



Inspection report

Gems Winchester School

Dubai

United Arab Emirates

Date **27th –29th October 2025**
Inspection number **20251027**

Contents		page
1	Purpose and scope of the inspection	2
2	Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
3	Overall effectiveness of the school	4
	3.1 What the school does well	4
	3.2 Points for improvement	5
4	The context of the school	6
	4.1 The British nature of the school	7
5	Standard 1 The quality of education provided by the school	8
	5.1 Curriculum	8
	5.2 Teaching and assessment	9
	5.3 Standards achieved by pupils	11
6	Standard 2 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	12
7	Standard 3 The welfare, health and safety of pupils	14
8	Standard 4 The suitability of the proprietor and staff	16
9	Standard 5 The premises and accommodation	17
10	Standard 6 The provision of information for parents, carers and others	19
11	Standard 7 The school's procedures for handling complaints	20
12	Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school	21

1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

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

The inspection and this report follow the 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 pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation; the school's complaints procedures; and leadership and management. If appropriate, there is a separate section on the quality of boarding provision. 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 pupils and pupils' 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 DfE on whether schools meet the standards for BSO.

Inspectors observed lessons, scrutinised school documentation and policies and analysed assessment information. Pupils' workbooks were seen in lessons and discussions were held with the staff, parents and informally with pupils. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Nicola Walsh. The team members were James Alloub, Rebecca Baggaley, Lee Connor, Brendan Flavin, Karen Hanratty, Riaan Huyser, Andy McLaughlin, Jack Meadows and Andrew Williams.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British schools overseas consistently, except for those that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. These pertain to aspects of the UK Equality Act 2010. The relevant standards are:

Part 1 – ‘2(2)(d)(ii)- encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;’

and

Part 2 – ‘5(b)(vi)- encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The school actively promotes tolerance and a respect for all human differences, within the confines of the law. This is embedded in the culture and ethos of the school. This judgement is endorsed by the British government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school provides a very good quality of education for the pupils and the families that it serves. The school's attention to the well-being of the whole school community results in a strong foundation on which all pupils thrive. Pupils achieve well, often from low starting points. Pupils are attentive, keen to learn and enjoy school. Parents value the quality of education that the school provides and in some year groups the school is over subscribed. Leaders have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the BSO standards are met consistently.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including:

- the inspirational leadership team that is sharply focused on the school's priorities for improvement
- the promotion of British values which is at the heart of the school's work
- happy, confident pupils who value their education and are proud to be part of this school
- high standards of attainment in key stages 4 and 5
- progress across the school, but particularly in early years foundation stage (EYFS) and secondary
- secondary pupils who are highly motivated, confident and have very positive attitudes to learning
- the breadth of opportunities for pupils and staff, provided both within the school day and beyond
- the strong partnership with parents and the focus on the well-being of all members of the school's community
- rigorous and robust systems for keeping pupils safe
- an attractive, clean, safe, and well-maintained school environment
- a warm and welcoming school culture and ethos that is fully inclusive
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- tionships across the school and the school's community.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- I. Further develop the quality of teaching in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 by equipping teachers with the skills to deliver lessons that engage pupils in purposeful learning
- II. Ensure all staff consistently promote high standards of behaviour particularly at transition times in secondary and in lessons in key stage 2
- III. Use feedback consistently to help pupils improve their work.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school	GEMS Winchester School Dubai		
Address	P.O Box 113272, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, near IMG Worlds of Adventure, Dubailand		
Main telephone #	+971-4-595-2555		
Website	https://www.gemswinchesterschool-dubai.com/		
Email	enquiries_wsd@gemsedu.com		
Principal	Mr. Matthew James Lecuyer		
Chair of board of governors/proprietor	GEMS Education Mr. Hywel Benbow, Chair of Local Advisory Board		
Age range	3-18 years		
Number of pupils	Total 4,465	Boys 2,309	Girls 2,156
Pupil numbers by age on date of entry	(0-2 years) 0	(3-4 years) 424	(5-11 years) 1,875
	(12-16 years) 1,730	(17-18 years) 436	(18+ years) 0
Total number of part-time pupils	0		

4.1 British nature of the school

The school delivers a distinctly British educational experience through its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements. The school's website, policies, and social media reflect a school that promotes British values, academic excellence, and global citizenship in equal measure.

