



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

GEMS Founders School

Al Mizhar

Dubai

United Arab Emirates

Date
Inspection number

21st – 23rd April 2025
20250421

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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 the extent to which schools meet the standards for BSO.

During the inspection visit, 79 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. 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 Karen Hanratty. The team members were Justin Blakebrough, Susan Eriksson, Stephen Jones, Caz Jude, Philippe Poulain, Rachel Sielski and Hussaina Sherieff.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas, 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)- encourage 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 comprehensive, high-quality education, based on a broad and balanced curriculum, strong teaching and excellent assessment practices. Standards of health and safety are outstanding, with a robust focus on safeguarding and pupil wellbeing. The school offers excellent, well-maintained facilities which meet the needs of the curriculum and beyond. School leaders are proactive in school analysis and development, with a commitment to excellence.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- pupils, who are eager and confident, and proud to be members of GFM;
- school leaders at all levels, from aspiring leaders to school governors, who have a united focus on continual improvement;
- 'GFM Way' which effectively encapsulates the school's core values;
- inclusive school culture where everyone is valued;
- opportunities for staff at all levels across the school to grow and develop professionally;
- relationships across the school between all members of the school community;
- support provided by the 'Flourish' department, to meet the needs of a wide range of learners;
- comprehensive pastoral practices which support the wellbeing of pupils, staff and parents;
- development of innovation, and opportunities for pupils to excel in this area;
- range of pathways in Key Stages (KS) 4 and 5, which meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- comprehensive and effective policies and practice around all aspects of health and safety, and site management.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- i. Embed strategies for teaching, to include:
 - greater emphasis on active participation and pupil-led learning in lessons;
 - independent and enquiry-based learning activities;
 - group work and pupil collaboration;
 - appropriate use of technology by pupils and teachers to support learning;
 - applying ongoing formative assessment to adapt teaching in the moment.
- ii. Develop the use of displays in classrooms and around the school to celebrate pupils' work and achievements.
- iii. Build on existing opportunities such as 'Take one picture,' to increase opportunities for pupils to develop creativity across the curriculum.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school	GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar				
Address	Al Mizhar 1, Dubai, United Arab Emirates				
Telephone number/s	+971 4 210 3555				
Website address	www.gemsfoundersschool-mizhar.com				
Key email address	principal_gfm@gemsedu.com				
Headteacher/principal	Mr Akram Tarik				
Chair of board/proprietor	Ms Fida Aoun as Chair of the Local Advisory Board Mr Matthew Burfield as Head of Corporate Governance				
Age range	3-18 years				
Total number of pupils	4,734	Boys	2,492	Girls	2242
Numbers by age	0-2 years	0	12-16 years	1408	
	3-5 years	707	17-18 years	162	
	6-11 years	2450	18+ years	7	
Total number of part-time children	0				

GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar (GFM) is a private, co-educational day school located in Al Mizhar 1, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The school opened in September 2018 with an initial cohort of 1,444 pupils, catering for pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to KS3. It has since rapidly expanded to offer a full through-school education to over 4,700 pupils from FS1 to year 13, based on the national curriculum for England, adapted to meet the needs of its local context.

The school currently educates pupils from 93 different nationalities, with the largest groups being Indian (23%), Egyptian (15%), and Pakistani (14%). The school has a highly international profile, with 92% of pupils identified as English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, although only 1.1% are at an early stage of English language acquisition (ELL).

GFM is a fully inclusive school. 10.5% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Pupils requiring significant support have formal individual education plans (IEPs), with 87 pupils currently supported through this provision. Those requiring less intensive support (Level 2) are provided with personalised learning passports.

The school operates from a modern, purpose-built campus offering specialist facilities to support a broad and balanced curriculum, including innovation hubs, sports facilities, and dedicated spaces for arts and technology. GFM is non-selective and promotes a values-based ethos known as the '*GFM Way*' with the core values of growth, flourish, and mindfulness.

