

Inspection Report



GEMS Modern Academy 2014-2015



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School information



General information

Location	Nad Al Sheba
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	1986
Website	www.gemsmodernacademy-dubai.com
Telephone	04-3263339
Address	P.O. BOX 53663, DUBAI
Principal	Mrs Nargish Khambatta
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	19 th – 22 nd October 2014



Students

Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age range	3 - 18
Grades or year groups	KG1 - Grade12
Number of students on roll	3701
Number of children in Pre-K	NA
Number of Emirati students	0
Number of students with SEN	336
Largest nationality group of students	Indian



Teachers / Support staff

Number of teachers	219
Largest nationality group of teachers	Indian
Number of teacher assistants	62
Teacher-student ratio	1:17
Number of guidance counsellors	3
Teacher turnover	7%



Curriculum

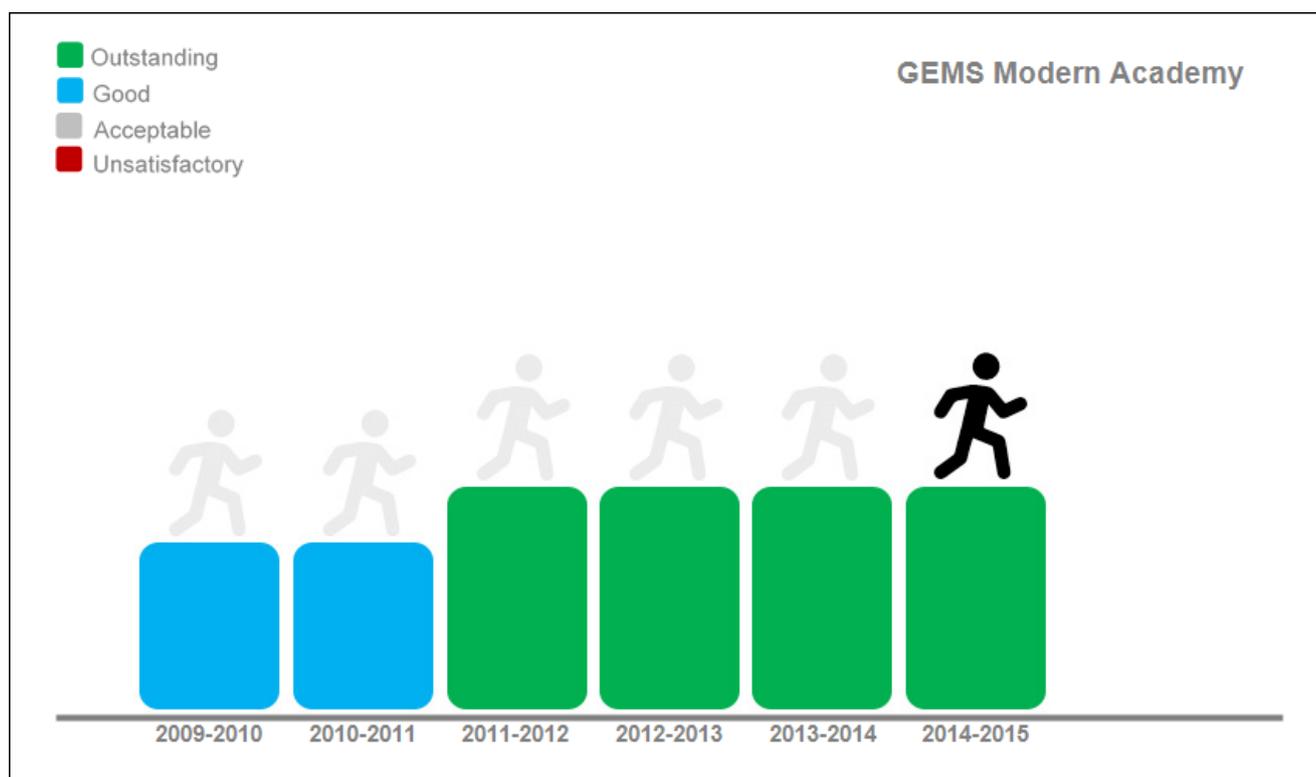
Educational Permit	CISCE 567840
Main Curriculum / Other	Indian / CISCE
Standardised tests / board exams	ICSE, ISC
Accreditation	CISCE, IB



