



High
Performance
Learning

Students driving the change they want

**How High Performance
Learning has improved
outcomes for GEMS Metropole**



مدرسة جيمس مترابول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

GEMS Metropole has been on a transformative journey over the last few years, striving to becoming a world class school for over 100 nationalities. Central to this journey has been a strategic focus on prioritising world class teaching and learning. Through the adoption of the High Performance Learning framework, we have made significant improvements in learning across the school.



- Nav Iqbal - Principal

Why choose HPL?

GEMS Metropole School, a private international school in Dubai for children and young adults aged 3 to 18 years, has a clear ambition: to be a world class school. This vision is not just about academic success, but also about nurturing students who can think for themselves, be capable leaders and have an intellectual curiosity which sparks great knowledge.

For Metropole, adopting the High Performance Learning framework felt like the right fit due to its proven success across other schools in the GEMS network.

Kelly Lohe, Deputy Headteacher of Secondary, said *"With its track record within GEMS schools, HPL seemed like the right fit for the way Metropole was heading. It was something that came with a track record of impact that we required in our journey"*.

Metropole's Senior Leadership Team sought an approach that would unite the whole school community and create lasting, progressive change, building on previous efforts to move the school forward. The HPL framework perfectly aligned with their vision, providing a structured pathway for achieving their goals.

Approaching Implementation

The HPL Leads, Kelly Lohe and Erin Nelson, designed a comprehensive roadmap for implementation, driven by the importance of bringing the whole school and its stakeholders together. *"It needs to be a whole community approach with everybody onboard for this to be successful. It's not something you can just add to one aspect of your school,"* explained Kelly.

In the first year, the focus was on building a shared language of learning, helping teachers understand the Advanced Cognitive Performance (ACPs) and Values, Attitudes, and Attributes (VAAs) central to HPL.



The initial plan to spend four to six weeks on each of the ACPs and VAAs helped to develop a shared language among students, particularly in the primary setting. However, it wasn't always a natural fit for existing lesson plans in the secondary school, so Metropole worked with HPL representatives to find a different approach. The new method identified three key ACPs that aligned with teachers' subject areas and focused on weaving these in with their existing teaching styles and plans.

As Kelly explained, *"It's not just a package you pick up and go. We've integrated HPL in a way that works for Metropole's unique approach"*. As Erin Nelson, Assistant Headteacher of Primary explained that by being an all-through school, they had to ensure that HPL is also firmly set in the Foundation Stage as it enables transformation across the whole school, *"Starting at Foundation Stage and moving all the way through the school has showed us that you can see the real benefit. We've definitely seen, especially those students now who've grown through the school through our whole HPL journey, you can definitely see them as more confident learners."*



This new approach allowed students to develop a deep understanding of these learning skills and use them effectively. But it didn't stop there, as Kelly found, *"It had a huge impact on our teachers, because they saw it was relevant. It didn't take extra planning because it was already happening in lessons - teachers were just enhancing it through the use of HPL language and activities"*.

As the team at Metropole started to see the effects of HPL on students, they wanted people beyond the SLT to take ownership. Middle leaders were crucial in ensuring that everyone understood what HPL was and why it mattered.

"The HPL culture was coming from all directions of leadership", said Kelly.

The turning point came when leaders across different areas of responsibility began to hold each other accountable for HPL, rather than relying solely on the teaching and learning team.

After a year of implementation, teachers at Metropole had grown in confidence, especially those who had been involved from the start. While new teachers initially worried they would need to change their teaching style dramatically, they soon found HPL was adaptable to their subjects.

Kelly explained, *“They were concerned they'd have to change the way they were teaching quite dramatically. But when we gave them their own focus areas that were relevant to their subject, they really saw the benefit. They realised, I can actually do this!”*.



As their confidence increased, the teachers started expanding beyond their three ACPs. HPL was integrating into their teaching so naturally, that the staff soon found they were pulling on all the resources and progression grids to utilise the framework to its full potential.

Aligning with EBL: As Metropole embraced an enquiry-based learning approach, they carefully aligned it with the HPL framework to inspire independent learning while maintaining the integrity of the HPL methodology.

“We were cautious that this didn’t take away from the work of HPL or the method the school now had within HPL. We ensured it was intertwined with it and they worked alongside each other, supported each other, but most importantly they enhanced each other,” adds Kelly.

This thoughtful integration underscores the school’s dedication to adapting HPL and other teaching methods in a way that best supports their students' learning journey.

Impact of HPL

When inspectors first evaluated Metropole’s progress in the early days of HPL, they were unfamiliar with this particular pedagogy. As a result, the feedback played a pivotal role in shaping the school’s future teaching methods. It prompted the team to focus on 4 learning skills in the Foundation Stage and linking these to the characteristics of effective learning.

