

Dubai English Speaking School

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 22 to 25 January 2024

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Age Group: 3 to 11 years
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the school. Education Development Trust is a body approved by the British government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Education Development Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally. Education Development Trust employs over 2,500 staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

To be recognised by the Department for Education, a British School Overseas (BSO) must have an inspection report which shows that its performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be added to the register, 'Get information about schools'.

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for BSO accreditation. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations.

The DfE updated the standards in August 2023. The new standards aligned the BSO standards with the Independent School Standards (ISS) and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding applied to schools in England and clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.

The Standards are as follows:

1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.

5. The premises and accommodation.
6. The provision of information.
7. The manner in which complaints are handled.
8. The leadership and management of the school.
9. The quality of provision for boarding.

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare
- provide rigorous and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and celebrate their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses
- inform parents and carers and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Proportions used in the report

90–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
75–90%	Very large majority, most
65–74%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none/very few

Information about the school

Dubai English Speaking School (DESS) is an inclusive, not-for-profit, co-educational primary school that follows the British curriculum. It is located in Oud Metha Road, Dubai. The school opened on its current site in 1963 and is the oldest British school in the UAE. The headteacher has been in post since 2014. Its sister school is Dubai English Speaking College (DESC) where the vast majority of pupils transfer to complete their secondary education. The two schools known as DESSC share the same principal and board of trustees.

There are currently 1015 pupils on roll aged three to 11 years. The school is comparable in size to other international schools of a similar type in the UAE. DESS provides rich cultural diversity with 51 nationalities represented in the school community. A small minority of pupils use English as an additional language (EAL). The school provides extra learning provision for 64 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has identified 69 gifted pupils. Teachers are fully aware who all these pupils are and ensure all learning activities allow them to reach their full potential.

The school's vision is 'to nurture independent, confident and resilient learners who respond to challenge and aspire to reach their full potential.' The school aims to do this by being the 'home of irresistible learning.'

Children in the early years follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. In key stages 1 to 3, pupils follow the national curriculum of England. The school's 'Invent, Explore, Inspire' (IEI) curriculum is designed to prepare children for success in the rapidly changing world of the future.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed and the inspection dates were agreed upon with the school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the school before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 55 lessons, six of which were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. Inspectors observed a range of extra-curricular activities and the school's International Day celebrations. There were 25 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to

assessment, policies and strategic plans. They inspected the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and staff expressed in the BSO survey, which was sent to parents and teachers just prior to the inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Dubai English Speaking School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 11 years.

The school meets all of the BSO standards except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. These are explained later in the report. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified in relation to these unmet standards and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding across the school. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress as a result of high quality teaching and targeted personalised support. The relatively few pupils who are at early stages of speaking English, rapidly develop their English language knowledge and skills. Boys and girls perform at similarly high levels.

In the early years, almost all children attain standards in literacy, communication and language that are typical for their age by the end of Reception. Almost all children make better than expected progress from their starting points.

In key stage 1, pupils broaden their vocabulary and make excellent progress in reading and writing. Pupils use a range of strategies to read age-appropriate books. They develop a fluent writing style and use varied sentence forms to write for different purposes. The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is well above the England average.

In key stage 2, pupils read literature with rich and mature language and interesting factual books each day in lessons. They often choose to read in their free time. Standardised assessments in reading show that pupils typically read at standards above England expectations for their age in all year groups.

Pupils' writing exceeds England national curriculum expectations for their age in all year groups. By Year 6, pupils write adeptly for different purposes. They select appropriate grammar, use exciting vocabulary, integrate dialogue and use a range of literary techniques to enhance their narrative writing. They structure their factual writing skilfully. Pupils' high attainment in English prepares them well for the next steps in their education.

Across the school, attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding, including pupils with SEND and EAL. There is no significant variation in attainment and progress between different groups of pupils including boys and girls. The three-year upward trend shows that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in mathematics continues to be outstanding.

Teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of application of numbers and shapes in daily routines with a range of engaging activities. As a result, children in the early years make rapid progress from their individual starting points. In Reception, highly effective teaching methods and high-quality continuous assessment ensure that children use their critical thinking and spatial reasoning skills well.