Dear Parents,

GEMS Modern Academy was inspected by DSIB from 19th – 22nd October 2014, and the overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **Outstanding**

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key aspects of the school's performance and standards. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in five key subjects, their learning skills as well as their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching was across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside the classroom, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.



The inspection judgements were drawn from a range of evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents' and teachers' surveys.

The key strengths and areas for improvement to be made by the school leaders, governors and owners are:

Strengths

- There was a broad and innovative curriculum.
- Student leaders had worked effectively with younger students to promote a positive attitude to learning and a strong sense of community.
- Students' attainment against international standards was outstanding.
- The approach to teaching and learning in the majority of lessons was innovative and led to high levels of engagement and motivation.
- The new Principal and the leadership team promoted the pursuit of excellence.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure students with special educational needs are supported effectively in every lesson.
- Improve students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language.

We warmly encourage you to read the full school inspection report.

The school is required to submit to DSIB an action plan identifying the steps they will take to address the areas for improvement. We have advised your school leaders to share this with you.

We trust that the information provided will help you understand, and encourages you to support, your child's school.

Yours sincerely,

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

A closer look at GEMS Modern Academy



How well does the school perform overall?

- Students' attainment and progress were mostly outstanding across all phases. They were weaker in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. The progress of students in science in the primary phase, although outstanding, was not as secure as in the other key subjects.
- Students were enthusiastic and responsive to challenges set by their teachers. They had developed their critical thinking skills and were able to use technology and other learning resources to research and investigate. They collaborated exceptionally well when working in groups, and could effectively apply their knowledge to real life experiences.
- Most students demonstrated outstanding learning attitudes and behaviours. They fully understood Islamic values, appreciated the culture of the UAE, and demonstrated a significant awareness of their own and other world cultures.
- Teaching methods routinely and effectively promoted the interest of students. Assessment strategies were robust and secure. As a result, students made significant progress in learning.
- The school's vision set a very clear rationale for achieving high international standards through building a strong curriculum.
- The school had put in place a wide range of systems and services to protect the students' physical and emotional well-being. Excellent relationships filled the school, and students felt secure as a result of the high quality of support and guidance that was offered.
- The new Principal and senior leaders promoted a vision aiming for excellence in learning. Self-evaluation was accurate and improvement plans were thorough and understood by leaders, teachers and staff. Governors worked closely with leaders to ensure the sustainability of the outstanding provision and outcomes for students. Links with parents and the community were highly effective and they demonstrated a positive impact on both the personal and academic development of the students.



How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

- Most students with special educational needs received appropriate support and made good progress in their learning from their individual starting points.
- The leaders of special educational needs, were very good at identifying students who would benefit from additional support, and a team of specialist teachers catered well for their learning needs. There were excellent procedures in place for tracking and monitoring students' progress.
- The school had started to involve parents in supporting their children, and most partnerships were very positive. However, there was scope to widen this support network and provide more strategies for parents to use at home to support their children.

1. How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning Skills?

		KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
 Islamic Education	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
 Arabic as a First Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
 Arabic as an Additional Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good ↑
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good ↑
 English	Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
 Mathematics	Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
 Science	Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
		KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Learning skills		Outstanding	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding	Outstanding

↑ Improved from last inspection

↓ Declined from last inspection

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding 	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding 	Outstanding 	Outstanding 	Outstanding 

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

Overall school judgement

Outstanding

Key strengths

- There was a broad and innovative curriculum.
- Students' personal and social development was outstanding, particularly the leadership skills of older students.
- Students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science was outstanding.
- The outstanding teaching and use of assessment across the school led to high levels of students' achievement.
- The senior leaders were dedicated in their pursuit for excellent outcomes for all students.

