stages 4 and 5, a full range of traditional subjects are offered for IGCSE, AS and A level, such as psychology, further mathematics, economics, accounting, and business studies. All subjects are timetabled and delivered as separate subjects across the school.

Subject specialist teachers deliver the secondary curriculum and specialist teachers for Arabic, music and physical education deliver lessons in the primary section. The curriculum allows for the students to re-enter the UK education system by following schemes of work and assessments in use in UK schools. Students study aspects of British life and culture, the youngest students enjoyed learning about 'The Gruffalo' and 'The Elves and the Shoemaker.' History topics cover aspects of British history such as the Anglo Saxons. Older students read from Shakespeare's 'A midsummer night's dream' during a library session.

The school recently modified the curriculum following the changes to the working week in Abu Dhabi. This enabled the school to extend the school day from 8am -2.15pm, to 7.45am - 2.35pm. This allowed the school to increase the number of lessons each day from 6 to 7 and had the added benefit of providing



two breaks which improved students' well-being. Parents were very supportive of this. The change also added extra curriculum activities (ECA) time in the last lesson of the day on Wednesdays. As a result, most children are now involved in ECAs.

In the EYFS, the curriculum is focussed on acquisition of language. During the inspection lessons observed were teacher led, due to the restrictions around Covid-19. Phonics is delivered based upon the UK DfE letters and sounds to whole class groups. Students are given opportunities to develop writing skills and are beginning to write independently.

Across the school lessons are planned with emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and to embed the High-Performance Learning (HPL) skills. In the primary section commercial schemes from the UK are used in subjects such as reading, music and mathematics, and these ensure full coverage of the ENC and progression. Clear examples of the teachers following the ENC curriculum were evident. In year 5 students investigated separating mixtures in science, and year 6 students explained why symbols are needed on maps in a geography lesson. Cross curricular links were limited. In a few lessons teachers referred to real life examples, such as a year 5 lesson on the area of rectangles. In primary art lessons cross curricular links were evident with geography and literacy, but these were not explored in any depth.

Long term plans and medium-term plans are in place for subjects and year groups based upon the ENC. However, PE plans do not yet cover the full range of the English national curriculum.

Teachers deliver lessons using plans that are the same across subjects and year groups, where there are duplicate classes. Plans are created by one teacher and then shared across the year group and subject. An example of this was observed in year 8 mathematics where students studied the differences between continuous and discrete data.

The school has close working links with the UK examination boards and the curriculum at key stages 4 and 5 is closely aligned to this. Teachers planned lessons where the curriculum coverage was tightly matched to the requirements of the examination boards criteria. This enabled students to cover the curriculum in depth and at the required levels.

There is good transition within the school between key stages and at post -16. Transition points across the school are managed well and information is shared between teachers to facilitate smooth transitions. When there are no covid

restrictions students can spend time with their new teachers before the end of the school year and to adjust to the new routines. FS2 students join the year 1 students for playtimes in the main school playground. The careers counsellor and secondary staff support the year 9 children well to make informed decisions about which options to take and families are involved in this process.

Students reported that the school offers support with UCAS applications, *UniConnect*, university virtual open days and other online events. This enables students to be informed about the next steps of their education. Older students were particularly positive about the support of the GEMS Alumni network. They stated that this was a strength in helping them to make the right choices post 18.

The provision for and identification of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are strong with the limited resources the school has available to it. The SEND coordinator (SENDco) is very proactive in ensuring students who are diagnosed with a special educational need can access a curriculum that meets their needs. The SENDco works extensively with parents to support them to support their child. This may be before the child enters school in EYFS, in class or where students are accessing the curriculum remotely. There is regular and close monitoring of curriculum provision for individual SEND students.

British values such as democracy, the rule of law, freedom and respect are delivered through curriculum plans, schemes of work and extra-curricular activities. Secondary students talked about the opportunities they have within the curriculum to talk about controversial issues, which they enjoyed. Theme days, competitions, cultural events are celebrated throughout the year. During the inspection visit a few female students in key stage 3 attended school in national dress to celebrate international day.