In key stage 1, pupils develop confidence and mental fluency with whole numbers, counting and place value. They can recognise, describe, draw, compare and sort different shapes and use related vocabulary. Pupils read and spell mathematical vocabulary confidently. By the end of Year 2, pupils can identify and describe the properties of three-dimensional (3D) shapes, including the number of edges, vertices and faces.

In key stage 2, pupils are fluent with the four operations, including number facts and the concept of place value. They demonstrate efficient written and mental methods and perform calculations accurately with increasingly large whole numbers. Pupils can find the percentage of an amount, find missing values, and solve problems. Pupils can explain their reasoning when completing more complex problem-solving concepts. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in external tests shows very high rates of progress that are above international averages.

Pupils' attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding and both continue to improve year on year. Teaching inspires pupils to question, explore and investigate the world in which they live.

In the early years, children develop their understanding of the world and scientific skills through an 'I see, I think, I wonder' approach. This allows most children to make progress above expectations based on their starting points. All groups including boys, girls, pupils with SEND and EAL make equally high rates of progress over time. Children explore the use of magnets, thinking critically and making predictions. Science days and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) weeks also reinforce their understanding and experience of science.

In key stage 1, almost all pupils make outstanding progress to achieve excellent results by the end of Year 2. There is an excellent focus on scientific terminology. For example, in Year 1 pupils could use the word absorbency accurately when they tested different materials to find out which soaked up water.

Pupils continue to make outstanding progress so that by the end of key stage 2 most groups of pupils make progress above expectations. In external tests, for the previous three years, DESS pupils consistently achieve higher than international averages in every year group. Lessons follow the 'Es' of science model of teaching: engage, enquire, explain, and evaluate. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils created their own scientific question to investigate how a crater forms. Their subsequent practical investigations were well thought through, with consideration of the variables and were lots of fun.

All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well in a broad range of **other subjects**. Pupils enjoy their learning in all subjects, but particularly the IEL lessons where they work independently on cross-curricular projects over an extended period of time. For example, a Year 6 group had researched a chosen artist and were in the process of analysing a piece of the artist's work.

Pupils benefit from specialist teachers in dance, music, computing, art, PE, French and Arabic. Pupils learn a musical instrument from an early age, many going on to specialise and perform to a very high standard. STEM enrichment classes for small groups of more able pupils encourage pupils to apply and extend their skills in context.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall (see Standard 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Standard 3 below).
- The standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Standard 4 below).

- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 5 below).
- The provision of Information for parents meets the requirements of this standard (see Standard 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Standard 8 below).

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during January 2024, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the independent school system in England. This judgement is endorsed by the British government, quality assured by Ofsted and is valid for a period of three years.

Standard 1. The quality of education provided by the school

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met except for the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding.

DESS provides a rich and innovative curriculum with a broad and balanced range of learning skills, knowledge and experience for all its pupils. It consistently fosters excitement, curiosity, and self-challenge in all pupils. The curriculum builds on the shared values that support the DESS vision statement which emphasises the nurturing of independent, confident and resilient learners.

The curriculum is fully aligned with the UK's statutory framework for EYFS and the national curriculum for England. It is constantly reviewed and improved according to the needs of all pupils, including pupils with SEND and/or EAL.

The IEI curriculum is an innovative project-based, child-led curriculum from Years 2 to 6 designed to prepare children for success in the rapidly changing world. The experiential style of learning encourages pupils to take risks, embrace new challenges and develop a sense of self. The curriculum demonstrates clear skills progression in all curriculum areas whilst also linking to pupils' interests and passions.

The DESS curriculum links to the United Nation's Global Goals with real-life and meaningful curriculum opportunities across all phases of the school. For example, the whole school has a sustainability theme to promote social studies and citizenship. The curriculum equips pupils well to become future-ready global citizens.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities (ECA) enhance the curriculum. Ninety-three activities take place before and after school, as well as at lunchtime, in which most pupils participate regularly.

Curriculum policies and planning ensure that there is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn about Britain and being British. From democracy in the pupil council elections to school assemblies led by pupils on kindness, the curriculum respects diversity and promotes tolerance. Pupils study key aspects of British society in moral education where pupils can compare and contrast the different political structures in the UAE and the UK.