“When staff are planning or looking at what experiences they’ve got in their classrooms, they’re making sure those skills are created throughout all of their learning and experiences. They promote it through all of that language”, explains Erin.

As a result of these changes, students are now able to embrace the HPL philosophy in more manageable ways. *“We’re all about independent learning and real life links in our infant school now. The students have confidence and talk with ease about what skills they’re using and how that’s linking across lots of areas of their learning”,* says Erin.

For Students

Overall, the introduction of High Performance Learning at Metropole has transformed students of all ages into more confident, reflective learners. HPL has become a natural part of their educational journey, with students seamlessly integrating its language and concepts into their daily routines.

“You can definitely see them as more confident learners. They dig deep into what skills they’re using and why,” remarked Kelly, reflecting on the shift in student behaviour. Over time, students have taken ownership of HPL, becoming the driving force behind its continued success across all parts of the school.



“The students are driving it because they want it. They want it in their lessons. They expect it in their lessons. They expect to have opportunities to use the skills and to reflect” added Kelly.

As a result of this enthusiasm, the school went one step further and created a HPL student drive team, which has played a pivotal role in staff development. The group of students conducted their own learning walks, looking for examples of best practice. From here, they created a professional development (PD) session for teachers.

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“That one had the most impact of all our sessions that term. And if you spoke to our staff after it, that's the one they listened to” Kelly explained, highlighting the profound effect students have had on driving the change they want to see in their educational journey.

As well as helping students feel more confident, HPL has given students more freedom in their learning, especially when choosing curriculum options in senior school. Leaders at Metropole ensured the HPL philosophy was fully integrated within the curriculum team to empower students to have as many opportunities as possible.

“We ensured students weren't capped in their learning. You want to make sure students are on the right courses to suit where they might be attaining and to make sure they are successful, but they know they have options now” detailed Kelly.

Whereas previously, students might not have been able to try certain courses, the HPL framework removes these barriers,

“If students are on the cusp of whether that is the right pathway for them, we can now support them to have a go and give them the opportunity. But there is that safety net there, just in case things aren't going well at that moment in time” summarised Kelly.

Enhancing Student Wellbeing

At Metropole, the combination of the PERMA model for wellbeing with the HPL framework has become a defining feature of the school's approach. By intertwining these two frameworks, the school has created a unified system where students, parents and staff see HPL as an essential part of the school's culture, rather than an additional strategy.

This cohesive approach ensures that both academic excellence and student wellbeing are seen as equally important, resulting in an environment where students can thrive holistically.

“We created a way in which PERMA and HPL are intertwined. So again collectively with students, parents, teachers, we're all recognising that it is one thing and HPL isn't just an addition to something, it is actually who we are as a school.” - Kelly

Looking to the future

Kelly and her team advise other schools to take their time with HPL implementation, breaking it down into manageable chunks and allowing it to naturally integrate with the school's existing practices.

"That whole pedagogy is there for you, but you have to take it slowly and make it work for your school's context." – Erin

As for implementation, the team at Metropole have learnt first hand that accountability from numerous middle leaders is the key to success. *"HPL works best when more people are steering the ship. It's easier when it's not a top-down approach. When more people take ownership, that's when HPL really comes into its own"* summarised Kelly.

Since adopting the High Performance Learning philosophy, the school has fully immersed itself in creating an environment where both teachers and students thrive. Their progress is evident, with significant improvements across the board, largely driven by students taking ownership of their learning and actively advocating for the changes they wish to see.





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While academic excellence remains pivotal, at Metropole, we recognize the importance of instilling character and practical skills that extend beyond the traditional classroom. Our commitment to empowering students as true leaders, ready to navigate challenges and excel in all facets of life, sets the foundation for our educational philosophy.

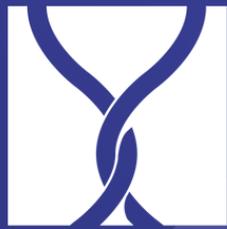
As the heart of our community, we hold ourselves to exceptional standards, expecting nothing but the best from every member of our school community. Our unwavering dedication to excellence is deeply rooted in our educational philosophy, preparing students for their future aspirations. Students are expected to be role models throughout their time at school.



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High Performance Learning (HPL) works with schools to embed the HPL philosophy where every student is seen as a potential high performer. Its unique teaching and learning framework systematically recalibrates the school and enables students to develop the cognitive skills, values, attitudes and attributes needed for high academic performance and lifetime success. HPL offers a range of programmes to enable schools at any starting point to begin their journey towards being an HPL school.

The HPL World Class School Award recognises the very best schools in the world and is designed for those at the forefront of educational thinking.



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Talk to us today:



+44 1993 222408



getintouch@highperformancelearning.co.uk



highperformancelearning.co.uk