Due to the recent pandemic most, extra-curricular activities ceased during the period of online learning. These are due to be resumed in term 3. Off-site trips pre pandemic took place regularly within the UAE and overseas to countries such as India and New York. These extended the curriculum offer and were well attended by students.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They deliver lessons in which the learning objective is clear so that students know what they are learning to do. In the best lessons observed time was used very effectively to motivate learners and links to the previous learning were timely and relevant. Whole class teaching was observed across the school. Students were excellent receptive learners. They listened and followed instructions from the teacher, attentively and accurately in almost all lessons observed. All teachers ensured that students who were learning remotely were involved in the lesson and routinely checked upon their understanding. Where teaching was strongest in the secondary section, the use of self-assessment was exceptionally well established.

In EYFS most teachers plan tasks that ensure children are engaged with their learning and make progress within the lesson. In the best lessons students had opportunities to solve open ended challenges and collaborate with their peers. In a phonics lesson the children worked together to create and find words containing the new sound. Where resources are used effectively this engages children in the learning. This was observed in a mathematics lesson investigating patterns, with a wide range of resources offered. The teaching of phonics is taught throughout the week and allows children to learn new sounds and apply their learning. Teaching assistants support students with organisational tasks. They are kind and helpful to the children and are present in all lessons.

In key stage 1, teachers routinely shared the learning objective and the HPL skills they would be using in the lesson. Teachers plan tasks that are matched to the needs of the whole class and are consistent across the year group. Teachers check on the understanding of students by asking questions, but often these do not offer sufficient challenge or prompt deeper thinking. Relationships are strong across the key stage. The use of talk to embed language is present in most classes observed. Teachers encourage students to talk with partners or read together. In a lesson on what makes a good friend, the students talked about their own friends and shared what makes a friend good. Key technical vocabulary was shared in a year 2 science lesson, and these were embedded using actions.

In key stage 2 the majority of teaching meets the needs of the students through whole class instruction and delivery by the teacher. Teachers deliver the same lesson plan across the year group. In the best lessons observed teachers drew upon strong subject knowledge and used effective teaching methods that engaged students. For example, in a Year 4 lesson about the perimeter of a rectangle, the teacher used interactive images and contextual examples to

engage the students. In a year 6 lesson the teacher used the image of a bicycle wheel to talk about the properties of a circle, referencing the spokes as the radius and the tyre as the circumference. This very effectively made the learning easy and embedded the language of radius and circumference.

However, in key stage 2 it was observed that the activities are not always providing sufficient challenge to prompt deeper thinking and move the learning on. There were missed opportunities for students to be more productive and explore concepts on their own, usually because the teacher talked too much. In English lessons there was a strong focus on grammar and too little opportunities for students to write independently, creatively and at length.

Across the secondary section self-assessment is used routinely, so that students can learn through making mistakes and improving on their own performances. Students talked about how they assess themselves at the end of the lesson. This was also evident in students' notebooks. Technology is used extensively in lessons by students to complete and record tasks. Teachers post comments online and students reported that the feedback they received from teachers was useful.

Across key stage 3 teachers use questioning to check on students' understanding. Where teachers are most effective, they check on the understanding of individual students and not just those who are indicating that they know. Teachers regularly give constructive and timely feedback to students during the lesson so that progress against the learning objective is evident. PowerPoints are used to lead students through the teaching, so both online and face to face students are included and engaged. In a year 8 mathematics lesson students online shared their findings of discrete and continuous data on a Padlet that was then shared with the whole class. In the best lessons observed in key stage 3 the teacher moves through the tasks quickly and encourages students to use online sources to check for definitions of key vocabulary. In a year 9 geography lesson students were given the opportunity to talk about the push and pull factors on migration and talk about what it meant to them.

In KS 4 and KS 5 almost all students acquire new knowledge and demonstrated good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects across KS4 and 5. All lessons are well planned. Through questioning and discussions, all students are engaged, and class time is well managed. Students are confident in answering questions and can self-assess effectively using the acronyms what went well (www), even better if (EBI.) However, challenge for the most able students was less evident in the lessons observed. This despite teachers having a clear understanding of the attainment of students through the baseline test. In

a year 11 English lesson students were able to identify the key features of the different forms of leaflets and measure their success using the criteria listed. Students used peer assessment and asked questions to seek clarification.

Almost all teachers provided constructive advice to students on the demands of GCSE, AS, and A level exams. In a lesson observed the teacher explained how the students must specify Iodine solution to get the full mark in a biology lesson. Teachers regularly provide students with both formal and informal feedback. Teachers know their students well and they use the information from baseline assessments and mock exam results to inform planning.