Pupils develop a deep understanding of the world and of life in British society. DESS celebrates different cultures and beliefs and the 51 different nationalities during, for example, UAE National Day and International Day. Pupils learn about empathy, respect and tolerance for the values of others, including the protected characteristics of age, disability, beliefs, race, and pregnancy and maternity. In Year 4, pupils learn about how stereotypes relate to acts of prejudice and discrimination. In Year 5, pupils discuss age discrimination.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for their next stage of education. Careers education is part of STEM projects, involving parents who talk about their jobs. 'Project 6.5' prepares Year 6 pupils well for their transition to secondary school. This project focuses on academic skills as well as the skills needed for secondary education. These include independence, time management, home learning and the prioritisation of tasks. The Parents in Partnership (PiPs) programme encourages parental involvement in the curriculum. Parents do this through community events, such as National and International Day.

The DESSCares programme is at the heart of this caring school community. Leaders and committees of staff and children work together on community, charity and sustainability projects to model and promote philanthropy throughout the school. Pupils are regularly involved in local trips to understand sustainability such as to Creek Park and the Shindagha museum to understand UAE heritage. They support their local community, for example, by donating to the Emirates Red Crescent.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** in the school is outstanding.

Leaders aim to make DESS 'the home of irresistible learning' and they succeed. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSA) have created an inspiring learning environment where pupils of all abilities make excellent rates of progress.

Teachers have deep subject knowledge and know all pupils extremely well. They devise activities that motivate pupils while promoting aspirational learning outcomes in all subjects. They make learning relevant by taking account of pupils' interests and making the most of cross-curricular links. Teachers ensure that pupils have the tools to succeed and develop the confidence to tackle 'tricky, trickier and trickiest' tasks.

LSAs contribute greatly to pupils' learning in class and in small groups. They provide additional help or challenge, while encouraging pupils to think independently.

Teachers sequence teaching carefully, so that pupils build their knowledge systematically. They use varied approaches and high-quality resources. Teachers clearly explain new learning and question pupils skilfully, helping them to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Additionally, teachers help pupils to develop skills that help them learn. They focus on building compassion, curiosity, creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking, referred to in school as the '6Cs'. In Year 5 French, for example, more-able pupils collaborated with and coached others in the class in translation. Lessons are orderly and productive because pupils love learning.

Teachers skilfully adapt resources and hone their questioning to challenge and support pupils at just the right level. Their continuous focus on vocabulary development and speaking skills enables pupils to clearly articulate their understanding. Pupils with SEND have detailed individual learning plans. They are fully included in lessons and receive high quality additional support based on their learning needs.

In their IEI lessons, pupils apply what they have learned in core subjects and increase their knowledge across the wider curriculum. They are encouraged to manage their learning, make decisions and be creative. In Year 5, for example, the class digital leader guided her peers as they designed photobooks of the creative photographs they had taken on school trips. They then used those photographs in their art lessons to create ceramic tiles.

Assessment is an integral part of every lesson and at the heart of teachers' responsive teaching. Teachers constantly check pupils' understanding. They revisit or expand on key points so that no child is left behind. Teachers carefully track pupils' progress against the national curriculum of England in each subject and use benchmarked

progress tests in core subjects. They use the various assessments effectively to analyse trends, identify gaps in learning and plan subsequent teaching.

Teachers' high expectations are reflected in pupils' work, which is well organised and beautifully presented. Teachers use a range of marking and feedback methods to help pupils make further gains. They encourage pupils to self-assess their work. In Year 4 mathematics, for example, pupils used their tablets to plot a graph as part of their self-assessment. Teachers use technology well to facilitate pupils' independent and collaborative study, encourage digital presentation and to provide step by step support or further challenge.

Children flourish as a result of the high-quality teaching and are well prepared for their move to secondary school. Leaders are keen to share and learn from best practice to ensure that they sustain outstanding teaching and learning as the school expands.