4.1 British nature of the school

The school has many distinct British features, which include the following:

- The school delivers the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum for England across all key stages, leading to GCSE, A Level, and BTEC qualifications;
- Many teaching resources and schemes are sourced directly from the UK;
- Assessment systems are British, including *GL Progress Tests*, *CAT4*, and *New Group Reading Test (NGRT)*, and the school benchmarks its outcomes against UK standards;
- The school's calendar, timetable, key stage structure, and year group organisation closely resemble those of UK schools;
- Pupils wear a school uniform;
- A significant proportion of GFM's teaching staff are UK-trained or have experience in British curriculum schools;
- The school supports Early Career Teachers (ECTs) through a structured induction and professional development programme;
- Staff participate in CPD pathways aligned to British standards, including instructional coaching, leadership development, and National Professional Qualifications (NPQs);
- Leadership structures reflect UK best practice, with a strong focus on governance, safeguarding, pastoral care, and academic monitoring;
- British values are actively taught and promoted through the curriculum, assemblies, and the wider school life;
- Pupils participate in a wide range of democratically elected leadership opportunities, including pupil council, head boy and head girl, prefects, and house captains;
- Moral, social and cultural (MSC) education closely mirrors the UK's personal, social and health education (PSHE) framework, adapted to the local context;
- The school places a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for university and global careers, supported by a dedicated university and careers guidance;
- Safeguarding practices and child protection policies are robust and closely aligned with UK expectations;
- GFM holds accreditation with many leading British education bodies, notably, Association of British Schools Overseas (AoBSO), Council of British International Schools (COBIS), The Alliance of Sustainable Schools (TASS) and British Schools of the Middle East (BSME).

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided is outstanding, with a broad, balanced British curriculum, strong teaching and high-quality assessment practices, ensuring pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points and consistently attain above UK expectations.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

The school delivers a broad, balanced, inclusive and dynamic curriculum, firmly rooted in the National Curriculum for England, and appropriately adapted to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) context. It is structured to ensure coherence and progression across all key stages from FS1 to year 13.

At Foundation Stage, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework is enhanced by the *Hygge* approach, which prioritises sensory experiences, emotional well-being, and calm learning environments. These principles support children experiencing separation anxiety and create smooth transitions into Key Stage (KS) 1. Teachers use structured teaching and continuous provision, ensuring early development in communication, language and other key skills.

Across the primary phase, the curriculum is underpinned by long-, medium-, and short-term planning, ensuring continuity and consistency across year groups. A thematic approach using cross-curricular themes fosters curiosity and meaningful learning. Curriculum planning and regular review ensure challenge, relevance, and progression. Key initiatives such as 'Engage and Explore' lessons are used effectively to introduce new vocabulary and concepts, particularly for English as an additional language (EAL) learners.

In KS3, 4 and 5, the curriculum continues to be broad and balanced, offering a wide variety of academic and vocational pathways. BTEC courses are available at Levels 2 and 3, providing alternative routes alongside GCSEs and A-Levels. Curriculum planning in these phases is characterised by well-defined learning intentions, strategic differentiation, and strong links to real-world contexts. Subject leaders ensure that progression is planned and monitored effectively, and schemes of work are regularly reviewed.

The curriculum is inclusive and tailored to the needs of all learners, including those with EAL, SEND and high achievers. A strong commitment to inclusion is evident through the school's 'Flourish' provision, supporting learners with additional needs in smaller, quieter environments. Digital technologies, including the use of

Chromebooks, live captioning tools, and the AI-driven Century Tech platform, support access, differentiation, and personalised learning pathways for these pupils.

Innovation is a particular strength of the curriculum. Through the GEMS *Innovation Challenge* and other opportunities, pupils engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge to sustainability and enterprise projects. These projects often align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide real-world relevance. Pupil voice is actively encouraged, and examples such as the development of a hydroponics garden and environmental campaigns demonstrate meaningful pupil engagement.

Enrichment is embedded across the curriculum. In EYFS and primary, themed learning days, trips, and parent engagement activities enhance the curriculum and build community. In secondary, pupils access a programme of additional activities, including leadership clubs; science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) initiatives and international competitions. However, the focus on developing creative and performing arts is less well embedded in the school than that for other aspects of the STEAM curriculum. Across the school over 50% of pupils participate in extra-curricular activities (ECAs). The school's 'GFM Way' Award further celebrates and encourages holistic development beyond the classroom.

