

# Dubai English Speaking School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 26 – 28 January 2020

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Team: Simon Spry, Mary Summers

Age Group: 4 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 nine 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 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 registered on Edubase.**

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas. These were updated with effect from September 2017. 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.

A policy update was issued by the DfE in October 2018. The Department confirmed that 'our policy is now to accredit schools in countries where to meet certain standards would be in breach of the host country laws, as long as there is evidence to substantiate this, and all other standards are met'.

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 the 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 the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

### Key for inspection grades

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

### 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 average-sized school established in Oud Metha, Dubai, in 1963. It is owned by an independent board of trustees who also own the sister secondary school, Dubai English Speaking College (DESC).

DESS caters for boys and girls from three to 11 years. Most leavers transfer to DESC at the end of Year 6. The school follows the English national curriculum and the English early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. The school also follows UAE curriculum requirements.

DESS has 1009 children and pupils from 56 nationalities, the highest number being British. Fifty pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One hundred and nine pupils learn English as an additional language. Almost all the 69 teachers are UK qualified.

Leadership comprises a headteacher, deputy, three assistant headteachers and year leaders.

DESS is a member of the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME) and the Council for British International Schools (COBIS). It also works closely with other not-for-profit schools in Dubai (DSID).

## Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors who spent three days at the school. The school requested the inspection eleven weeks before it started and agreed the date. Prior to the inspection, the team examined the school's self-review, BSO compliance documents, previous reports, surveys and other information. Inspectors visited 36 lessons and held 16 meetings with trustees, leaders, staff, parents and carers and pupils. They observed the start and end of the school day, celebrations, performances, rehearsals and lessons. They also reviewed computer records, examined samples of pupils' work and observed diverse aspects of school life. They paid particular attention to safeguarding policies and arrangements.

## 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 Standards for British Schools Overseas, 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**. Children in EYFS make excellent progress from their starting points in all elements of English. Almost all exceed what is typical for their age in speaking and listening by the end of EYFS and a very large majority exceed the UK early learning goals. This progress continues as pupils move through the school. It is confirmed by standardised assessments in Years 2 and 6 showing that almost all attainment is in line with, or exceeds, English national averages. Far more Year 6 pupils exceed expected levels in reading than in the UK. Improvements in progress in writing across key stage 2 mean that boys and girls perform at similar levels. Pupils with SEND make outstanding progress in reading and writing throughout the school and pupils learning English as an additional language make exceptional progress.

Pupils in Year 6 are avid readers. They read with fluency and mature expression and talk excitedly about their chosen fiction, displaying impressive knowledge of different authors' work and styles. They describe characters well and make confident predictions about possible endings to the story. They use their reading skills, non-fiction texts and online resources to gain relevant information for project-based learning, for example on the Second World War. Their written work is usually spelt and punctuated accurately

with careful attention paid to increasingly complex grammar and figurative language used to enhance meaning. Pupils write for a range of audiences and diverse purposes, including persuasive letters to the headteacher explaining why they think that homework should be banned. Their knowledge and use of vocabulary are exceptional throughout the school.

Attainment and progress in mathematics are **outstanding**.

Children in EYFS explore number, shape and measures through play-based activities and use this to practise sorting, matching and ordering two- and three-dimensional objects. They develop spatial awareness and use mathematical terms accurately. They use simple resources to manipulate single-digit numbers and can write number symbols correctly. Progress is outstanding by the end of EYFS, with 97% of children exceeding UK averages.

Year 1 pupils build on their skills to manipulate numbers using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They relish solving problems and add to their knowledge of different measures and shapes through practical and theoretical tasks. They continue to build on this by applying different methods to multiply and divide. Throughout key stage 1, pupils are confident in presenting data graphically and can discuss the features of different statistical analyses. In Year 4, pupils applied their previous learning and considered a range of strategies to calculate the area of shapes, with most-able pupils calculating the area of complex and irregular shapes independently. This confidence in applying mathematical knowledge continues to develop as they use algebraic and geometric formulae to tackle challenging problems. By the end of Year 6, progress and attainment in mathematics exceed UK averages and over 80% of pupils achieve above international averages.