Standard 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5 (b) (vi). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding
DESS promotes mutual respect and supports all pupils to realise their potential. Positive approaches to behaviour align with the school's 'Like a DESS Child' initiative, ensuring that pupils understand and demonstrate appropriate behaviour and respect for others. When discussing characteristics of being a good friend in Year 1 and a good person in Year 6 pupils engage with their 'shoulder partner'. Exceptional standards of behaviour are rewarded through house points, positive praise, or individual class rewards such as table points.

DESS facilitates a culture of praise and encouragement, along with a strong work ethic to ensure that pupils are confident and resilient learners, responding to challenge and aspiring to reach their full potential. Pupils speak with confidence about the 'peace process' initiative that empowers them to resolve conflict independently, enabling them to share their feelings and take responsibility to move forward from problems.

DESS systematically promotes a culture of self-esteem, self-discipline, with proper regard for authority and positive relationships based on mutual respect. Building these character strengths begins in EYFS. Pupils thrive on taking responsibility around the

school. There are 11 distinct leadership roles with a total of 59 pupils serving in capacities such as well-being leaders, and student council members. The house system which is designed to foster a strong sense of belonging further enhances the importance of leadership.

DESS frequently collects pupils' views through survey platforms because pupils' input is an integral part of the school's quality assurance process. Recently, well-being leaders conducted interviews to collect feedback. As a result, the school implemented changes, such as constructing a sustainability garden with a composting system, repainting benches, and creating an outside reading space.

The school promotes fundamental British values of democracy. Pupils speak highly of the student council consisting of two pupils elected from each year group who represent their peers. Pupils explore democracy, politics and economics during the transition events from Years 4 to 6. They confidently talk about the British parliament, the monarchy and Brexit. Pupils fully understand the importance of following rules and what is right or wrong. All pupils sign a 'DESS child' contract with a 'working together agreement'. At the beginning of each academic year, each class writes their own charter to set the rules that they want to follow. DESS embraces the uniqueness of each pupil through the empowering 'I am me' week or 'dress to express'. Pupils cultivate essential life skills, for example, the art of active listening and the awareness of body language. Pupils also reflect on the UN sustainable goal of gender equality and what that would look like in today's society, discussing the meaning of stereotypes. DESS strives to create an environment where each pupil feels valued, heard and understood.

The DESSCares programme is at the heart of the school community. Pupils work on community, charity and sustainability projects to role-model and promote philanthropy throughout the school. This has included building a school in Madagascar, collecting funds for disaster relief and raising awareness about sustainability through recycling projects.

The school's provision for careers information and guidance is outstanding. Pupils meet with the careers advisor from DESC to discuss their options. During STEM week, parents who are working in the STEM industry talk to the pupils about their jobs and experience.

Standard 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are outstanding.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures fully meet UK and UAE laws and requirements. Frequent high-quality training ensures that all staff understand that pupils' welfare, health and safety are the responsibility of everyone in school. Staff are vigilant in implementing policies and keeping children safe.

The safeguarding team consists of highly-qualified professionals and knowledgeable school leaders. They provide expert advice and care to pupils and their families. Staff are fully aware of the procedures for reporting concerns. There is excellent communication and collaboration between staff facilitated by a well-managed online system for reporting. This enables the safeguarding team to take swift action to respond to pupils' and families' needs in times of difficulty, which parents appreciate.

Parents value the advice and health care that they can access on site from the full-time nurses and doctor. Nurses train staff in first aid and there is always someone to administer timely first aid in line with the school's policy in school and on trips.

The school integrates health and safety education into the curriculum from early years onwards. Teachers focus on pupils' mental and physical health in PE, moral education, science and social studies. Across the wider curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in school, online and in the community. The school promotes pupils' well-being through daily mindfulness sessions and pupils are helped to understand and manage their emotions using the school's innovative 'zones of regulation' approach.

There are comprehensive induction procedures for new staff and pupils that help them settle into school quickly. Pupils are happy and state that they feel safe and well looked after. Their attendance is above the England average and they are punctual. All members of the school's community promote good behaviour in line with its clear and comprehensive policy. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that staff will deal with any incidents fairly. They know whom they can talk to if they are worried or concerned. Parents state that their children are safe and well cared for.