The school's approach to curriculum review is rigorous and collaborative. Leaders work with other GEMS schools in cluster groups to evaluate curriculum impact, incorporate best practices, and reflect on pupil outcomes. Reviews are informed by internal assessment data, external benchmarks, and stakeholder feedback. Curriculum mapping ensures clear progression across year groups and supports smooth transitions, particularly between Key Stages.

The school's 'Universal Values Curriculum' was developed in response to parental input and embeds British values, UAE culture, wellbeing, and personal development into everyday learning. Lessons promote kindness, tolerance, and cultural understanding through topics and assemblies. Financial literacy, enterprise, and digital skills are introduced from KS2 onwards and reinforced in secondary through partnerships with external organisations.

GFM provides a comprehensive and personalised programme of university and career education, beginning in KS3 and becoming increasingly targeted through KS4 and 5. Pupils benefit from access to the *UniFrog* platform, structured enrichment programmes, internship opportunities, and direct links with industry professionals and alumni. Enterprise education is embedded through initiatives such as the GEMS 'innovation challenge' and financial literacy projects, promoting critical thinking, leadership, and sustainability. Sixth Form pupils receive tailored support for both A-Level and BTEC pathways, with clear guidance on university applications, careers advice, and professional mentoring.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

High quality teaching was observed across the school with many outstanding lessons. Both teaching and assessment exceed the standard for BSO. The school is demonstrating a clear and sustained trajectory towards outstanding teaching and assessment, as evidenced by the growing numbers of teachers delivering consistently high-quality lessons.

In EYFS, teaching is deeply rooted in holistic development, with whole-class teaching effectively complemented by continuous provision. Assessment is embedded in everyday routines, enabling teachers to respond dynamically to pupils' emerging needs. In FS2, for example, children used wooden ten frames and playdough in the mathematics area to explore basic addition. Teachers simultaneously used this time to gather assessment evidence and identify children requiring targeted support during the next day's early morning intervention block.

From KS1 to KS5, lessons are characterised by clearly articulated learning objectives. There is consistency in pedagogical approaches, such as the effective use of 'Do Now' retrieval tasks, cold calling, and structured peer discussions.

In KS1, pupils benefit from well-structured and engaging lessons. During a year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils explored halving using a variety of visual and manipulative tools. The lesson used effective questioning and peer collaboration, supported by formative assessment strategies such as thumbs up/down and the use of mini-whiteboards. Planning aligns with the *White Rose Maths* programme, ensuring progression and coherence. In year 2, mastery was evident through the use of concrete, pictorial, and abstract methods, with teachers consistently promoting oracy and mathematical reasoning.

In KS2, the best lessons promote critical thinking through structured strategies such as compare all possibilities (CAP), encouraging open-ended discussion and deeper understanding. A standout feature of teaching is the consistent use of retrieval tasks at the start of lessons, reinforcing prior learning from the previous lesson, week, and term. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils who were secure in their learning accessed the marking station independently before proceeding to more challenging mastery tasks, while others received scaffolded teacher support based on formative checks. However, in some less effective lessons, pupils exhibited passivity, indicating a need for greater encouragement of active learning strategies.

Secondary teaching is underpinned by purposeful planning that incorporates *Bloom's Taxonomy* and differentiated activities. Learning outcomes are frequently expressed as 'I can' statements, ensuring clarity and pupil ownership. In KS3, a year 9 English lesson stood out for its strong subject knowledge and high-quality feedback. Teachers encouraged extended responses using the '*pose, pause, pounce, bounce*'

questioning technique, and built in time for pupil reflection on their work using purple pen responses.

In KS4, the integration of critical thinking was notable in a year 11 sociology lesson, where pupils explored media bias and sensationalism by drafting fictional crime stories using 'news values'. This not only fostered analytical thinking but also reinforced ethical considerations. Similarly, a cross-curricular enrichment lesson on personal finance required pupils to decide how they would allocate 500 dirhams, promoting independence, budgeting, and collaborative decision-making.

Teaching at KS5 demonstrates high levels of subject expertise and pupil engagement. In a year 12 mathematics lesson, modelling was used to reinforce complex concepts such as percentages and decimals, with targeted questioning eliciting deep thinking. Assessment for learning was embedded through answer stations, exit tickets, and teacher feedback. Pupils were confident in articulating their learning targets and responded well to teacher interactions.