The curriculum is aligned with the national curriculum for England and the early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements. It provides progression through all key stages and leads to British qualifications. Schemes of work incorporate British social, historical, and cultural contexts. Assessment systems are British. Lessons promote pupils' moral awareness and develop their understanding of tolerance, respect, and community engagement. A broad enrichment programme extends learning beyond the classroom in line with a well-rounded British educational ethos.

The school's leadership and governance model mirrors British practice. The executive leadership team and local advisory board understand the UK education system. This helps to foster a culture grounded in accountability, inclusion and reflective improvement. The school's staffing structure mirrors that of a British school. Membership of the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME), the Association of British Schools Overseas (AoBSO) and the Council of British International Schools (COBIS), confirm the school's commitment to British standards.

Teaching and assessment approaches apply established British pedagogical approaches. Ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) ensures that teaching aligns with UK curriculum standards. Resources are UK sourced. Published schemes of work used in British schools are in use across the school to support learning and teaching.

British values are embedded and reflected in the school's published values: tolerance, respect, understanding our responsibilities, and endeavour. Pupil leadership is encouraged through elections for the school council and leadership positions. Pastoral care follows the British model, with form tutors, heads of year, and a house system offering support, competition and community. Safeguarding and behaviour policies meet UK expectations. The school promotes a nurturing environment built on kindness, respect and inclusion.

British traditions are evident in uniform expectations, rewards and sanctions, school assemblies, classroom organisation and visual displays. Events such as Remembrance Day, World Book Day and British Science Week are celebrated and create a strong link with similar events in UK schools. English is spoken widely throughout the school and is the medium of instruction.

5. *Standard 1* The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the BSO standards for this part. The quality of education provided by the school is good with outstanding features.

5.1 Curriculum

The national curriculum for England and EYFS requirements are adapted to meet ministry requirements and are fully inclusive. The curriculum is broad, balanced and suitably ambitious.

Schemes of work, curriculum handbooks for each year group and lesson planning supports teaching effectively. Clear learning objectives are shared routinely in lessons and with parents. These are linked to the school's seven learning skills: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, confidence, curiosity and consciousness. They are central to lesson plans and schemes of work.

The curriculum policy is reviewed every two years. Currently, the development of reading and communication skills is a priority on the school's development plan. Regular reviews and curriculum audits ensure that the curriculum is very closely matched to the needs of the pupils and based on the school's self-evaluation.

The provision for pupils under the age of 5 is met through the structured delivery of the EYFS curriculum. Activities are delivered around the seven areas of development and include hands-on and play-based tasks. There is a clear focus in ensuring pupils develop skills and foundational knowledge in communication and language, literacy and mathematics.

Optional pathways in Key Stage 4 and 5 enable pupils to follow iGCSE, A level and AS level. BTEC courses offer subjects such as business and sport. A BTEC football academy programme combines classroom study with practical coaching and has established links with UAE clubs. The school guides pupils in their options at Key Stages 4 & 5. Guidance is given to ensure pupils take account of their career aspirations. Careers guidance is provided through a career's counsellor, tutors, online programmes, visits to university fairs and talks by visiting professionals. The school's virtual reality bus is used to provide pupils with simulated tours of universities and insights into a variety of professions. As a result pupils are well informed about the next stage of their education. At the end of 2025 pupils left the school to attend universities internationally and universities within the region.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and diverse needs are provided with a bespoke curriculum. This is informed by an accurate assessment of a pupil's individual needs. Inclusion teachers draw on diagnostic information and individual education plan (IEP) targets to design learning that builds on prior attainment. Adaptive strategies,

supported by regular collaboration between class teachers and inclusion staff, ensure that pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. Assessment, including termly reviews of IEPs, identify starting points and inform teachers of what pupils have learnt and the gaps in their learning. In the secondary section the ASDAN curriculum provides an additional pathway, accredited by UK institutions for pupils with different needs. Parents have been very appreciative and are fully supportive of the ASDAN curriculum and the qualifications that this offers.