Leaders ensure that the school's environment is healthy and safe for all staff and pupils. Each day the facilities manager rigorously checks the school's site for any necessary maintenance. Staff supervise pupils closely at all times. The procedures for fire evacuation and sheltering are clear and there are frequent drills. Risk assessments are very thorough and robust action is taken to minimise risk to pupils in school, during events and on trips. Bus and parental drop-off and pick-up of pupils are very well organised.

Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school conducts rigorous and comprehensive checks on all staff and external providers. The school includes checks for identity, police records, qualifications, three references, suitability to work with children and the right to work in the UAE. A single central register (SCR) is in place for the whole organisation, DESSC, to record this information. This is secure and only accessible to the Human Resources (HR) department. HR also keeps a recruitment tracker and completes social media checks once a candidate is on the shortlist.

HR maintains records of all safeguarding training completed annually. Most staff complete both certified online and face-to-face training. Native language training is also available. All senior leaders, the director of sport, medical team and the three designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) have completed advanced training appropriate to their role. HR and most senior leaders have completed safer recruitment training.

Staff turnover is low. The school recruited seven new teachers in the current year to DESS. The school's highly rigorous recruitment process results in the employment of very high-quality staff that are mostly trained in the UK. The school has also recruited 12 LSAs in the current year, all of whom are highly qualified. New staff report that they settle in to the school very quickly and that their well-being remains paramount at all times. The school is appropriately staffed to fulfil the school's vision.

Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school's site is very well managed. Recent audits and certificates demonstrate that the school operates safely and legally.

Leaders constantly strive to improve facilities and expand the resources that are available to pupils. The single-storey blocks, each accommodating two year groups, are carefully designed and equipped with furniture that is age appropriate. They are well resourced and have up-to-date technology to support vibrant teaching and learning. As well as pupils bringing in their own computing devices, classrooms have interactive whiteboards and robotics equipment. Classrooms are bright and provide access to outdoor learning.

The inspiring library, break-out rooms, extensive shared spaces and specialist teaching rooms for music, computing, art, dance and cooking stimulate and enhance learning across the curriculum. Pupils of all ages have access to well-equipped play areas, swimming pools and sports facilities both indoors and outside. Areas are accessible and safe for all pupils. The facilities for teachers, administrative and support staff are well designed and support the efficient running of the school.

The full-time doctor and nurses provide medical care in a dedicated health facility. There are plentiful washing facilities for pupils. Pupils bring their own food from home and eat in or around their classrooms. The areas are cleaned thoroughly before and after pupils have eaten.

The school is safe and secure. The site manager ensures any necessary maintenance is carried out immediately. Hazardous materials and electrical equipment are stored securely. There is clear signage to identify fire safety equipment, evacuation routes, medical and first aid equipment. There is a secure perimeter wall with well-supervised entry points.

Standard 6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

DESS is a flourishing community which values parental involvement in all aspects of school life. This has a positive impact on the outcomes for the pupils whilst also building a thriving and resilient school community.

The school has a strong partnership with parents, carers, and others. They actively involve parents through an open-door policy, weekly parent forums, meet-the-teacher evenings, parent-teacher conferences, as well as sharing news and updates through the parents' online portal. Parents appreciate the high visibility of the senior leadership team at the school gates. They state that, 'They also care about our mental health and well-being as parents'.

Parents describe the school as 'nurturing and being a caring family'. Parents of children with SEND describe the school as 'very inclusive' and sensitive to their children's individual needs. Parents state that, 'It does not matter whom you speak to in school; they know your name.'

PiP actively supports a wide variety of activities and community-based projects. Teachers invite parents to join trips, help run events and to support pupils with their

reading. Parents state that they are happy that their children are safe and making strong progress in different areas of the curriculum. They praise the house system for fostering an ethos of teamwork and community spirit.

The school's website and parents' portal are up to date. They provide parents with a wealth of information about educational trips, visits, extra-curricular activities and contain all the school's policies. Parents view it as a useful source of information alongside the dedicated parent-relations ECA co-ordinator and communications manager whom they contact frequently.

The school provides parents with mid-term and end-of-year reports which cover all aspects of pupils' achievements, identify their next steps and focus on their personal and social development. They can also access real-time attendance, attainment and progress data through the parents' portal. Parents appreciate the advice available from teachers about how they can support their children's learning at home.