Attainment and progress in science are **outstanding**.

Children in foundation stage are naturally curious about the world around them and how living and non-living things move and behave. They record what they notice using tablet computers. They use scientific words correctly to describe their observations, frequently enhancing words with gestures to reinforce meaning. Age is no barrier to being a scientist at DESS.

By the end of key stage 1, almost all pupils make at least expected progress according to a commercial assessment scheme. They develop and refine scientific understanding as they widen their knowledge of differences between living and non-living things, how objects and living things move and changes in substances. They work responsibly, measure materials accurately, use equipment safely, record their findings factually and analytically, label diagrams and are confident in discussing what worked as planned and what was surprising.

In Year 5, pupils were highly motivated by a scenario in which they needed to separate everyday dry foods using filtration. They compared evaporation with filtration before designing and preparing fair tests to maintain focus on the scientific process and to

avoid being distracted by the changes in some of the food substances. They shared responsibility, for example, 'Can one of us test and check this out before we go further?' Year 6 pupils applied their knowledge of electrical circuits to design and make a useful object incorporating at least one circuit. They showed sophisticated scientific thinking in planning, constructing, testing and identifying where circuits had failed. The skills and knowledge involved exceeded those expected for the end of key stage 2, which reflects the assessments from a commercial scheme.

Children and pupils use **technology** naturally and in EYFS use the controls and functions of tablet computers and programmable toys to achieve specific tasks. Older pupils use a range of software applications to research, record, analyse and present their work. They make outstanding progress and attain high standards, with technology being integral to learning. In key stage 2 they show how computers function and are confident in programming computers to complete specific tasks. Children and pupils of all ages use tablet computers spontaneously to evaluate experiments, record their work and carry out research. Technology is an accepted tool for learning.

Pupils make excellent progress in all subjects and apply their knowledge well in cross-curricular projects. Creative and performing arts are a strong part of the curriculum and also popular options for extra-curricular activities. Children from EYFS acquire balance and fine-motor control in their dance lessons and soon become natural performers. Progress and attainment in musical composition, appreciation and performance are exceptional and pupils are confident musicians. Children and pupils value the range of physical education, from swimming and gymnastics to field sports and athletics. Swimming attainment is particularly strong compared with English expectations. All pupils swim using several strokes and lessons build their technical skills, as well as stamina and strength. Pupils also make strong progress in French and art. Moral education allows them to develop their ethical and moral thinking in relation to contemporary society.

DESS is fully inclusive and pupils with **SEND** are well supported by trained and qualified staff. Staff from the Learning Zone work in partnership with class teachers to plan and deliver bespoke programmes which allow pupils to make very good progress from their starting points. The support provided for pupils with SEND is outstanding.

Children and pupils show determined and tenacious attitudes to their learning. This maturity is carefully nurtured without stifling the awe and wonder of childhood.

### **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). All lessons observed were at least good and most were outstanding. Sharing the strengths of outstanding teaching regarding pace and delivery is recommended to achieve an even higher proportion of outstanding teaching.

- 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).

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during January 2020, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas (2017 updated), 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 UK independent school system. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government, quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and is valid for a period of three years.**

## **Standard 1. The quality of education provided by the school**

Most of 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 provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

### **The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding.**

It is broad, balanced and takes full account of the current English national curriculum and EYFS curriculum. It caters very well for pupils with SEND. Pupils at all stages are very well prepared to move on to the next phase in their education. Curriculum plans are reviewed to show how those protected characteristics that can be promoted in the UAE are met in age-appropriate ways.

Leaders have a thorough knowledge and understanding of how to modify and deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Regular and informative communication with parents ensures that all work together to meet pupils' needs. Levels of support in class lessons and discrete sessions are high. In whole-class lessons, teachers' plans indicate how the curriculum will be adapted and additional support allocated to meet the needs of individual pupils. Learning-support assistants play a vital role in extending pupils' learning and in supporting them in making progress. They have a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs and use a wide range of strategies to help give them access to learning successfully.