Assessment systems are routine and rigorous across the school. There is an assessments calendar for summative tests. UK standardised tests are used to check progress for students in key stage 1, 2 and 3, and overall attainment at the end of each year.

In the secondary section diagnostic tests are used at the start of each year as a baseline test. Half termly in-house tests are created by teachers to check students understanding of the units of work taught. Past papers are also used to ensure students are well prepared for the rigours of an examination. Teachers moderate their results particularly in English writing, against other GEMS schools. This enables teachers to be confident that their data regarding students' achievement is robust.

The results of GL progress tests and CAT4 test are routinely shared with parents and students. Students know their targets. Assessments are a routine and regular feature of the school so that students know their test result and are working towards improving their attainment.

## 5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Students' attendance is high, and strongest at key stage 3 where attendance is in line with UK expectations. Standards in behaviour are excellent across the school. Students show respect for one another, the equipment that they use and to all the adults in the school.

Students observed were confident and articulate speakers overall. Many students are using English as a second language and yet there were very few issues with language restricting students understanding of what was being taught.

Students in foundation stage were observed interacting appropriately with well-developed social and emotional skills. They took turns and shared where there were opportunities to do this. Self-reliance and self-discipline, and attention to the rules of the classroom and school were age appropriate and very good. However, the school's internal data suggests that on entry to the school standards are low across all 7 areas of the Early Years foundation stage. The school reported that students rarely attend preschool before entering school at age 4. This suggest that the students make rapid progress from their starting points at the start of foundation stage.

By the end of key stage 1 the school's internal data indicates that most children are working at or above the expected levels in English, mathematics, and science at the end of the year. The data indicates that a minority of children made lower than expected progress in English last year, which could be related to the long periods of online learning. Phonics data was unavailable at the time of the inspection. However, in lessons observed the majority of students made good progress against the learning objectives. This was also evident in students' work books and in displays of students' work.

In key stage 2 students used ambitious vocabulary. Standards in reading were good. Most students could read fluently but they often mispronounced words, which occasionally impacted on communicating meaning.

At key stage 3 the schools internal data indicates that the students are working at or above the age-related expectations in English and mathematics. Over three years the percentage of students attaining stanine 5 has increased in mathematics as students progress through the school. Girls' attainment is higher than boys overall in mathematics and science in key stage 3. Both boys and girls worked hard in lessons observed and there was no difference noted in progress.

All students worked in line with age related expectations and made good progress overall.

At key stages 4 and 5 students' attainment is outstanding in external examinations. Over the past three years 88% of Year 11 students obtained 5 or more A\*-C grades in IGCSE, which exceed UK averages. In 2021, 65% of Year 13 students attained either A\*-B grades at A level. In year 13, 75% of students achieved A\* - B in English, mathematics, chemistry, and history.

In the secondary section students demonstrated a mature and responsible attitude to learning. The standards of presentation in most students' notebooks of work completed in class was high. Where students made presentations online the standard of ICT skills to communicate the learning was of a high standard.

Students of determination made strong progress from very low starting points in English, mathematics, and science. This was due to the bespoke targeted support around each student's individual needs and the strong working relationship the school has created with parents.

## 6. *Standard 2* Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development of pupils

The quality of the students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development meets the standard for BSO. It is excellent across the school.

The school offers a range of activities that support the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of its students such as enrichment afternoons, wellbeing challenges and presentations and leadership opportunities. One student commented to an inspector, 'I can be who I really am here.'

The school actively promotes diversity and harmony within the school. This is especially apparent during their frequent celebration events for different festivals and celebrations and through taught sessions. In a key stage 3 lesson students were encouraged to prepare a presentation on an artefact with cultural significance from their own country and present a talk to their peers. Students are tolerant young people who have good knowledge of, and show respect for the beliefs, cultures, views, and lifestyles of other people. The students spoke about the celebration events that were the highlights of the school calendar. In primary corridors and classrooms there are birthday displays, ensuring every child is recognised and valued on their special day.