The school actively seeks parents' views. For example, during the previous academic year, parents asked for a more flexible model for parents' evening, and, as a result, the school now offers both online and face-to-face parents' evenings. Their feedback also informs the school's development plan.

Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The headteacher, leaders and teachers are readily accessible to parents at the start of the day, allowing parents to speak informally to staff if they have a concern. At other times, parents can contact the parent relations co-ordinator by email or telephone. She responds in an efficient and timely way, usually in advance of the 48 hours stated in the policy. She records concerns that require further investigation and ensures all are fully resolved.

The school has a clearly staged complaints policy that is accessible on the website and on the parents' portal. However, the school has not directly had any formal complaints.

The school regularly reviews concerns and surveys parents annually. It publishes a 'You said, we did' document to show parents how the school responded to their suggestions.

Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are fully met.

The stable leadership is very successful in ensuring the positive ethos of the school. The vision 'to nurture independent, confident and resilient learners who respond to challenge and aspire to reach their full potential' is fully evident in every classroom. It is definitely the 'home of irresistible learning' where pupils flourish academically, physically and emotionally. Each year the school focuses on simple key words that link to the school's values, direction and priorities. This year 'Flourishing' is the theme. Pupils can clearly communicate what this means, and teachers model the language consistently.

The school's one year action plan, derived from the areas in the DESS Direction 2021-24, is aspirational and prioritises well-being. All stakeholders' perspectives shape it. Each area is framed within the context of promoting flourishing children, flourishing staff and a flourishing community. This results in a school where all feel valued. The plan undergoes regular reviews, emphasising staying at the forefront of innovative practice through engagement with other schools to share their outstanding practice and to learn from others. Leaders recognise the value in extending this culture of sharing.

DESS invests time, professional development and exposure to experiences for staff to grow and flourish to become leaders, fostering a culture of empowerment. Leaders at all levels have high expectations and apply standards with consistency. The professional culture of 'tight values and loose control' promotes responsibility, decision-making and risk taking. As a result, all leaders have excellent capacity for further improvement. The head of early years, a member of the senior team, together with two middle leaders, ensure outstanding provision for children in the early years.

Staff embrace professional development (PD) guided by leaders, and seek coaching to enhance their learning journey. There is a strong culture of wanting to improve at DESS. All teachers are excellent role models. The 'DESStudy' approach, where teachers work with a peer to plan, observe and provide feedback is valued by staff.

Morale and motivation are exceptionally high as evident in the BSO and school surveys and feedback from staff, parents and pupils. Every member of staff said they enjoy working at the school, one saying they 'feel inspired and supported every day'. This was

typical of the wholly positive comments made. Parents were exceptionally happy with the genuine care for their child. Pupils that inspectors spoke to struggled to suggest any ways in which the school could improve, loving their experience at DESS.

DESS maintains a strong safeguarding culture, ensuring it is a shared responsibility and integral to staff recruitment and retention. The school has recently had a detailed safeguarding audit of its practices and has made some improvements as a result.

The school's trustees, comprising parents and individuals with diverse skills and experience, ensure that the school operates legally, and its financial policies are sound. Governors have undertaken accredited training. They are trustees for both schools in DESSC, sharing meetings and sub-committees. They encourage the junior leadership team to present their ideas and initiatives on which they have been working.

Governors clearly know the school and its priorities well. They encourage open dialogue with leaders but understand and respect their separate responsibilities. They communicate ambition and appraise the principal for DESSC. He in turn sets the performance objectives of the two headteachers, overseen by governors.

The school promotes equality and fosters inclusivity, particularly for pupils with SEND, emphasising acceptance and uniqueness. Pupils articulated this perfectly, saying, 'At DESS we accept everyone no matter who you are. Everyone is unique'.

DESS is an overwhelmingly caring and nurturing school, prioritising the well-being of everyone.

EYFS provision

Early Years provision is outstanding.

Most children join the Nursery class aged three and make excellent progress from their starting points. At the end of Reception, almost all children achieve a Good Level of Development, and a very large majority exceed it, which is well above the England average. Teachers ensure children are prepared well for their transition to Year 1.