The EYFS curriculum is vibrant and exciting. Planning is meticulous and reviewed regularly to ensure that it caters for children's needs and interests. This can happen almost daily as teachers review what has worked well and what might be even better. The outdoor area is well organised and safe. It provides a wealth of opportunities for children to explore and develop all aspects of their academic learning and personal development. They scramble over the climbing frame and ride tricycles around the track, construct models and castles from plastic crates and wooden bricks, 'write' on the windows and count and weigh different objects. They plant and look after tomato and herb plants, learning about the best conditions for healthy growth.

The curriculum is enriched with a well-selected and diverse range of extra-curricular activities covering music, sport, performance arts, languages and many other options. Participation is extremely high and reflects pupils' enthusiasm and commitment. An extensive range of visits in the UAE and visitors, for example authors, add interest and illustrate various aspects of learning. Residential visits to Cyprus and a ski resort enable pupils to learn the necessary skills for living harmoniously together while away from their homes.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed. Project-based learning in key stages 1 and 2 was introduced recently following an in-depth review focusing on foundation subjects. This is helping pupils to transfer their skills across these subjects more freely.

The DESS expectations are prominently displayed and encourage pupils to understand and observe their rights and responsibilities. Classes design their own charters which are appropriate to their ages and state how rights and responsibilities apply to them.

The increasing emphasis on sustainability is in line with the United Nations sustainable goals and includes the development of a sustainability garden which pupil volunteers tend and keep in good order. Staff and pupils look after their buildings and outdoor areas, extending the work on sustainability and respect for the environment. Displays value pupils' work, provide helpful models to support learning and also draw attention to aspects of Emirati culture and life in British society.

The school has the recognisable atmosphere of an English primary school. Pupils relocating to another international school with an English curriculum, or a school in the UK, would be familiar with the curriculum and routines of an English school.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is **outstanding**. The school meets the requirements of this standard. Children and pupils, including those with SEND, make outstanding progress as the school staff turn the DESS aim of creating 'Irresistible Learning' into exciting, dynamic and highly successful lessons. While all pupils are challenged in lessons, the ideal of learning that cannot be resisted is evident in pupils' laughter, spontaneous comments and ever-increasing curiosity.



Teachers combine strong subject knowledge with deep understanding of curriculum requirements, enabling them to plan engaging lessons, where pupils make at least good progress in acquiring skills and knowledge. Teachers collaborate to produce detailed lesson plans with resources, technology and teaching approaches selected carefully, reflecting how well they know their pupils. Class and specialist teachers explain the learning objective clearly at the start of their lesson, making clear how each activity will contribute to achieving the objective. This clarity allows pupils to monitor their progress during lessons, so helping them grow as independent and resourceful learners. Teachers' are highly skilled in using stimulating questions and prompts to encourage pupils to reflect, start thinking about hypotheses and generate alternative ways of working. While the pace of lessons was generally highly effective, a minority of lessons lacked pace and so learning was limited.

Children in EYFS respond positively to the creative, fun-filled activities that provide countless opportunities to be curious, explore and develop their communication and social skills. The skilled staff plan and deliver personalised learning covering the seven key areas of learning. They use ongoing assessment records to modify plans and so sustain outstanding progress.

SEND pupils are extremely well supported by specialist trained and qualified staff and this allows them to make excellent progress from their starting points. The pupils have access to learning at levels determined by individual needs. Learning-support assistants work in close partnership with teachers and have deep understanding of teachers' plans and learning objectives. This results in highly successful teams which are focused on helping pupils learn.

Pupils collaborate well as they learn together, bringing laughter and delight to lessons in core and specialist subjects. They are highly motivated to learn, are not deterred by teachers' high expectations or challenging lesson content, and approach lessons enthusiastically.

Children and pupils display excellent behaviour and take responsibility for their actions and words. Lapses of behaviour are rare and are managed quietly and discretely to avoid repetition.