Changes since the last inspection

- The improved attainment and progress of students in Arabic as an additional language in the secondary phase.
- The improved teaching and learning in the primary phase.
- Curriculum design had improved to outstanding.

Recommendations

- Ensure students with special educational needs are supported effectively in every lesson.
- Improve students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic as an additional language.

 Improved from last inspection

 Declined from last inspection

1. How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning Skills?

KG

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In English, most children were able to read, write and speak English at above age- related standards. They made outstanding progress from their starting point.
- In mathematics, children were confident in using number concepts to solve simple problems. They could identify shapes well.
- In science, the majority of children grasped the basics of simple prediction, investigation and observation, for example when comparing wet and dry sand, or observing salt, sand and oil in water.

Primary

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Good	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Good	Good
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In Islamic Education, most students could list the pillars of Islam and those of Iman appropriately. They had good knowledge of etiquettes and values. However, their understanding of the prescribed verses of the Holy Qur'an was less developed.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students developed their listening and speaking skills well. They demonstrated a good knowledge of basic Arabic grammar. However, their writing skills were the least developed. Most students made good progress in developing their Arabic vocabulary, but lacked confidence in using it in different context.
- In English, students' listening, speaking and writing were well developed. For example, students could explain, using well-structured sentence, text they were reading.
- In mathematics, students had a secure knowledge of number and used correct mathematical vocabulary to describe the properties of geometrical shapes. They made exceptional progress in solving problems.
- In science, most students demonstrated a good grasp of scientific skills which including predicting and observing. Although, this was inconsistent across a few classes.

Middle		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Good	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Good	Good
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In Islamic Education, the majority of students confidently discussed key events in the Prophet's (PBUH) life. They could also talk clearly and eloquently about virtues in Islam. Most students had a good understanding of Islamic values and their contribution in becoming a good Muslim.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students had developed a bank of vocabulary, but had difficulty in confidently using this in meaningful expressions. Most students were making good progress against learning objectives.
- In English, students demonstrated an excellent understanding of a range of texts from different genres and their writing was progressing well in its fluency and accuracy. Frequent opportunities to contribute to class discussion enabled most students to become confident speakers.
- In mathematics, students made excellent progress. This was evident in their ability to confidently apply their knowledge to make deduction and solve complex problems.
- In science, most students had outstanding knowledge which they confidently applied to their research discussions and presentation. As a result, their progress was outstanding.

Secondary		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Good	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Choose an item	Choose an item
Arabic as an Additional Language	Good 	Good 
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- In Islamic Education, most students had good knowledge of Islamic concepts. They could identify and talk confidently about Halal and Haram. Students were knowledgeable of the main aspects of the Prophet's (PBUH) life. For example, they could discuss major milestones in his life.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students had good listening. They understood basic classroom instructions accurately. They developed and used a good range of vocabulary, although their pronunciation was not always accurate. Progress in developing students' writing skills was slower as students had limited opportunities to write.
- In English, students could write for different purposes. They had excellent analytical skills which they applied to different genres. Students' were articulate and highly proficient speakers.

- In mathematics, students applied calculus techniques to solve complex problems. They continued to make outstanding progress.
- In science, students demonstrated outstanding knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. For example, they carried out practical work selecting relevant and appropriate equipment.

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding 	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students were enthusiastic and readily took the initiative to be responsible for their own learning.
- Almost all students were actively engaged, genuinely interested and demonstrated strong independent learning skills
- Collaborative work was a strength and often students produced high quality work.
- Almost all students could apply their learning to other areas of the curriculum.
- Students responded well to challenges and applied their critical thinking skills productively. They used technology and other resources effectively to support their investigations.