Extensions to the curriculum are well-planned and wide ranging. These include extra-curricular clubs, educational visits, over-night trips and visitors to the school. They are closely related to the aims of the school. Every pupil has an opportunity to participate either through activities within the timetabled school day, after school or at specific events. Opportunities for pupils who are gifted and talented are met through the provision of extra-curricular initiatives and enable pupils to participate in areas in which they have a specific interest or skill.

Aspects of the school's wider curriculum are underpinned by an effective pastoral system, which constantly promotes and monitors the well-being of all pupils. The school's provision for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is further embedded through timetabled subjects such as moral education and social studies. Also, through assemblies and events such as the school's recent International Day of Tolerance.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

In the EYFS, teaching is engaging and inspiring. This helps to ensure that children develop appropriate skills and knowledge aligned to the seven areas of development. Learning environments are a strength. Pupils are engaged with consistent, high-quality and stimulating continuous provisions. Outdoor environments support child-initiated learning and opportunities for enquiry and curiosity. Strong routines support smooth transitions and positive relationships. Expectations are high. Staff have identified low starting points in children's stages of physical development, communication & language and consequently these are prioritised. Where teaching is effective, questioning is used to develop language and modelling is strong. Fine motor skills are developed through a range of activities to support an accurate pencil grip in preparation for early writing. This ensures children are well equipped to enter KS1.

Assessment in EYFS is embedded into daily practice and progress is recorded in observation booklets. This data is monitored to ensure pupils are on track to meet the expectation by the end of the year. Pupil's achievements are shared with parents via an online app. Staff are quick to identify gaps and work to address these.

Teaching in key stage 1 is effective. Pupils secure a basic understanding of key subject knowledge and skills. Planning ensures curriculum coverage and activities are suited to most pupils' prior attainment. While challenges may not always stretch the most and least able, the majority of pupils are appropriately supported.

Pupils in key stage 1 receive feedback, but this was inconsistent between teachers and

subjects. Teachers maintain records of attainment and progress and use these to report to parents. In the strongest lessons, teachers used a variety of ongoing assessment strategies to check understanding and immediately address misconceptions. As a result, pupils learned the knowledge they needed to move on to the next task

In key stage 2, lessons are structured and learning objectives are routinely shared with pupils. In most lessons the pace of learning is appropriate. Teachers use questioning to probe understanding, though this is inconsistent. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons tend to rely on whole-class instruction and there are limited opportunities for independent application of skills. In a few lessons behaviour is poorly managed. However, pupils are beginning to take greater ownership of their learning through self- and peer-assessment, though consistency varies between classes.

In the better lessons in key stage 2 teachers plan engaging activities that promote active participation and secure progress for most pupils. This was particularly evident in a year 5 lesson regarding a homework task which required pupils to construct models of the solar system. The in-class follow-up provided opportunities for the pupils to further develop their understanding by using virtual reality (VR) headsets. The headsets were used effectively to extend pupils' scientific knowledge, understanding and engage all learners.

Across secondary the "Teach Like a GEM" framework is beginning to shape practice. This embeds a consistent approach to planning of lessons, and encourages a more active and collaborative approach. This was evident in lesson plans, seating arrangement, data sheets and effective use of interactive whiteboards. Secondary pupils respond positively to these opportunities and show growing independence as learners. In lessons observed most pupils were engaged, behaved respectfully, and demonstrated confidence in applying knowledge. Where teaching is stronger, lessons are closely aligned to examination specifications. This was most evident in maths and science lessons in key stage 4. In these lessons the use of questioning, differentiation and scaffolding ensured that pupils of all abilities were making strong progress. However, this was not consistently applied across all lessons and in every subject.