The school ensures students have a deep knowledge and understanding of modern British life including attitudes towards tolerance, democracy, and respect. UK values are aligned to Islamic values. These feature during morning form tutor sessions and the weekly PSE enrichment activities which the students can complete with their families. British culture is often used as a starting point for learning opportunities throughout the school. In the recent secondary challenge day, the students had to solve the problem of 'Who stole the Queen's corgis?' Displays throughout the school also inform students about modern British life such as a display about the Queen of England's upcoming Platinum Jubilee.

There are frequent opportunities for students to take part in democratic processes. Students have opportunities to be elected for a range of leadership opportunities including head boy and girl, student council, deputy head boy and girl, student leaders and club ambassadors. Students vote for the best dressed costume on world book day. Students also have the opportunity to initiate and organise a number of whole school events such as pink day and blue day.

Students are rewarded in school through gaining achievement points and stamps in their HPL passports. This recognises where students have outstanding achievement in academic and pastoral issues and reinforces moral values around good citizenship and work ethics.



A prayer room offer students time for quiet contemplation and to engage in spiritual reflection. This is also encouraged through assemblies and special events such as remembrance days.

The PSE curriculum has been designed by the school to meet the needs of students. It is delivered on a weekly basis by form tutors for younger students, and specialist teachers in secondary. The curriculum explores a common theme each week which allows students to learn how to make well-informed choices and consider varying moral perspectives, including their own and how they would like to live their lives. From the start of this academic year when students returned to school, enrichment activities have been offered as part of the timetable on a Wednesday afternoon. This has increased the number of students who are accessing the enrichment activities and increased opportunities for social interaction.

Due to the restrictions regarding the pandemic, ECAs, trips, visits, visitors and in school opportunities have been limited. However, there have been some opportunities for children to collaborate on enrichment activities. A music concert is planned for key stage 2, a Model United Nations event took place for secondary students and secondary students have been reading to the youngest students in the school. Students have also previously been involved in the Red Crescent charity drive donating Ramadan meals and are also supporting the UN World Food Programme by using the Free Rice online quizzes.

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

The school meets the standard and is excellent.

The school's Health and Safety committee meet monthly. Staff report any issues or concerns about the accommodation and resources online and verbally. The committee regularly complete a walkthrough of the school as a site safety check, and this is recorded in the maintenance logbook. The meeting minutes clearly show the actions that have been taken and matters that are raised are dealt with. All staff at the school have completed health, safety, and environmental awareness training.

Throughout the school there are fire extinguishers with clear signage. Additional fire extinguishers are placed in areas of high risk, such as science laboratories. There is a clear record of maintenance on each unit. Fire blankets are also placed in high-risk areas. The exit and evacuation points are clearly labelled throughout the school. An internal inspection by GEMS for health and safety rated the school as outstanding. The school holds regular fire drills, and these are recorded. All staff have mandatory training for fire safety, evacuation procedures and lockdowns.

At the start and end of the day security staff ensure the safety of all students outside the school grounds. Vehicles are not allowed to stop at the school entrance. There is a clear parking, drop off and pick up system in place. Regular monitoring ensures the buses used by students are safe. The buses are checked after every drop off and end of day to ensure there are no students still on the bus. There are bus attendants to ensure the safety of students when travelling. The buses are parked outside the school entrance and students are monitored as they exit the gates and onto the buses. Close monitoring is in place as students arrive at school. Information regarding end of day procedures and arrangements are visible in the school so that students and staff are clear of their responsibilities.

The good level of hygiene and cleaning routines is evident across the school. Cleaners record hourly the cleanliness of the bathrooms. Corridors, classrooms, and shared areas are free from litter and tidy. There are sufficient toilets and washrooms across the school. Although the toilets in EYFS are not age appropriate, they are adapted to enable independent access by students. Attendants are available to support if required. All staff have received training on Covid-19 awareness and their duties to reduce the spread of infection around this.

The school keeps the chemicals used in science locked securely. There are clear procedures to ensure there is a safe amount of stock, that resources are monitored and that all lessons are risk assessed using an online app. There is a contract with an external

waste removal company to dispose of waste chemicals safely and responsibly. The science laboratories all have an emergency shower and an eyewash station. There are clear signs of safe practice within the science classrooms.

The only access door to the swimming pool is locked when not in use. There are qualified staff to coach swimming. The swimming pool was locked during the inspection as it was not in use. Storage rooms are kept locked. There is CCTV and 24/7 security. There are four gated entrances to the school and there is a secure perimeter wall.