Early Years leaders maintain outstanding provision and outcomes for children. Children are happy and their behaviour is exemplary. They feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. Provision for children's personal and SMSC development and their welfare, health and safety are outstanding.

High quality professional development ensures all staff have a good understanding of how children learn and develop. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding, health and

safety and first aid. They share their ideas and observations of children in daily professional discussions so that everyone knows individual children very well.

Leaders have created a magical environment where children have rich, awe-inspiring learning experiences every day. The curriculum follows the EYFS framework, while capitalising on children's interests and capturing their enthusiasm. For example, when children expressed curiosity about the past, staff created an exciting 'time travel' role play area, which children love. All staff carefully assess and track children's progress through the curriculum. Teachers' skilful and timely interventions help children build on their knowledge and develop their skills.

Children benefit from focused time with their teachers and LSAs in which they develop their phonic knowledge, reading and writing, mathematical and scientific knowledge and skills. Staff also enable children to experiment, investigate, be creative and design their own learning activities. In Reception, a group of children initiated a challenging mathematical activity where they laid out a line of cubes on the floor and numbered each one, going up to 70 plus. They then accurately measured, recorded and compared the length of their friends. Another group performed a dance in full costume to percussion instruments that they had made themselves.

Staff communicate regularly with parents and provide workshops to support them with home learning. As well as frequent reports and newsletters, parents can approach teachers as they drop off and pick up their children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

Dubai English Speaking School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards set out below that relate to the UK Equality Act 2010.

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;

5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

What the school could do to improve further

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

The school recognises that it needs to stay at the forefront of innovative and outstanding primary education practice. Leaders should now ensure that they continue to build sustainable partnerships with other schools. The sharing of best practice locally and internationally will enable pupils to continue to flourish in this outstanding school.

Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	x			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	x			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	x			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	x			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	x			
The behaviour of pupils	x			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	x			
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Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			
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School Details

Name of school	Dubai English Speaking School
Type of school	Private, not-for-profit
Date school opened	February 1963
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	1015
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	n/a
Annual fees (day pupils)	40,220 to 49,776 AED
Annual fees (boarders)	n/a
Address of school	Oud Metha Road Umm Hurair 2 Dubai, UAE PO Box 2002
Telephone number	00971 433 71 457
Email address	Dess_reception@dessc.sch.ae
Headteacher	Catherine Dando (Headteacher) Andrew Gibbs (Principal)
Proprietor	n/a

GLOSSARY

Achievement – Progress made by a pupil taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

Accreditation – The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and if deemed as having achieved the standards required is provided with some form of official certification or recognition.

Accreditation Board – The body responsible for the strategic direction, operation and conduct of the accreditation service provided by Education Development Trust

Assessment – The process of finding out how well pupils have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

Attainment – The level pupils reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

British Schools Overseas Inspection (BSO) – Inspection framework and standards defined by the DfE for British schools overseas to opt to be inspected against.

Education Development Trust – Formerly CfBT Education Trust, we are one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally.

Central Support Team – Personnel based in Education Development Trust Head Office who are responsible for the administration of the various educational services provided to international schools.

Combined or Joint Visit – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

Cycle of Inspection – The period of three years between BSO inspection visits.

Curriculum – The educational programmes or courses of study taught by a school including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extra-curricular enrichment programmes.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) – All private schools in Dubai are required by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority to be inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). A joint DSIB/BSO inspection may be requested through the KHDA's strategic partner Education Development Trust.

Leadership – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

Learning – Pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

Management – The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of a school's work in an efficient and useful way.

Ofsted – The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England and is responsible for school inspections in England.

Progress – The gains in learning made between two points in time. A pupil can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

School self-evaluation – The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school's work on the outcomes for pupils.

Standards –

- (1) The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils and a school demonstrates at a particular point in time.
- (2) The evaluation requirements to be used in the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

Teaching – All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing pupils' learning.

With 50 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust's vision is a world in which all lives are transformed through excellent education. We strive to improve education for learners globally, grounding our work in research and evidence. We support leaders to raise standards, improve school performance, develop great teachers and open career pathways.

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train.

We have built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services. One of our main aims is to improve schools through high quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges.

Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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