Much of the learning is intentionally teacher directed, in line with the school's pedagogical approach and corporate policy: opportunities for independent and enquiry-based learning are more limited. Teachers often follow *PowerPoint* presentations to deliver lesson content. Questioning is a strength and teachers encourage the use of talk-partners for pupils to expand their ideas. However, opportunities for greater collaboration and group work are more limited.

SEND and EAL provision is a strength of the school. Teachers annotate lesson plans with differentiation strategies and use adaptive teaching to support learners. The 'Flourish' department ensures that pupils with additional needs have access to personalised learning through IEPs, learning passports, and daily communication with learning support assistants (LSAs). Technology supports access, with tools such as *Flash Academy* and *SmartScreen* translation for Russian and Chinese-speaking pupils. However, beyond 'Flourish' the school has not yet consolidated a policy on pupils' engagement with technology.

Assessment practices are rigorous and comprehensive across all phases. Ongoing assessment for learning is evident in many lessons. Some teaching is not adapted 'in the moment'. A combination of internal data and external benchmarks such as the *GL Progress Tests*, *CAT4* and *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)* ensures reliability and provide benchmarking to UK and international standards. Internal assessments are moderated across cluster schools and aligned with mark schemes. Data from progress tests directly informs curriculum planning.

The '*Four Quarters*' marking model ensures that pupils receive regular, focused feedback on at least one deeply marked piece of work per week. There is some

variability in how effectively pupils respond to feedback. Monitoring systems, including book looks and pupil progress meetings, aim to address this inconsistency.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by pupils are outstanding.

Academic standards at GFM are high across all phases. Both internal and external assessment data confirm that pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, make substantial progress from their varied starting points. The school employs a robust system of assessment and monitoring, including *GL Progress Tests*, *CAT4*, IGCSE/A-level and BTEC outcomes, triangulated with teacher judgments and moderated across cluster schools, to ensure consistency and comparability to UK standards.

In the Primary phase, GL assessments show that pupils are consistently achieving above UK benchmarks, particularly in mathematics and reading. This trend is further evidenced by results from the 2024 *TIMSS* data, where attainment exceeded both UK and international averages. The impact of targeted early intervention, especially in phonics and reading, is clear. For example, a recent focus on developing Tier 2 vocabulary through a reading tracker initiative has led to improved reading outcomes across KS1 and 2.

At KS3, progress remains strong, especially in core subjects. Notable gains were identified in year 9 English, year 8 mathematics, and science in years 9 and 10. GCSE outcomes reflect a sustained upward trajectory, with 83% of pupils achieving grades 9–4 and 47% attaining 9–7, which is significantly above UK averages. In English literature, 94% achieved at least a grade 6, with 15% attaining grade 9.

Post-16, the school's first cohort of A level pupils performed positively, with 95% achieving A* - E and 61% attaining A* - C grades. Although not yet exceeding national standards, these results provide a strong baseline for improvement. BTEC Level 2 results were promising with an 80% pass rate, and Level 3 pupils achieved a 100% pass rate, many attaining merit or distinction, reflecting strong inclusivity and academic support for diverse learners.

Behaviour across the school is excellent. Pupils are consistently respectful, courteous, and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Low-level disruption is rare. In lessons, most pupils are engaged and motivated, and transitions around the school are calm and orderly. The school culture, underpinned by the '*GFM Way*', promotes high expectations, mutual respect, and self-discipline.

Attendance is in line with UK norms, currently standing at 94%. Attendance is closely monitored, and interventions, including flexible start times and parental

engagement, are used effectively to support individual needs and improve punctuality where necessary.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

Pupils' spiritual development is nurtured through a variety of reflective and sensory experiences, particularly in the early years and primary phases. The EYFS has adopted aspects of the *Hygge* approach to create calm, home-like environments, with mindfulness and sensory engagement embedded into daily routines. Observations noted the effective use of breathing exercises and calming outdoor music during morning mindfulness sessions, helping children to develop awareness of their emotions and surroundings. Across the primary school, spiritual growth is encouraged through journaling, such as pupils' use of '*Happy Confident Me*' books where they record gratitude and affirmations. In KS2, morning '*Mindful Moments*' offer pupils opportunities for stillness and self-reflection. Wellbeing check-ins using '*Upstrive*' and zones of regulation are consistently used, indicating a culture that values self-awareness and empathy.