Teaching and learning in key stage 5 is characterised by strong relationships between teachers and pupils. The comfort with which pupils ask, and answer questions illustrates the high degree of belief and trust that has been developed in the key stage 5 classrooms. Pupils spoke very highly of their teachers' commitment to their success and to their welfare.

The sixth form pupil leadership team expressed pride in their belief that 'the best teachers' are in the senior parts of the school. 'They have very good knowledge of their subjects.' Lessons are thoroughly planned and have clear objectives. Teachers ensure that pupils understand how they are building on their previous experiences in IGCSE and of AS. In addition, small classes enable planning to consider pupils' individual needs, including those with SEND. Teacher assessment is reinforced by the use of pupils' IGCSE histories, CAT4 scores and a diagnostic test taken early in year 12. Lessons and assessments are explicitly focussed on the needs of the A level or BTEC examinations, based on past-paper questions and assessment objectives. The value of this approach is evident in the results awarded to past pupils.

Pupils with SEND have work well matched to their diverse needs. Teachers' plans for this group of pupils are well structured and include opportunities for regular diagnostic testing to inform planning. IEP targets are identified and used in planning to support pupil outcomes and are regularly reviewed. The focus on modelling, scaffolding, and structured feedback enables pupils to develop confidence, independence and sustained learning gains.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Achievement across all key stages has risen steadily over the past three years. External assessments confirm a consistent upward trend. Pupils now attain above UK and international benchmarks in most core subjects. This improvement reflects increasingly accurate assessment, effective teaching and a well-structured curriculum. This supports progression from the early years through to post-16 education.

Pupils in the EYFS make rapid progress from low starting points as most enter school with limited English language skills. High-quality provision, daily language-rich interactions and careful assessment against the early learning goals ensure that all pupils make accelerated gains, particularly in communication, literacy and early numeracy.

In primary attainment and progress are good and improving. Standardised assessments, in English, mathematics and science show that pupils perform above international averages. Pupil outcomes are moderated across year groups and with GEMS cluster schools. This has strengthened reliability and raised expectations, contributing to year-on-year improvement.

Across key stage 3 and key stage 4, attainment continues to strengthen. At IGCSE, results have improved since the previous inspection and are above UK averages. Data indicates that pupils make very good progress. Mathematics, physics and biology are strengths, supported by careful transition planning between Year 6 and Year 7. English outcomes are broadly in line with UK expectations. The school is focused on further strengthening reading comprehension and extended writing across subjects.

In the sixth-form, standards are high and improving. At A level, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades has increased over the last three years. Pupils make very good progress with their learning. Vocational outcomes are equally strong and outcomes are consistently good.

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

The school meets the BSO standards in this part. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and is a strength of the school.

The school's ethos successfully promotes a culture of inclusion, family and mutual understanding. Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect, tolerance and empathy for others.

Spiritual development is nurtured through reflections in assemblies, creativity and a strong focus on emotional literacy. The school's emphasis on wellbeing is particularly strong. The implementation of wellbeing lessons supports pupils' emotional health and self-awareness very well.

Moral, social and cultural and PSHE lessons help all pupils develop a strong understanding of local and global issues, alongside an appreciation of cultural diversity. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on moral questions and social responsibilities in a range of contexts, and they respond thoughtfully and sensitively. The curriculum also encompasses real-world ethical issues such as environmental responsibility, and social justice. This helps pupils to develop resilience and ethical awareness.

The promotion of fundamental British values is embedded throughout the school. Pupils of all ages have a strong understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for those with different faiths and beliefs. From a young age, pupils can clearly distinguish right from wrong. This is embedded through the school's rules and rewards system. These values are evident throughout the curriculum, in assemblies and are highlighted across the whole school environment.