The assessment policy is clear and has been sensitively reviewed and developed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Assessment is continuous and carefully used to check each pupil's learning and development. Marking is consistent, reflecting the agreed policy and practice. Verbal feedback from teachers is focused and personal, allowing pupil and teacher to discuss and agree the next steps for learning. The internal tracking system provides a cohesive and easily accessed picture of summative assessments. Leaders and teachers use this to set pupils targets as well as it being a powerful analytical tool for self-evaluation.

School leaders are fully committed to continuous improvement for teaching and learning. The bespoke professional-development opportunities allow staff to develop their teaching skills and knowledge. This, along with the quality-assurance programme, drives consistently high standards of teaching and learning.

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

Most of 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 provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is **outstanding**. Inspection evidence, including discussions with pupils, scrutiny of their work and examination of curriculum plans, confirms that the school encourages respect for, and tolerance of, the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. It fully meets the requirements set out in the Act in relation to age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief. However, it is unable to meet fully the requirements in respect of gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation due to the laws of the host country.

DESS is an inclusive school, where children and pupils with SEND are fully accepted by staff and their peers. Pupils understand that some disabilities are not easy to see and are very sensitive to those with such conditions. Children with dwarfism, Downs syndrome and medical conditions play a full part in school life, with support where necessary.

Pupils encourage male and female adults of any age to try activities and are keen to give everyone equal opportunities. This includes encouraging nervous children to 'have a go'.

All members of the school community are valued and their contribution is celebrated in assemblies. Pupils are delighted when the 'Star of the Week' is awarded to a member of site maintenance or hygiene teams, who come from different religious or ethnic backgrounds, thus valuing their contribution and role.

Pupils understand that some staff are married and others not, and treat both equally. They show mature understanding of pupils whose parents are no longer married.

Parenthood for all staff is highly respected. Maternity is respected, with mothers receiving maternity support and cover, before and after the birth of their baby. Fathers receive paid paternity leave, acknowledging their role in caring for the new-born and supporting their family. When members of the site teams announce a new baby, staff

take the initiative to collect gifts for the baby and family and show the father that his paternity is also recognised and valued by colleagues.

The school fully includes all children and pupils and extends this to their interaction with all staff regardless of their role, culture, faith, home language or age. The school's culture of high expectations for all members of the community permeates every aspect of daily life. Pupils, parents and all adults understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. They adhere to the DESS expectations and, as a result, the school is a calm and relaxed place where pupils flourish personally and academically and are concerned for each other. Almost all pupils attend regularly and punctually.

Mindfulness plays a big part in maintaining children's and pupils' mental health and creating spiritual moments. EYFS children closed their eyes, listened to a soundtrack and 'felt' rain trickling down their faces as they prepared for the day's activities. Year 2 pupils concentrated hard as they rehearsed an imminent concert, showing great delight as they sang and danced. Tuneful Tuesdays are wonderful opportunities where pupils give poignant vocal and instrumental performances in the outdoor entrance area, while parents, staff and other pupils listen and watch in amazement. Performances on piano, drums and trumpet, as well as individual and group singing show pupils' excellent musical knowledge, skills and confidence in sharing the results of hard work and dedicated practice.

Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons, listen carefully to teachers and work hard at tasks. They behave impeccably during lessons and when moving around the school, showing self-control and respect for others. Participation in extra-curricular activities is extremely high and reflects pupils' enjoyment of all aspects of school life and learning. They talk animatedly, yet modestly, about successes in netball, basketball, dancing and music, always acknowledging the contribution of others, for example family, staff and friends.

The many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and give their views include the chance to become a school councillor, head or deputy head boy or girl and a member of a team for community and sustainability. The environment team, in conjunction with staff, parents and governors, wrote an action plan to support sustainability in the school. It is trying to reduce the use of paper cups, has planted a sustainable garden and is investigating how waste might be recycled. Library experts train apprentices to provide appropriate support during weekly library sessions. Older pupils help younger children in EYFS during their physical education lessons.