Spiritual themes are also explored through the arts and ECAs. Pupils take part in reflective art, music, and poetry activities during assemblies, and many engage in mindfulness-based ECAs, such as doodle art, dance, and yoga. Assemblies across the school begin with reflection and often integrate quotations or stories that prompt introspection.

Pupils' moral development is robustly supported through the school's clearly defined behavioural expectations and values-based framework, embedded through the '*GFM Way*'. The school-wide code of conduct is reinforced through class charters, circle times, and thematic assemblies. In year 4, for example, a year group assembly explored the concept of fairness through discussion and pupil reflection, with pupils articulating real-life examples and offering strategies to show fairness in school and at home.

Behaviour is excellent across the school. Pupils consistently display respect and courtesy toward staff and peers. A restorative behaviour approach empowers pupils to reflect on their actions and make amends. Sanctions, known as 'improvement points', promote a growth mindset and are linked to activities for self-reflection.

Ethical discussions extend into subjects such as sociology, where pupils analyse issues including sensationalism and bias in the media. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and Moral, Social and Cultural (MSC) lessons prompt pupils to consider contemporary issues, moral dilemmas, and the implications of their choices.

GFM offers a wide range of opportunities to promote social development, including extensive leadership programmes. Pupils are confident, articulate and eager to share their views. Pupil voice is highly valued. The pupil council is active and inclusive, with pupil leaders from year 1 to year 13 engaged in initiatives that impact school life. Secondary pupils describe these roles as instrumental in building their confidence, communication, and leadership skills.

A strong buddy system supports key transition points. For example, year 6 pupils are paired with year 10 mentors to support their move into secondary school, and sixth form leaders provide guidance on exam readiness and independent learning to pupils in KS4. Pastoral teams coordinate these initiatives and respond to wellbeing data through targeted strategies such as peer-led discussion groups and circle time.

Enrichment activities further foster social development. Pupils participate in Model United Nations (MUN), Duke of Edinburgh International Award, and community based ECAs such as the happiness hub, a drop-in club promoting social inclusion for primary pupils. Leadership roles in the house system, assembly contributions and public speaking events enable pupils to build resilience and collaboration. In primary, mindful breaktime clubs and wellbeing journals help pupils navigate friendships and emotional regulation. The school's *Upstrive* platform supports early identification of wellbeing concerns. Teachers, support staff, and counsellors proactively engage with pupils needing social or emotional support, ensuring they are equipped with tools for self-regulation and interpersonal success.

Cultural development is actively promoted through a wide range of curricular and extracurricular opportunities. The school proudly celebrates its international community, with over 90 nationalities represented. Cultural identity is respected and explored through international day, Emirati heritage events, themed displays, and curriculum links. Pupils dress in national costume, engage in traditional music and art activities, and share cultural perspectives. Assemblies, displays and lessons consistently promote British values, including democracy, individual liberty, and mutual respect. KS1 displays include links between Emirati heritage and British history, while secondary lessons explore British values within the context of global themes such as sustainability and ethical innovation.

The curriculum makes deliberate links to cultural understanding. For example, a year 2 theme day on 'monarchs' tied into broader discussions on leadership and service. In KS3, pupils engage with culturally diverse literature and global issues. Cross-curricular links, such as the 'Big Green Legacy' environmental initiative, allow pupils to explore sustainability from international and local viewpoints. Cultural leadership is promoted through specific roles, such as heritage ambassadors and cultural leaders, and through ECAs such as the Emirati reading club. The integration of Arabic, Islamic Studies, and UAE Social Studies further reinforces cultural identity and respect.