There are extensive opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and positions of responsibility. The roles of head pupil, house captains, prefects, wellbeing ambassadors, learning ambassadors and eco champions, empower pupils to make meaningful contributions to school life. The pupils appointed to these roles are displayed in the entrance corridors. They are given opportunities to represent their peers and influence school decisions and the life of the school. Older pupils were assigned tasks to assist pupils at the end of the school day to enter buses in the bus park and navigate the road crossings safely.

Events such as anti-bullying week, world mental health day and international days and flag days. Pupils attended the *WeEvolve* Wellbeing Conference. Most recently, pupils organised 'Pink Day' where they successfully raised awareness and money for research by donating hair during breast cancer awareness month.

Secondary pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility and service through work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, and a BTEC Football Academy programme. These opportunities, alongside extracurricular activities such as Model United Nations and the World Scholars Cup, enhance pupils' independence, teamwork, and global awareness. Together, they

make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, fostering social responsibility and global citizenship.

The school celebrates cultural diversity and global awareness through a rich programme of festivals, events, and curriculum integration. Pupils learn to appreciate and respect cultural differences through events such as Black History Month, Diwali, Winter Souk, Ramadan initiatives and World Health Day. Pupils are also encouraged to understand the UAE's cultural context, promoting respect for local customs while celebrating the global diversity of the school community. This balanced approach ensures that learners develop both international-mindedness and a strong sense of identity and belonging within the UAE.

Comparisons between Emirati and British culture are celebrated through curriculum work and school-wide events such as UAE National Day and the International Day of Tolerance which enhances pupils' intercultural awareness and appreciation.

There is a strong sense of belonging which unites pupils, staff, and families, reflecting a shared commitment to the school's vision and values. 'Family First' is an initiative that aims to strengthen the school community by involving parents and fostering family values through activities such as 'Breakfast Buddies' and 'Family First Breakfast' which strengthens social cohesion and inclusion. The school café located at the entrance to the school, provides a community hub where all stakeholders can meet informally and drink a sustainably sourced cup of coffee.

Parents and pupils view the school as a caring and inclusive community where all individuals feel recognised and valued. This sentiment was echoed by a pupil who stated, "I'm always excited for the day ahead."

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school meets the BSO standards in this part. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils is outstanding.

The emphasis on pupil welfare and wellbeing is a significant strength and reflects a deeply embedded culture of care and vigilance. This is underpinned by clear leadership, well-defined responsibilities, and consistent practice. Policies are current, aligned with host-country law and effectively applied. Across all phases, staff–pupil relationships are warm, respectful and nurturing. This creates an atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, valued, and confident to approach adults when needed. Pupils report feeling safe and supported. Parents express confidence in the school’s vigilance.

The *Engage* framework provides a highly effective multi-disciplinary approach, bringing together counsellors, inclusion staff and designated safeguarding leads to coordinate personalised support and early intervention for pupils. Displays, assemblies and pastoral programmes reinforce British values, tolerance and respect, underpinning a positive and inclusive safeguarding ethos.

The school's behaviour policy, ‘Be a GEM’ is clear and comprehensive. It is built around expectations and routines with a view to creating young people with constructive and positive relationships. It is supported by an extensive pastoral care programme, in which members of the extended senior leadership team (SLT) play an active role.

In its implementation teachers use positive rewards as well as negative sanctions – in the secondary school, accumulation of the latter may end in detention, internal suspension, or occasionally external suspensions. The SLT are very much involved in the disciplinary procedures, making it a priority to evaluate behaviour in context of the individual and the event. The total number of suspensions has declined from 82 in 2022-23 to 43 in 2024-25.

When applied effectively, the policy encourages good behaviour amongst pupils – including timely presence in lessons and respect for each other and for staff. This was especially evident in the primary school where pupils were well-practised in classroom routines.