There are two qualified nurses on site in the school's clinic. This is accessible throughout the school day. One clinic with separate facilities for boys and girls. Medicines are stored securely, with monitoring of expiry dates and a weekly audit of contents. The nurse is also responsible for checking the weight, height, and sight of students in line with ministry regulations. Further, additional staff have been trained to administer an EpiPen should this be required. The EpiPen is accessible in the clinic. There are first aid kits positioned throughout the school. The school nurse has also supported presentations in assemblies around healthy eating and lifestyles.

The school is active in the local community and regionally in sporting competitions and has been particularly successful in the past in hockey tournaments. Students enjoy PE and know how to stay healthy. Opportunities in after school clubs such as karate, and timetabled PE sessions ensure students can understand the benefits of an active lifestyle.

Students report that they feel safe in school and know who they can talk to. Where bullying happens the student counsellor is involved and supports those involved to prevent reoccurrence. This is rare and most students reported bullying wasn't an issue and parents supported this view. A behaviour log is in place and indicates that the most common issues are where students fail to follow the instructions of the teacher. Behaviour across the school is excellent and incidents such as those reported in the behaviour logs are minimal and rare. There have been no full-time exclusions or suspensions of students at the school in the past two years.

The promotion of an antibullying culture was evident throughout the school. Odd socks day is celebrated to promote how differences are celebrated. PSE lessons ensure students can identify the different forms of bullying. Students in year 4 were observed drawing pictures to represent the 4 types of bullying. However, students were limited in their awareness of how to stay safe online when asked during the inspection.

The school is very proactive in ensuring students' wellbeing. There are many displays around the school which indicate the school works hard to ensure students have the vocabulary to articulate how they feel. Boxes outside classrooms where students can

leave comments about how they are feeling and a wealth of displays regarding wellbeing are prominent across the school. A display which represented a large tree of hearts contained students' written comments about what they value and what it means to them. This encourages students to consider each other's wellbeing and enables students to have time to talk and record their feelings.

Parents reported that they felt their children were safe in school and concerns are dealt with quickly. The school makes contact promptly about their child's welfare when there are concerns regarding illnesses or accidents in school. This is either during the school day via a phone call or at the end of the school day. Attendance registers are maintained and the school calls parents when there are no reasons to explain a student's absence.

The school is extremely proactive on promoting attendance. Displays across the school recognise classes where attendance is high and celebrate this. The school has set high targets for the school to exceed the UK attendance average. The school is working to achieve this through the promotion of the benefits of attendance with all stakeholders.

All staff understood the importance of keeping students safe and were vigilant. All staff complete child protection and safeguarding training. However, a few support staff require further training to ensure they are fully understanding of the high standards of UK safeguarding procedures and practices. A monthly newsletter to parents had recently been implemented to keep parents informed of the initiatives the school are taking to keep children safe. A recent session with parents on the importance of sleep had resulted in the school offering a coffee morning to engage parents in discussions around this. Students can independently access support from the designated senior safeguarding leads in the school, who are level 3 trained. This is accessed by scanning a QR code and most referrals have been around exam anxiety from secondary students. However, all the initiatives were new this academic year, due to the period of online learning. Staff can access an online tool to report concerns around safeguarding. They can also report concerns face-to-face to one of the three designated senior leaders.

There is support for the Principal, Designated Safeguard Lead and the Head of Security from GEMS central office should they require any further guidance around the welfare, health, and safety of students in the school. The school has a nominated child protection governor on the local advisory board.

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

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

The Cambridge High School Abu Dhabi is owned and operated by GEMS Education, the largest K-12 education provider in the world, with 43 schools in the MENA region. There is a dedicated vice president safeguarding officer at the GEMS School Support Centre who can provide external support to deal with safeguarding issues, including complex ones, if required. Annual safeguarding audits are undertaken, the most recent in February 2022 in which the school was judged 'very good.'

The safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures follow British legislation, as well as that of the host country and the school group. The school undergoes external safeguarding audits by GEMS education and follows any advice given. The SLT, as well as head of HR, have all completed safeguarding level 3 training and safer recruitment training. The school policy states that one member of the senior leadership team is present on all interviews. The head of Arabic is also trained in safeguarding and safer recruitment so that bilingual support is available.