The 'GFM Way' award, an annual initiative with over 400 participants, includes tasks that link cultural, environmental, and personal values across home and school. This initiative

encourages family involvement and highlights the school's commitment to holistic education grounded in cultural appreciation.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

Safeguarding is a clear priority across all phases. All staff, including governors and volunteers, are trained to at least Level 1, with 20 trained as level 2 safeguarding champions and 20 designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) including the principal and vice principal trained to level 3. Bespoke safeguarding training, such as intimate care, is delivered to targeted groups, such as EYFS staff. Posters with safeguarding contacts are displayed throughout the school, including on visitor lanyards and in toilets. Safeguarding information is reinforced through form time and assemblies, and shared with parents via workshops and online platforms.

Concerns are reported through the GEMS online platform, '*Guard*', enabling timely action and tracking of concerns. A clear process exists if concerns are overlooked, reinforcing a whole-school ethos of safeguarding being everyone's responsibility. The safeguarding team regularly reviews data, identifying and supporting vulnerable pupils through targeted interventions.

The school has developed a strong wellbeing infrastructure. Initiatives such as '*Upstrive*' allow for regular monitoring of pupils' emotional needs. Daily check-ins, wellbeing journals, and the use of tools such as '*Happy Confident Me*' and mindfulness corners ensure a consistent and proactive approach to mental health. The school employs a large counselling team, and wellbeing is monitored through *PASS* surveys, journal entries, and observation. Pupils are confident in identifying trusted adults and demonstrate awareness of emotional regulation strategies.

Behaviour is excellent. The '*GFM Way*' promotes positive values across the school. Behaviour systems are clear, age-appropriate and restorative in nature. Behaviour incidents are recorded using the '*Go for Schools*' platform, and behaviour data informs strategic planning. A recent development has been the rebranding of sanctions as 'improvement points', reinforcing a growth mindset. Staff consistently praise and reward good behaviour through *Class Dojo* in lower primary and house points across upper primary and secondary.

Bullying, including cyberbullying, is taken seriously. The school adopts a restorative justice approach, involving both the victim and the perpetrator, which also includes parental involvement. Pupils are explicitly taught anti-bullying strategies through PSHE, themed weeks, and circle time sessions.

GFM has rigorous systems in place to ensure physical safety. Regular internal audits, a weekly

health and safety checklist, and monthly site reviews, which are submitted to the GEMS central office, demonstrate strong compliance. The most recent external audit returned a score of 100%, evidencing outstanding practice.

Fire drills are conducted every term, including one with UAE Civil Defence. A risk assessment policy is in place. Risk assessments for all activities, key areas of the school and field trips are meticulously documented. Emergency procedures are clearly displayed around the school, and security is enhanced with access card systems and CCTV coverage throughout the premises.

Medical provision is exemplary. The school has two fully equipped medical rooms, one each for primary and secondary, staffed by qualified nurses and a doctor. More than 10% of staff are trained in first aid, and EpiPen training is provided to staff supporting pupils with allergies. Medical records and accident logs are well maintained. Dubai Health Authority (DHA) regularly inspects and certifies the clinic.

The school's bus transport procedures are extremely well organised. All pupils wear lanyards with barcodes for check-in and check-out, enabling real-time updates for parents. Bus monitors, trained in safeguarding, supervise safety procedures. The school is aware of the need to ensure pupils wear the three-point seatbelts correctly, not as lap-straps, to ensure safety. Buses are not allowed to move until all pupils are accounted for and gates remain closed until staff confirm readiness.

Supervision is a strength. Staff wearing high-visibility jackets ensure clear oversight of corridors during transitions and at the end of the day. Attendance is carefully tracked and followed up. An automated SMS notifies parents of absences and unexplained absences are escalated. A soft and supportive approach is used initially, progressing to formal reviews when needed.

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

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

GEMS Education provides robust corporate governance and oversight. A dual governance structure operates effectively at GFM, with corporate oversight complemented by an active Local Advisory Board (LAB) comprising parents, staff, pupils and community stakeholders. Governance meetings occur regularly, including monthly principal reviews, half-termly cluster meetings, and strategic improvement visits. These ensure that key performance indicators (KPIs), including safeguarding, outcomes and operations, are monitored and acted upon.

Recruitment procedures are outstanding and fully compliant with BSO expectations. All staff appointments undergo extensive background checks, including verification of identity, qualifications, medical fitness and the right to work in the UAE. Police checks are sought, including ICPC for candidates who have lived or worked in the UK. The single central record (SCR) is regularly audited internally and across the cluster. All documentation, including safeguarding certification, is securely stored in a password-protected electronic system.