The effectiveness of the school’s efforts to build positive relationships is reflected in the pupils’ feelings of safety and security in school. Whilst secondary pupils acknowledged bullying may exist, they expressed their confidence “it always ends.” Pupils themselves play a role in this through their leadership roles, their availability and in their training in the ‘do’s and don’ts’ of managing younger children.

Outside the classroom, in the secondary school, moving over 2,000 pupils around the corridors of one building is challenging: the school endeavours to manage this through the implementation of a one-way system.

Health and safety procedures at the school are outstanding. Drawing upon the frameworks and support of the *GEMS* parent organisation, the school meets, and in most cases, exceeds local statutory requirements across all aspects of health and safety. For the last 5 years, the school has received a 'Golden A' certificate in health and safety from the Dubai Municipality. This incorporates food hygiene, as well as safe practice in science laboratories. Indeed, laboratory provision for first aid and for the storage of chemicals were impressive.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

The school implements rigorous and comprehensive recruitment and vetting procedures that fully meet BSO requirements. All recruitment follows *GEMS'* safer recruitment policy. This ensures that posts are advertised transparently, applications are carefully screened and interview panels include safer recruitment-trained staff from both academic and human resource (HR) teams. Recruitment records are well maintained, with interview notes, reference verification and documentation available in both hard and soft copy files. Demonstration lessons, language proficiency assessments and written submissions form part of the appointment process, ensuring candidates meet the professional and linguistic standards required for the British curriculum.

All pre-employment checks are consistently completed prior to appointment. These include identity verification, right-to-work and visa confirmation, criminal record checks (ICPC and local police clearance), prohibition and Section 128 checks for leadership roles and comprehensive reference validation through official channels. The single central record (SCR) is complete, accurate and maintained in accordance with BSO expectations. It contains all statutory information, including medical fitness, qualifications, and signed declarations related to conduct, safeguarding and conflicts of interest. Random file scrutiny confirmed full compliance. The SCR is reviewed regularly by the head of HR and is subject to both internal and annual corporate audits; the most recent audit in May 2025 confirmed compliance.

Safeguarding is embedded within recruitment and induction. All staff complete face-to-face safeguarding training before starting their roles. Training is tiered according to responsibility: all staff complete level 1, while senior and middle leaders hold level 2 or 3 certification. Support staff, including subcontracted personnel such as drivers, canteen staff, and security, receive level 1 training. Induction materials are comprehensive and include coverage of Keeping Children Safe in Education, Prevent duty, online safety, peer-on-peer abuse, whistleblowing, and child-on-child abuse. Refresher training occurs termly, with additional reminders and updates communicated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Subcontracted staff are also subject to the same rigorous standards. As all service providers—security, catering, and transport—are owned by *GEMS*, safeguarding oversight remains centralised and robust. Governance arrangements support safe recruitment through the Local Advisory Board (LAB), whose members all hold safeguarding certification. Proprietors are well informed of their statutory responsibilities and receive updates through corporate channels.

9. Standard 5 The premises and accommodation

The school meets the BSO standards in this part. The premises and accommodation are good.

The school's premises and accommodation comply fully with both British and UAE regulatory frameworks. Documentation, including maintenance logs, risk assessments and health and safety inspection reports, confirm that the site is safe, clean and well maintained.

Toilet and washing facilities are sufficient, age-appropriate and maintained to a high standard. Separate facilities are available for boys, girls, staff and visitors. Accessible toilets are provided for people with disabilities. Hygiene standards are excellent, with cleaning staff stationed in key areas throughout the day. Changing facilities and showers for pupils aged 11 and above are located near the sports halls, providing appropriate supervision and hygiene. All facilities have safe running water at suitable temperatures and maintenance records confirm regular servicing of plumbing systems.

The medical clinic provides suitable accommodation and is located adjacent to toilet and washing facilities. Medicines are stored securely, and protocols for administration and emergency response are well established. The clinic is well equipped. However, the lack of space at busy times must be managed carefully by clinic staff to ensure protocols around patient care are not compromised.

