

Introduction to Sparkling GEMS

This document forms part of the Sparkling GEMS Inclusion Framework and should be read alongside related guidance, resources, and templates available on the Sparkling GEMS SharePoint Hub.

About Sparkling GEMS

Sparkling GEMS represents the culmination of GEMS Education’s commitment to creating world-class, inclusive schools where every learner shines. It was developed as part of a multi-year strategy to embed inclusion across all schools, reflecting a shared belief that inclusion is not an initiative or programme, but a culture that shapes how we teach, lead, and learn together.

The framework was benchmarked against world-class inclusion standards, drawing inspiration from UNESCO’s (2020) ‘All Means All’ report, Florian and Black-Hawkins’ (2011) work on inclusive pedagogy, and the UAE National Policy for Inclusive Education (2017). These sources, combined with GEMS’ lived expertise, inform a unified model that translates international best practice into everyday action across our schools.

Sparkling GEMS aligns closely with principles identified through research into world-class inclusion practices: recognising unpredictable potential, prioritising early and responsive identification, and focusing on holistic development—academic, social, emotional, and personal growth. It celebrates the diversity of our community and provides a common language and structure that unites all GEMS schools in their journey toward excellence in inclusion.

Purpose and Alignment

The Sparkling GEMS Framework ensures that inclusion remains central to GEMS Education’s mission of excellence and equity for all learners. It translates research, evidence, and regulatory expectations into actionable strategies that support every school’s improvement journey. Sparkling GEMS provides coherence and consistency across the network while recognising each school’s individuality and local context.

Grounded in evidence-based identification and dynamic adaptation, the framework ensures that all students, especially those identified as students of determination, receive personalised and high-quality support. It promotes rigorous, inclusive, and challenging learning opportunities that nurture curiosity, confidence, and creativity. This approach is supported through continuous professional development, leadership accountability, and collaborative practice, in line with international and UAE inclusion standards.

World-Class Features of Inclusion

Through extensive research and collaboration, Sparkling GEMS has identified eight key features that underpin world-class inclusion within schools:

1. **Equity and Access:** Every learner has the right to participate, achieve, and belong, supported by accessible systems and adaptive curricula.
2. **Evidence-Based Identification:** Inclusion decisions are informed by robust, data-driven, and multi-source evidence.
3. **Personalised Learning:** Individualised plans and interventions enable progress and achievement tailored to each learner's needs and potential.
4. **Community and Wellbeing:** Schools cultivate a culture of belonging that prioritises social, emotional, and mental wellbeing for all.
5. **Professional Development:** Staff engage in continuous, targeted professional learning to enhance inclusive pedagogy and leadership.
6. **Leadership and Advocacy:** School leaders champion inclusion through vision, strategy, and resource allocation.
7. **Collaboration and Networking:** Partnerships within and beyond GEMS schools promote innovation and shared expertise.
8. **Continuous Improvement:** Practices are regularly monitored, evaluated, and refined to ensure sustained impact and innovation.

These features form the foundation of the Sparkling GEMS Playbooks, Toolkits, and Evaluation Framework, ensuring that world-class inclusion is measurable, visible, and lived across every GEMS school.

Key Features of the Sparkling GEMS Framework

- A unified structure that connects inclusion policy, practice, and professional learning across all GEMS schools.
- Clear pathways for development through the Sparkling GEMS Playbooks, Toolkits, and Audit Frameworks.
- Integration with Evaluate My School for tracking progress and evidencing impact.
- Practical guidance tailored to each role—from Principals to Learning Support Assistants.
- Alignment with regulatory frameworks (KHDA, ADEK, SPEA, RAKDOK) and other international frameworks such as the IQM standards of excellence.
- Collaboration through the Excellence Fellows network to build capacity and share expertise across clusters.

The Sparkling GEMS Framework at a Glance

Sparkling GEMS is structured around five interconnected components that together create a holistic system for inclusive excellence:

1. Framework Overview – Defines the principles, language, and shared vision for inclusion.
2. Tools and Resources – Provides templates, audits, and exemplars to guide school implementation.
3. Training and Development – Builds capacity through professional learning, mentoring, and Fellowship networks.
4. Quality Assurance – Aligns with Evaluate My School, IQM, and regulatory inspection standards to ensure rigour and accountability.
5. Community and Celebration – Shares good practice, case studies, and impact stories across the GEMS network.

Together, these elements ensure that inclusion remains a dynamic, evolving, and celebrated part of every GEMS school.

References

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