With 56 different nationalities represented at DESS, cultural development is strong. Pupils share knowledge about their different traditions and beliefs and participate in assemblies, for example Diwali, and celebrate International Day with parents and staff. This is a genuine international event with parents from different cultures offering samples of different foods, providing Bhangra-dancing lessons or playing traditional games. Pupils from different cultures play and work happily together in lessons and in the playground. Emirati culture has a prominent role, with photographs and art work

displayed widely. All staff and pupils show high levels of respect when the UAE National Anthem is played daily. The school celebrates British culture in all aspects of its work, stressing British values of good manners, tolerance, pride in one's work, respect for others and being a team player.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are outstanding. The strong values of the school are very clearly exhibited in the 'Like a DESS child' poster which all stakeholders follow enthusiastically. This sets the tone for positive relationships and happy pupils who are ready and want to learn.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard, regulatory and cultural obligations of the UAE. Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and adults at DESS are **outstanding**.

Safeguarding is accepted as everyone's responsibility, forming part of extensive training for all staff that meets current UK guidance. Great care is taken to provide thorough training in all aspects of health, safety and safeguarding so that all members of the DESS community are confident about their responsibilities. Parents are well informed about safeguarding and during the inspection a group confirmed the extent of their confidence in how DESS safeguards their child. Children and pupils understand how to raise a concern with a trusted adult. Keeping children and pupils safe when using the internet is a priority, with security on the school's internet and age-appropriate training for all users of technology.

Senior staff and managers with specific responsibility for all aspects of health, safety and welfare ensure that policies and procedures are followed. Actions, concerns and any incidents are carefully recorded, showing how they are managed and the attempts made to reduce risks of recurrence.

Safety at the start and end of the day is supervised by vigilant security staff who direct vehicles to park without risk to adults or children entering or leaving the site. The robust perimeter wall adds to security throughout the day. Hazardous materials and equipment are stored securely.

The school achieves a delicate balance of rigour in policies and procedures within a friendly and warm atmosphere. In EYFS, children are helped to stay safe by clear guidance, amusing posters to reinforce safety and high levels of supervision by trained adults. They settle quickly, establishing friendships as they engage in enjoyable activities, often unaware of how much they learn. Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and reflect the school's aims. Children and pupils are eager to be at school and lateness is rare. Lessons start punctually and precise systems for monitoring attendance confirm that it exceeds UK averages.

Incidents of harassing behaviour are extremely rare and policies are followed when necessary. Pupils are very well supervised in classrooms and while learning outdoors. This includes during sport and swimming lessons, where generous staffing includes qualified lifeguards, coaches, teachers and support staff. Pupils take care of their own safety, for example by avoiding excessive heat and sun and drinking water.

The nurse cares for unwell or injured pupils, following agreed policies. She ensures that first-aid kits are fully equipped and readily available on site and during off-site visits. Demanding risk assessments take place routinely and actions to reduce risks are implemented. Site maintenance works closely with local Civil Defence to ensure that fire and emergency procedures meet UAE requirements and exceed UK expectations for emergencies. Pupils and staff are familiar with procedures due to regular practices.

#### **Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Checks on the suitability of leaders and staff at all levels are extremely thorough and are completed before staff are appointed, reflecting rigour in safer recruitment. Checks also comply with expectations for the suitability of staff working with children in the UK. When advertising any vacancy or opportunity, expectations about safeguarding and child protection are explicit, with the aim of deterring unsuitable applicants. This rigour continues throughout recruitment procedures with references, qualifications, suitability to work with children, records of criminal checks and right to work in the UAE verified before appointment offers are confirmed.

Trustees are not exempt from this rigour, regardless of their professional standing or reputation in the UAE, length of involvement with the school or their role in governance. This shows consistency, compliance and commitment to keeping children and pupils safe.

All information is held securely on a single comprehensive record, which ensures that renewal dates are not missed and compliance is sustained.

The designated safeguarding leaders are well trained and easily accessible to anyone wishing to express a concern. Safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment procedures are followed diligently and are compliant with UK and UAE requirements.