All staff complete Level 1 safeguarding training before starting their role and take annual refresher training at the start of each academic year. Safeguarding champions, teaching assistants and leaders have undertaken further training at levels 2 and 3, with 33 staff having advanced safeguarding accreditation. Governors and members of the LAB have also completed at least Level 1 safeguarding training. The school is aware of the need to monitor the impact of ongoing safeguarding training on the approaches taken and behaviours of all staff members.

New staff induction is well-structured and begins in the term prior to commencing employment. It includes safeguarding protocols, school values, and code of conduct training. early career teachers (ECTs) are well supported, with 35 currently in post and receiving structured mentorship.

Performance management is implemented using the 'Blue Sky' platform. Targets are aligned with school development goals and reviewed mid-year, with evidence uploaded and analysed by leaders. Where concerns arise, there are clear procedures for performance review and support. Staff appraisal is linked to professional reflection and continuous professional development (CPD). CPD is tailored, strategic, and supported through initiatives such as the 'Teach Like a GEM' framework and instructional coaching cycles, enabling staff to develop and share best practice.

Leadership development is a particular strength. A strong culture of 'growing leaders from within' has resulted in over 90% of leadership roles being filled internally. Many leaders are supported through National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) at the relevant level.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

Premise and accommodation of the school are outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

The premises meet all regulatory requirements and are approved by the relevant UAE authorities. Classrooms are well-lit, ventilated, adequately sound-proofed and suitably furnished, although some primary classrooms are slightly cramped. Specialist teaching areas include well-equipped spaces for music, drama, ICT, innovation, food technology, and textiles. The 'innovation hub' is a flagship space supporting digital and enterprise skills. Displays in classrooms and common areas promote and support the curriculum, however, there are fewer examples where displays celebrate pupils' achievements and success.

Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for all age groups, including changing rooms and showers. Facilities for pupils with physical disabilities include ramps, lifts, and accessible toilets on each floor. A well-equipped clinic meets the needs of pupils who are unwell or injured. Drinking water is available at many points around the school.

Maintenance is proactive and rigorous. A digital system, accessible via QR codes, allows staff to report hazards instantly. Weekly health and safety walks and monthly audits ensure high standards are maintained. A 100% compliance score was awarded in the most recent GEMS health and safety audit. Cleaning regimes includes daily checks and deep cleaning at night.

The school is secure with access onto the campus restricted with colour-coded lanyards and keypads. School leaders are aware of the need to ensure staff monitoring school entry and exit points, enforce the wearing of lanyards by all parents. CCTV is used throughout, and security staff are well trained. Risk assessments are in place for relevant facilities and are updated regularly.

Outdoor provision is excellent. There are multiple shaded play areas, AstroTurf pitches, and indoor sports halls for both primary and secondary pupils. Suitable changing and shower facilities are available and used for after-school activities. EYFS outdoor areas are purposefully designed with a wide range of equipment and learning stations.

The school has two dining areas, regularly inspected and approved by Dubai Municipality. Food safety is ensured through the 'Food Watch' platform. Staff are certified and trained in hygiene and dietary awareness. Pupils with allergies are well supported through tailored risk assessments and medical plans, with food allergy alerts clearly marked.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, carers and others meets the standard for BSO; it is outstanding.

The school's website is comprehensive, well-structured, and regularly updated. It provides access to all key policies, including safeguarding, behaviour, complaints, and curriculum overviews. The latest BSO inspection report, contact details, admissions procedures, and school fee details are easily accessible online. Parents can also view curriculum information for each key stage, exam support materials, and guidance on British values.

Communication with parents is proactive and inclusive, and in a range of formats. Weekly newsletters keep families informed of academic updates, achievements, and reminders. These newsletters include weekly curriculum overviews for each year group, detailing what children have learnt and what they will learn next. The '*LinkTree*' communication hub provides comprehensive information. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and LinkedIn, are used effectively to celebrate pupil achievements and promote school values to the wider community. The school's social media presence is strong, with regular posts showcasing learning, innovation projects, pupil leadership, and special events. A notable feature is the AI-powered 'Ask GFM' chatbot, available 24/7, providing instant responses to parental queries about school life, logistics, and academic information.