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students' attitudes were outstanding as they were consistently well-engaged in and focused on their own learning.
- Students demonstrated outstanding behaviours, characterised by their high levels of self-discipline in the classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, the canteen and other areas of the school.
- Students built strong relationships with their peers; these were characterised by mutual respect between students and staff.
- Students adopted a healthy life style at school, as demonstrated in their diet, participation in physical activities, and their awareness of the characteristics of healthy living.
- Most students were punctual in arriving at lessons and their overall attendance was good.

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students fully understood the basic values of Islam and appreciated the impact of these values on everyday life in Dubai. This was evident in well-planned assemblies and corridor displays.
- Through initiatives such as Arabic Day and Creative Festival, most students demonstrated that they respected and appreciated the culture of the UAE and understood how it differed from their own Indian culture.

- Students' awareness of world cultures was outstanding. It was acquired through activities such as 'Model United Nations', and 'Face to Faith' and through well-organised trips to other countries and places such as Nepal and Antarctica.

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students were active members of the school community. Older students started several initiatives to support younger students in the school. They took the initiative and used their creative ideas to develop projects that had a positive impact on the local community, such as collecting donations in newspaper and book drives to help poor workers and children in Dubai and India.
- Students showed well-developed work ethic and integrity. For example, they clearly understood the importance of honesty and unethical practices. They believed that hard work and persistence led only to success.
- Students were fully aware of the main environmental issues the world faces such as global warming. They were able to discuss complex issues such as renewable resources and their impact on sustainability in the United Arab Emirates.

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding 	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge, which enabled them to ask challenging questions of more-able students and also support those who needed specific help.
- Lesson plans were highly structured and showed a range of interesting activities which engaged and motivated students. Technology was used well to provide variety and a stimulus for ideas.
- The positive learning environment created in almost all lessons provided a strong basis for student dialogue and debate. Teachers facilitated these discussions very effectively and promoted the involvement of all students.
- In most lessons, teaching strategies met the different learning needs of students well.
- An emphasis on problem solving, critical thinking and research was an essential part of effective teaching and learning.

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Internal assessments were systematically moderated to ensure they were aligned to the expectations of the Indian curriculum.
- International attainment benchmarks were systematically used to monitor and compare students' and groups of students' achievements against the highest standards.

- Almost all teachers used diagnostic, formative and summative assessments in a coherent way to ensure that all students' progress was sustained.
- Teachers had an in-depth knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of students. This enabled them to support students in an appropriate manner. Students were encouraged to be self-reflective about their work and their progress.

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The curriculum provided clear breadth and balance. It met all the requirements of the CISCE and IBDP programmes.
- The curriculum was planned effectively to ensure continuity and progression. Consequently, students were successfully prepared for the next phase of their learning.
- A wide range of enrichment activities included age-appropriate activities. For example worldwide field trips enhanced students' global awareness.
- There were meaningful opportunities for students to link subjects across the curriculum.
- The curriculum was reviewed rigorously to accommodate international assessment requirements.

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding 	Outstanding 	Outstanding 	Outstanding 

- The curriculum was planned effectively and created a stimulating learning environment for students to become independent and responsible global citizens.
- Students' leadership and initiative were encouraged through activities within and beyond the school. The mentor-mentee interactions for mathematics, Arabic and Islamic Education provided scope for older students to collaborate with younger students.
- Strong community links and extra-curricular activities, many which were established and managed by the students, provided rich learning experiences to enhance students' practical application of their knowledge and skills. For example, students produced an Islamic Education monthly magazine, and regularly participated in an annual Arabic competition.

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff had received training in child protection procedures. The school counsellor and the Digital Citizenship Team had conducted an anti-cyber bullying campaign. Safety systems on the school premises, on buses, in playgrounds and swimming pools were diligently implemented and monitored. As a result, students felt safe and secure in school. Fire drills and evacuation procedures were regularly reviewed and managed effectively. The school provided ramps and other appropriate modifications to the school building and grounds to ensure access for all members of the school community with physical disabilities. A team of two doctors and four nurses monitored students' health. Nutritious lunches were provided for students. 				

