



DRIVING INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE: HOW GEMS IS USING EMS TO ENHANCE SELF-EVALUATION AND SUPPORT COLLABORATION

With **Berna Bouwer**, Corporate Director of Inclusion and **Stacey Bradwell**, Director of Primary Inclusion and a GEMS WESEND coach

How do you ensure consistent, high-quality SEND provision across 48 schools? For GEMS Education, the answer lies in collaboration, self-reflection, and data-driven action planning.

GEMS is a global education group comprising schools across the Middle East, United Kingdom and India. Originating in the Middle East 65 years ago, GEMS now serves approximately 144,000 students around the world.

GEMS schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) range in size from 2,000 to 10,000 students and deliver four different curriculum models. This brings opportunities and challenges when it comes to streamlining and aligning practice.

In this case study, Berna Bouwer and Stacey Bradwell share how GEMS is using EvaluateMySchool across 48 schools in the UAE to strengthen its centralised approach to SEND provision, as part of a wider project with Whole Education.

AT A GLANCE

PRODUCTS

- EMS SEND self-evaluation
- 48 schools involved

REGION

- United Arab Emirates (UAE)

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Consistency at scale: Promoting consistent SEND evaluation across multiple schools.
- Data-driven improvement: Enabling impact monitoring and targeted improvement.
- Collaborative culture: Using data to promote professional dialogue.

The WESEND project

In 2024, GEMS Education launched a three-year project with Whole Education to further enhance SEND provision across its schools in Dubai. Spearheaded by Berna Bouwer, Corporate Head of Inclusion, the initiative empowers inclusion leaders to share good practice and drive improvement. Having launched with 24 schools in the first year, all 48 GEMS schools in Dubai are now engaged in the project.

What does the GEMS WESEND project involve?

The project combines self-evaluation, peer coaching, expert input, and strategic action planning to secure inclusive excellence.

At its heart is a bespoke SEND self-evaluation hosted on the EvaluateMySchool (EMS) platform.

- Participants attend a launch event introducing the project.
- Participants complete and regularly update the bespoke SEND evaluation on the EMS platform.
- Findings inform strategic improvement plans created and tracked on EMS.
- Action plans are quality assured by independent SEND experts including David Bartram OBE and Gary Aubin.
- Schools work in clusters based on their strengths and areas for development.
- GEMS WESEND coaches support colleagues through coaching and collaborative evaluation.



The second year of the project launched in Dubai in August 2025.

How EMS supports GEMS

Securing consistency and creating a shared understanding of good practice across all schools is a key challenge for large school groups. EMS provides a structured, centralised framework for self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Stacey explains:

"EMS has enabled schools to conduct consistent self-evaluations aligned with cluster-wide expectations, ensuring transparency and comparability... It has provided a benchmark for all schools to work against the same framework, opening up discussions about practice in a supportive and collaborative way."

Using EMS, leaders are able to highlight gaps and guide schools toward targeted improvement priorities, aligned with inclusion goals and outcomes.



Data can be analysed at an individual, cluster or whole-group level as shown in this example.

Impact and success

EMS has supported GEMS to make significant progress in several key areas:

- Creating a common language and framework for inclusion.
- Promoting a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement.
- Empowering leaders to use data-driven insights at individual, cluster, and whole-group level to target improvement planning.
- Enabling targeted action planning to close gaps and align best practice.
- Strengthening GEMS coaching model by providing clear evidence to inform professional dialogue.

Stacey adds:

"The dashboard has allowed us to monitor impact across our own school and compare to multiple schools within the cluster. This data-driven approach ensures SEND provision is continuously refined and aligned with best practice standards."

For Berna, the greatest successes so far have been the self-reflection and professional dialogue sparked by the process, which are strengthening collaboration and deepening collective ownership of inclusion across participating schools.

Evaluate Analyse Compare Track Improve



SEND

Evaluate the teaching and Learning of SEND Students



Leaders use the EMS platform to compare the strengths and areas for development of different schools, as shown in this example.

Next steps

Moving forward, strengthening alignment in the quality of provision across all schools will remain a key area of focus for Berna. She is passionate about empowering heads of inclusion to lead that work with confidence and clarity.

"It's very easy to for SENCOs or heads of inclusion to burn out. So I think my focus for next year is looking after our heads of inclusion. So that they feel empowered, but they now start looking after themselves and their teams."

EMS looks forward to continuing its partnership with GEMS and Whole Education, working collaboratively with colleagues to build on the successes achieved so far.

For more information about how EvaluateMySchool works with school groups around the world, contact info@evaluatemyschool.co.uk or visit www.evaluatemyschool.co.uk/international/