Prior to staff appointments the HR department completes appropriate checks in the UAE as well as in the staff member's host country. Identity, medical, qualifications and police check, or DBS checks and references were in place for all staff appointed to the school. This includes teachers, administration staff and teaching assistants. These are held in individual files and on a single central record held centrally and by the HR manager in the school. Information regarding staff who have resigned in the last three years, was also detailed on this record. All information is stored securely and confidentially.

Staff who are recruited locally must undergo the same checks as expatriate staff regarding identification checks, police checks, medical, qualifications and references. A disclaimer letter for local staff is sought from the previous place of work in line with ministry requirements.

Qualifications are checked by the ministry and attested for overseas staff. Three references, one from the most recent place of work, are sought which are followed up by the school. VISA details are stored centrally on the single central record for all staff. The school also complete social media searches to ensure that all staff are suited to work with children. If there are any concerns, then these are resolved before appointment to ensure that the person appointed is suitable.

The school rarely uses supply staff and when they are required, they are sought from within the school or other schools within the group. Where volunteers are used in the school on a regular basis, checks are made against passport VISA's and Emirates Identity. The local authority approves all volunteers such as parents who are working in the school.

Staff that are outsourced, such as cleaners are checked by the company and this detail is shared with the school's central office. The school conducts a further check on contractors against police clearance and local authority approval. This is detailed on the single central record before contractors can work in the school. The same detail regarding police checks and local authority approval is also gained for the members of the local advisory board.

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

The premises and accommodation meet BSO standards.

The main building of the school is on three floors and centred around a large, shaded courtyard area. There are clear divisions in the allocation of classrooms to the youngest students on the ground floor. The first and second floors hosting the oldest students in the school. Separate accommodation in single storey units is located at the back of the school and is in use for sixth form and storage. There are additional sections of the school allocated to administration.

The school site is secure and there are four gates that are monitored by CCTV cameras and security guards. A large wall marks the perimeter of the school site. External lighting is available to ensure the safety of all users.

The school has been creative in its use of its' space to accommodate students meeting the covid health and safety requirements. The school maximised the use of spaces, by creating classroom spaces in the school's auditorium and relocating specialist equipment out of specialist teaching areas such as art and music rooms.

The school features several specialist areas to enhance teaching and learning and extra-curricular activities. There are 2 outdoor artificial turfed areas for multipurpose games use, a swimming pool with separate changing and showers for boys and girls, specialist music, art, a play station room, and a junior and senior library. Separate play areas are adjacent to foundation stage classrooms and have free flow available for some of the foundation stage classrooms, but not all. This area was equipped with age-appropriate climbing and outdoor play equipment but lacked imagination to engage the youngest students.

There are specially equipped science rooms and computer rooms. The PE areas lacked specialist equipment for the full range of the ENC. There are also no specialist areas provided for lessons in food technology or design and technology.

The school's nurses have a designated clinic, well equipped with facilities to treat boys and girls separately. This has access to a separate toilet area and is close to the central administration block.

Despite the school's buildings being operational for almost 30 years, the school's building and site is clean, tidy, and well maintained. Displays in corridors are attractive and informative, particularly in key stage 2. Vigorous risk assessment evidence indicates that very close attention is paid to external security as well as health and safety.

Resources are UK sourced and widely available in the primary section to support learning. A well-known UK published reading scheme is in use across the primary section. In addition, a wide range of science inquiry materials, interactive smart boards, musical instruments, P.E equipment, art materials, and special needs resources meet the needs of all students.

Water dispensers for students are located at strategic positions throughout the school. Staff have access to separate water dispensers in their staff rooms and offices. Toilets for sole use of students are also located on each floor and near classrooms.

The lack of space for students was evident during the inspection. This was particularly evident in the secondary section.



## 10. Standard 6 Provision of information for parents, carers, and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others meets the standard.

Parents feel very well informed by the wide range of communications that the school has made available to them. A weekly newsletter, daily social media updates, letters, emails, and texts ensure parents are regularly informed about what is happening in school. The school's website is updated regularly and contains information around the school's performances, events and policies for parents and prospective parents. A parents information booklet is updated annually and includes information for new and existing parents.