The premises are clean, safe and healthy. A subsidiary of the parent company *GEMS*, oversees daily maintenance, pest control and health-and-safety inspections. Risk assessments are conducted regularly for all specialist areas, including laboratories, art rooms, and playgrounds, with actions logged and resolved promptly. Security measures are robust. Fire evacuation routes are clearly displayed. Both fire and lockdown drills are practised routinely.

Classrooms and specialist teaching spaces are bright, well-lit and fully air-conditioned. Ventilation and lighting levels are appropriate for all age groups. The school's maintenance logs record regular servicing of air conditioning and lighting systems. Acoustics are good, with classrooms and learning spaces designed to minimise noise disruption and ensure a conducive learning environment. Safe, portable drinking water is available across all corridors through hygienically maintained bottle-fed stations. These are sited across the school.

Outdoor and indoor sports facilities are well equipped and promote physical activity and wellbeing. Shaded play areas and separate primary and secondary playgrounds ensure safety and accessibility for all age groups. Changing facilities and showers are available for older pupils and PE equipment is regularly checked and well maintained.

The school's accommodation provides effectively for the curriculum that the school offers. Where there are gaps, staff have been creative in the use of space to address areas of need. However, the increasing number on roll has resulted in areas of the school such as the sixth

form centre and school clinic to be very busy at specific times of the day. Movement of people around the secondary corridors at transition times is congested and can impact pupils' welfare.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

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

The school's arrangements for the provision of information are well established. The website is regularly updated, providing clear access to statutory documentation, policies, curriculum information and previous inspection reports. Communication with parents is frequent, timely and multi-faceted. In addition to telephone contact, email correspondence and weekly newsletters, the recent introduction of groups on social media apps in January 2025 has further enhanced the efficiency of home-school communication.

The school places strong emphasis on curriculum transparency and parental engagement. Weekly bulletins distributed across the school provide detailed updates on curriculum content, assessment focus, forthcoming activities and enrichment opportunities. Parental understanding of learning is supported through 'Family First Think Tank' events and dedicated workshops. These sessions are particularly beneficial at transition between years 6 to 7 and during IGCSE or post-16 option selection. The 'Pulse' system of communication ensures that every family receives personal contact at least once a month from their child's form tutor or homeroom teacher. This approach provides a clear mechanism for parents to offer feedback and strengthens the partnership between school and home.

End of term reports on each pupil's academic achievement and progress ensures that parents are informed. Regular parent-teacher meetings offer opportunities for discussion. The 'meet the teacher day' at the start of the academic year enables parents to meet with staff and understand expectations for the year ahead.

The senior leadership team maintains open channels with the parent community. Regular SLT coffee mornings provide opportunities for dialogue. In partnership with *GEMS Education*, the school conducts annual parent surveys, which consistently indicate high levels of satisfaction regarding the quality and timeliness of information provided. Leaders systematically analyse survey feedback and ensure all issues raised receive appropriate follow-up. This evidence shows a culture of responsiveness and accountability.

The friends of Winchester (FOW) parent association contribute significantly to the life of the school. The group provides constructive feedback to leadership, supports key events such as National Day and the Winter Souq, and strengthens community cohesion. The high level of parental involvement is indicative of strong trust and shared ownership of the school's vision and values.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO.

The school has implemented an effective, transparent and structured complaints procedure that is published, consistently followed and aligns with BSO expectations. The complaints policy is easy to find on the school website and is part of the *GEMS Education* group's standard procedures. It clearly explains the steps for raising concerns—informal, formal, and escalation—along with timelines, communication channels and rights of appeal. This gives parents and carers straightforward ways to voice their concerns.

Both staff and parents understand and use this process. Surveys, interviews and leadership records show that complaints are handled quickly, privately and with respect. Most concerns are settled informally, so formal escalation is rarely needed.

