

Effective School Governance Award (ESGA)

Verification Report

School name:	GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar
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Award verifier:	Andy Taylor
Award adviser (if applicable):	School Led
Date of verification:	12 December 2024

Commentary on the evidence provided:

- The key performance indicators of all the objectives have been evidenced and therefore meet the requirements of the award. The ESGA Co-ordinator has compiled an excellent portfolio which reflects both the high standards promoted by the school and the thoroughness of her approach.
- Progress towards the various key performance indicators has been closely monitored. Because of this, the school maintained efficient momentum in completing the award.
- A range of documentation shows the school's vision and mission to be very clear and shared with all stakeholders.
- School improvement planning identifies clear priorities with the intended impact outlined. In addition, financial allocation is referenced to ensure these can be effectively implemented. There are clear links between the school's self-evaluation and the identified steps to be taken.
- The school provides a wide range of professional development opportunities for staff at differing stages of their careers. This support strategic succession planning.
- Meeting minutes reflect governance which has high expectations of the school. In addition, documentation evidences a high degree of both support and challenge.

- The school has extremely well-developed communication pathways with stakeholders.
- Roles within the Local Advisory Board are clearly defined and areas of responsibility align with school priorities.
- Both BSO and KHDA inspection reports highlight the effectiveness of school governance.

Strengths identified during verification:

- In terms of its development, the leadership and management of the ESGA award has been excellent. Due to a shared, and actualised vision of continued improvement, leaders are determined to build on the many strengths of the school.
- Those responsible for governance bring a wide range of skills, experiences, qualifications, and perspectives. They have diverse experiences and support the school well.
- The final verification evidenced effective strategic leadership providing a high level of accountability and support.
- There are now opportunities for students to contribute to the governance of the school. The Head Boy and Head Girl are now part of the Local Advisory Board.
- There is real clarity in terms of the school's overarching vision. To support this, there is evidence of clear strategic planning that defines clear goals and improvement priorities. Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure actions taken are having the desired impact.
- Across the organisation, effective structures have been developed over time. These ensure complete compliance to regulatory requirements.
- Reporting procedures, for example around safeguarding concerns, ensures vital aspects of the school's provision are monitored. These provide a wealth of evidence with regard to the effectiveness of actions taken.
- Leaders, supported by all levels of governance, have developed a culture in the school of high expectations for all students. There is a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.
- Discussions held as part of the Final Verification demonstrated the wide-ranging knowledge various facets of governance have with regard to all aspects of the school's provision.
- Communication with all stakeholders is outstanding. Leaders ensure that staff are regularly communicating with parents and carers.
- The school effectively listens to, and where appropriate acts upon, the views of stakeholders. There is forensic analysis of all feedback and steps taken to address any concerns. Feedback from the parent body is extremely positive, reflecting the effectiveness of leadership.
- Through both informal opportunities such as 'parents' solution days' and other scheduled meetings, members of the Local Advisory Board develop a full understanding of many aspects of the school's provision.
- The school collects the views of staff, at regular intervals throughout the academic year, in order to review and streamline unnecessary workload whilst maintaining high educational standards.
- There is a regular cycle of meetings and appropriate processes to support business and financial planning.
- Students from all phases are provided opportunities to experience leadership roles, 'Heritage Heros' and 'Cheerful Champions' being but two examples. As a result, students know they can make a difference which helps them develop a social conscience.

Impact:

- The school continues to build upon its current successes. As the Final Verification progressed, it became very clear how the school's partnership with stakeholders continues to go from strength to strength. School leaders, through continual scrutiny, ensure that this trajectory continues as they always strive for further improvements.
- Leaders evaluate the impact of all their actions and this has informed the key areas on which to focus in the next academic year and beyond.
- Senior leaders ensure there are frequent, focussed conversations on the key strategic issues. All parts of the school community, including the Local Advisory Board, are committed to work together towards a common goal.
- The school's communication methods are highly effective and really embrace and utilise modern technology. The effectiveness of these approaches is reflected in the feedback from parents.
- The ESGA framework has been used as a diagnostic framework, by which leaders can benchmark the school's effectiveness. The school uses the findings from a range of inspections to further develop the school's provision. Leaders are very reflective, innovative and 'outwardly looking'.

Areas for development:

It is important to record, that there were no key performance indicators referenced within the ESGA framework which needed further development. Moving forward, leaders have identified areas on which to focus. These include:

- to continue to develop innovative practices with the support of technology;
- further developing the Local Advisory Board's knowledge of progress towards the school's current priorities;
- continue to strengthen student voice to support the governance of the school.

Verifier recommendation:

- GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar to be awarded the ESGA for a period of three years.

Principal comments:

We found the process of the Effective School Governance Award, along with the engagement with the verifier, to be exceptionally productive and beneficial for our school. The process provided a clear framework to evaluate and enhance our governance practices, ensuring alignment with best practices and the needs of our school community.

The verifier's approach was highly professional, insightful, and collaborative, offering constructive feedback that has already led to tangible improvements in our operations. The opportunity to

reflect, refine, and elevate our standards of governance was invaluable, and the overall experience was seamless and well-structured.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this award process to other schools. It is not only a rigorous and rewarding journey but also a powerful tool for continuous improvement and driving excellence in school governance.

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