Teachers are approachable and can be contacted at the end or start of the school day. In addition to this deliberate contact is made each month by the school with parents when the students class teacher or form tutor calls the parent by telephone. This direct contact is to check on students' wellbeing and builds relationships between home and school.

There is an event coordinator appointed by the school, to ensure that all information provided to parents regarding school events is timely and succinct. In addition, the administration team have been briefed on positive parental communication and work hard to ensure that all information parents need is timely and relevant. There are staff available who can help where translations may be required. These are available in the most common languages shared by the school community. This ensures that parents have the information they require.

Parents receive progress reports termly and these are heavily aligned towards performance in academic standards. The progress reports use the school's internal assessment systems and report an individual's attainment and progress against the targets set. Parents like this approach and the termly progress reports are followed up with an open house meeting. Here, parents can meet with the teachers to gain further clarification.

Parents reported that they are very pleased with 'the teachers' tremendous amount of support and encouragement provided to their children.' They are aware that they can also access GEMS central administration and the local authority ADEK, for further support if this was required.

## 11. Standard 7

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

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

The school has a written complaints policy that clearly details the importance the school assigns to dealing with complaints and the need to resolve them in a timely and appropriate manner. The school states at the outset of its policy that complaints will be dealt with within 48 hours of receipt and if the resolution of the complaint requires more time, then the complainant will be informed of this. The school aims to act upon complaints received within 24 hours of receipt. In most cases this was achievable due to a very proactive open-door policy by staff.

There are 3 clear stages in which a complaint can be dealt with to seek a satisfactory resolution. The steps taken to resolve complaints are detailed within the policy. The responsibilities of staff are also clearly defined so that staff can understand their role in ensuring the policy is upheld.

Parents can also raise a complaint with the corporate body of the school through GEMS central office or the local authority and this is detailed in the report. A parent relations executive is based in the school and there is also a parent's relations team at the GEMS central head office to help schools and parents resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

The school's complaints log indicated that complaints are rare. Six complaints had been recorded since the start of this academic year. Each complaint was related to issues around the day-to-day running of the school and were resolved very quickly.

The school and parents reported that complaints are rare and resolved quickly. They like the 'open door' policy at the beginning and end of the school day where class teachers are available to speak to parents if required. Bilingual staff assist with translations if required. The school principal welcomes students at the start of the day and monitors students at the school gate, as they exit school at the end of the day. Parents reported that the principal is easily approachable and listens to their concerns. Complaints and concerns are managed effectively and meet the needs of the parents and students at the school.

## 12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management of the school is good and meets the standard.

The principal of the school and his close leadership team know the strengths of the school and the areas on which they need to focus. A development plan is in place which identifies the areas of priority however this could be more specific and measurable in the outcomes it describes. The senior leadership team are ambitious and lead by example. They understand the needs of their staff team and work collaboratively to support school improvement.

The principal and his senior leadership team have moved the school forward significantly in the past three years, such that the school is now oversubscribed and results at key stages 4 and 5 are outstanding. The recent net promoter score (NPS) showed a positive increase in parents views about the school.

The professional development of staff remains a high focus area. In the secondary section of the school middle leaders have rigorous and reliable assessments in place that enable them to understand the academic achievements of students. They also moderate their judgements working with middle leaders in other GEMS schools. This effectively enables teachers to know that the school's internal data is reliable. However, this is not yet sufficiently developed across the whole school. Newly appointed core curriculum subject leaders have not yet had time to have an impact.

The teachers talked positively about the opportunities for professional development. They enjoyed the TELLAL face-to-face coaching programme. Induction processes for staff are thorough and ensure they are well prepared to enter the school. Staff mobility is low. Staff enjoy working at the school and benefit from the training the senior leaders provide and the training which is offered by the GEMS cluster of schools.

The GEMS advisory team support the school and are regularly involved in the life of the school. They are sharply focussed on the school's performance data across many aspects of the school's provision. They also carefully consider the value that the school provides to its school community. They hold senior leaders to account and challenge decisions made that are not in line with the school's vision, mission, and GEMS corporate vision. The local advisory board constitute parents in the school, and they offer some challenge by asking questions of the leaders in the school. They are limited in their abilities to effectively hold the school to account for the quality of education it provides, effective deployment of staff and use of accommodation and resources.

The day-to-day management of the school is effective. The school operates smoothly, with strong lines of communication at all levels.