Complaints are centrally tracked via the *GEMS Pulse System*, an internal platform providing real-time monitoring and analytics for all recorded concerns. This system allows the principal, senior leadership team and the *GEMS* Corporate Office to monitor patterns, track response times and ensure compliance with the 48-hour response expectation. The school also maintains a formal complaints register, in line with BSO standards, recording outcomes and lessons learned.

Feedback shows high satisfaction. The latest parent survey had 91% positive responses about communication and responsiveness, with the school's net promoter score rising for three years. This points to a strong partnership between the school and families.

Leaders make sure staff are trained to handle complaints professionally. Ongoing training and safeguarding sessions help keep responses consistent and fair. This approach reflects *GEMS*'s values of respect and care. The school's whistleblowing policy adds further transparency and integrity. Pupil-led projects, such as an artificial intelligence (AI) platform analysing feedback, demonstrate the school's commitment to problem-solving, reflection and resolution regarding complaints raised.

Complaints are managed professionally, with sensitivity and with fairness. The system is robust, efficient and responsive. This approach reflects a school culture that values openness, accountability and partnership with parents.

12. Standard 8

Leadership and management of the school

The school meets the standard. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding.

Leaders and managers inspire both the school and wider community through passionate promotion of their school values: pursuing excellence, growing by learning, learning through innovation and global citizenship. They have demonstrated their ability to maintain exceptional results for pupils, including remarkable achievements in academic performance, well-being and the overall quality of education. Additionally, they have driven significant, rapid improvements across the school in both attainment and progress.

Leaders set high standards and are ambitious in their goals. They are highly respected and maintain a visible presence throughout the school. They have set high expectations of manners and behaviour from pupils and staff, which is evident in the school culture. Leadership structures and accountability systems are robust and effective and staff at all levels know who to approach for support. Leaders are rigorous with monitoring and self-evaluation, giving them a sound knowledge of all aspects of the school. They have been successful in creating a child-centred culture, which is securely embedded. The ethos is embedded by leaders and positively supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. The promotion of fundamental values is at the heart of the school's vision.

School staff feel highly valued and invested in, which contributes to the stable staff body. Staff, from a diverse range of backgrounds are listened to and feel they have a voice in the process of whole school improvement. Leaders promote the school's inclusive ethos in line with the school values, through their own positive professional behaviours. Leaders have developed a strong recruitment and on-boarding process. This welcomes and involves new staff through a buddy system, rigorous induction and initial professional development and staff training. Staff morale at Gems WSD is high.

Appraisal and performance management processes are robust and transparent. Targets at every level are linked to school improvement plans, which are succinct and relevant. Continued professional development and wider school opportunities, create a holistic approach and are very closely aligned to school improvement plans and the schools' processes of self-evaluation. Progress is measured against targets and is regularly monitored by middle and senior leaders. Record keeping is clear and maintained within an internal online platform. Support is offered at all levels for staff to fulfil these targets and reach their full potential.

The programme of continued professional development for staff is significant and embedded. The current roll out of the 'Teach Like a Gem' programme has been structured to build on teachers' skills and embed quality-first teaching in all classrooms. The programme is designed to be interactive, is delivered in manageable bitesize sessions of training, which are specific and targeted to rapidly upskill teachers. This approach allows teachers to rehearse, prepare and reflect on their own practice in a safe environment.

27th - 29th Oct 2025

School leaders have a constructive and proactive relationship with the local advisory board. Board members possess and draw upon a broad skillset, which is beneficial to the school in providing external support. The LAB are well-informed and involved in strategically driving school improvement. They have a clear understanding of the school context and measures being implemented and are competent in holding leaders to account. They are present and actively participate in school events that build strong relationships with staff and parents. The board is fully aware of its responsibilities and has ensured that all BSO standards are met.

Leaders and managers at all levels ensure the school runs smoothly day-to-day and have the welfare of all pupils as a foremost concern.