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and students enjoyed strong and productive relationships. A lively, purposeful and harmonious atmosphere prevailed in classrooms and in the school. The school managed and rigorously monitored students' attendance and punctuality very well. The school had excellent systems for identifying students with special educational needs and clear policies and processes for their admission and inclusion. The school provided well for students with special educational needs; through initiatives such as withdrawal groups, modifications to their curriculum, parental support and close tracking and monitoring of progress. Students felt well supported and had access to guidance from both trusted adults and through the school's counselling staff. Older students had good support in preparing for their future careers and further education choices. 				

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

	Overall
The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good management of the special educational needs department had enabled the school to manage an increasing number of students with specific learning needs, and ensured most made good progress. The school had established good policies and systems for identifying and serving the needs of most students with disabilities. Specialist staff offered effective support to students but the level of skill in providing for them in mainstream classrooms, whilst good overall, was inconsistent at times. 	

- The school had good tracking procedures, which helped to monitor the progress of all students effectively.
- There was scope for further development in the areas of facilitating parental support, sharing of staff expertise, and surveying parents' views.

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Principal was dynamic and focused. Capacity to improve was clearly demonstrated by continued drive and ambition. • School leaders had a clear vision and were dedicated to improving the school at all levels. • All other new staff, including the new Vice Principal, had a good understanding of the school's strength and areas for development. They were clearly understood what was expected from them. Responsibilities were shared strategically. • Communication channels were robust across the phases. Staff and students had a clear sense of direction. 	

	Overall
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a very collegiate approach to self-evaluation in all phases. • A robust vertical and horizontal reporting system enabled the two senior leaders to monitor the progress of priorities for improvement. As a result, the school had made secure progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report. • The appraisal system and professional development activities were meaningful as they targeted specific areas of development. 	

	Overall
Parents and the community	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents' interventions were meaningful. They played a crucial part in the personal and academic development of their children. • The communication between the school, the parents and the community was strong and frequent. • Reporting on students' progress was regular and included specific outcomes, self-evaluation from students and clear targets for improvement. • Extensive partnerships with other schools and the community played a significant part in students' life. 	

	Overall
Governance	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors were very proactive in ensuring the school was meeting its targets. • Systems and processes for ensuring leadership and governance accountability were efficient. They involved different sectors of the GEMS group. • The Board of Governors ensured resources were deployed effectively to improve the school performance and enhance students' outcomes. • Parental views were sought out regularly both formally and informally. Governors responded well to parental requests and concerns. 	

	Overall
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were excellent systems in place that facilitated the smooth and efficient running of the school. • The older students provided leadership which they supported staff in the running of the school. • The operations team was very well trained, deployed very effectively and were ably led by the operations manager. • The high quality facilities and resources provided an excellent and inclusive learning environment designed to provide access for all. 	

What are the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
 Parents*	This year	1111	41%
	Last year	548	22%
 Teachers	197		86%
 Students	357		80%

- Around a fifth of the parents responded to the survey. Almost all students and a small majority of teachers responded.
- Overall, all stakeholders responses to the surveys pointed to high levels of satisfaction.
- Most teachers felt that the school had strong leadership and that it listened to them and acted on their views.
- Responses concerning students with special educational needs were positive. Most students felt they were safe on school premises and on buses and that the school dealt with bullying appropriately.
- Of those who responded, a majority of parents indicated that the tuition fee increases did not contribute to improving the school facilities and their children's learning experiences.
- A majority of teachers believed that their salaries and incentives were not proportionate to the increase in fees.
- Many teachers, students, and parents thought that inspections should be unannounced for them to be effective, whereas governors felt that outstanding schools should not be inspected under all criteria every year.

*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This should address:

- recommendations from DSIB
- areas identified by the school as requiring improvement
- other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school
- priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next school inspection will report on changes made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report, you should contact inspection@khda.gov.ae