The school maintains strong communication with parents regarding pupils' academic and personal development. Termly academic reports detail attainment, progress, behaviour and home learning, and are supported by termly parent-teacher consultation meetings. For pupils with SEND, personalised communication is prioritised through learning passports, IEPs and regular dialogue with the 'Flourish' department. Parents, including those of SEND pupils, express high levels of satisfaction with the clarity, frequency and responsiveness of school communications, personalised to their child.

Parent engagement is further strengthened through initiatives such as weekly 'parent solution mornings,' where parents meet directly with the senior leadership team (SLT) to discuss concerns or ask questions. Coffee mornings, curriculum workshops, and parent webinars are routinely offered to enhance parent understanding and involvement. Workshops cover a variety of topics, including supporting wellbeing, online safety, and academic development.

New parents are well-supported through the parent relations executive (PRE) team, who offer personalised onboarding to ensure smooth integration into the GFM community. Printed information and translations are available for families who may have limited digital access.

Parents report very high levels of satisfaction with the school's communication and inclusivity. Interviews confirmed that parents feel listened to, respected, and valued as partners in their children's education.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

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

The school demonstrates excellent practice in the implementation and management of its complaints policy. The policy is clear, accessible on the school website and fully compliant with both UAE and BSO standards. It clearly outlines how parents and other stakeholders can raise concerns, the timescales for each stage of the process and how complaints are escalated if needed. The staged approach is structured to resolve most issues informally and swiftly. It includes guidance on the escalation of complaints by raising a formal written complaint. The policy details the process for panel hearings, fully compliant with BSO expectations, ensuring procedural fairness and the right to appeal at each step.

Parents interviewed as part of the inspection process stated that they feel confident raising concerns with staff. They reported that issues are dealt with swiftly, respectfully and thoroughly. There was a strong sense of trust between parents and the school, underpinned by open lines of communication and consistent follow-up.

Senior leaders demonstrate a proactive approach to using complaints data to inform improvements in school practice. Governors are also involved in the oversight of complaint procedures, providing an additional layer of accountability.

12. Standard 8

Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and meet the standard for BSO.

The school's leadership team has established a clear and compelling vision through the '*GFM Way*', encapsulating the core values of grow, flourish and mindful. This vision is not merely theoretical but lived throughout the school community, influencing everything from teaching strategies to community relationships.

Strategic planning is rigorous, reflected in the school's implementation of 25-day action plans that are data-driven, regularly reviewed, and aligned with the school development plan (SDP). A model of distributed leadership empowers middle and senior leaders. A key strength is the investment in professional development and succession planning. With over 90% of leadership roles filled internally, FSM has cultivated a culture of growth and ambition. CPD programmes, including the '*Teach Like a GEM*' initiative and instructional coaching, provide bespoke support for staff at all career stages.

Quality assurance is embedded at every level through structured lesson observations, book scrutiny, data analysis, stakeholder surveys, and external benchmarking. Leaders triangulate evidence to inform improvements. School leaders are aspirational in their evaluation of the quality of teaching across the school. A more objective, evidence-based approach would ensure CPD and peer-support are targeted effectively.

Leaders see safeguarding as a key priority. All policies align with both UAE and UK statutory requirements. The GEMS '*Guard*' platform ensures confidential reporting and case management. Leaders are proactive in reviewing safeguarding protocols.

Parental engagement is a hallmark of leadership success. Leaders act on parental feedback through live net promoter score (NPS) tracking, with satisfaction rising significantly since 2019. Parents are involved in decision-making processes and receive regular updates on strategic developments and academic priorities.

FSM leaders also demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and innovation. Programmes like '*Flourish*', showcase their commitment to every learner's success. The focus on British values, blended with UAE culture, promotes respect and cultural understanding.

Governance is robust, with both local and corporate GEMS structures ensuring accountability and challenge. The LAB provides strategic oversight and is engaged in school improvement through sub-committees and regular review of progress. Communication is transparent, with published minutes and active involvement from key stakeholders.