#### **Standard 5. The premises and accommodation**

The school meets the requirements of the standard and UK expectations for premises and accommodation.

The school opened its first buildings on the site in 1963, since when further teaching areas, specialist facilities, playgrounds and extensive sports facilities have been added. All are thoughtfully arranged inside the secure perimeter of a limited inner-city site. Mature trees give shade and provide informal seating for adults and pupils.

The single-storey buildings convey spaciousness where children and pupils of all ages have space to learn as they relax and have fun. Specialist facilities include dedicated teaching areas for science, creative and performing arts, computing and physical education and an impressive library. Pupils of all ages enjoy playing on the natural grass sports field, which is carefully managed to keep the grass playable. Facilities for swimming are exceptional, with high regard given to safety, hygiene and privacy in the changing rooms.

Specialist facilities and classrooms are exceptionally well equipped with resources that allow pupils access to the broad curriculum and an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. The ease of access to open teaching areas facilitates sharing materials for learning and teaching. The stock of 15,000 fiction and non-fiction books for all ages is impressive and supports the culture of reading. Computers and tablet computers are up to date and have appropriate software applications. The internet is reliable, secure and maintained by specialist technicians.

Unused spaces between classrooms enhance learning with bespoke areas for small group work. The design of typical shop fronts in a small French town creates a language-rich setting for acquiring French in a relaxed way.

Thought-provoking displays add to the stimulating environment for learning, internally and externally. These build on children's and pupils' interests and encourage involvement in projects and extra-curricular activities. High-quality and age-appropriate furniture and furnishings are replaced regularly through a detailed rolling programme.

The extensive maintenance schedule, from drainage to roofing, minimises emergency repairs and ensures that premises remain of exceptional quality.

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

The provision of information **meets all the requirements** of the standard. The provision of information for parents and others is **outstanding**.

Partnerships with parents are well-established and woven into everyday activities, special events and celebrations. The headteacher and senior staff offer a warm welcome to everyone arriving each day, taking a genuine personal interest. Parents confirmed how staff adopt the listening approach, which allows them to share small or larger concerns.

Parents of pupils who travel by school transport use technology, messaging and telephone calls to maintain positive and productive relationships with teachers and leaders. This is evident before, during and after the school day, when parents show real interest in rehearsals and practices, celebrating the triumphs and efforts of every child and pupil. This adds to the very real family atmosphere at DESS. Daily activities before registration are structured to show a range of activities and pupils' achievements.

Families new to DESS, Dubai or the UAE spoke of the supportive welcome for their families on joining the school. Options for parents and their children to join buddy networks are practical and relevant. The online learning hub gives parents confidential access to their child's learning or classroom activities.

The café for parents and staff provides a congenial setting for informal meetings, allowing concerns to be shared and solutions to problems agreed. The parent-liaison officer knows all families well and makes every effort to put the parent in contact with the appropriate person promptly. Staff work closely with parents of a child or pupil returning to DESS after illness or injury, carefully planning how the child will relate to their peers, appropriate class activities and, of equal importance, support for the family.

Parents confirmed the results of surveys, which showed that extensive and clearly presented information keeps them well informed about school events, developments and their child's progress. The 'You said, we did' report explains actions and responses to parents' views. Reports to parents are easy to understand and give an accurate picture of what their child has achieved and their next steps in learning. Meetings with parents follow each report to allow deep discussion.

Arrangements about how DESS safeguards all its children and pupils are shared before admission and subsequently explained during initial visits and induction days. Parents expressed full confidence in how the school cares for all children and pupils, including safeguarding on and off the school site.

## **Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints**

The procedures for handling complaints **meet all the requirements** of this standard.

The school's procedure for parents to give feedback, raise a concern or make a complaint is very clear and easily accessible to parents and staff.

Parents spoke of feeling confident in raising their concern and being taken seriously, whether the concern is raised verbally or in writing. Scrutiny of confidential records of parents' critical feedback showed that the policy is applied fairly, regardless of the context and that resolving the concern is always the priority. The written replies to

parents' concerns and complaints show great sensitivity and are factual rather than emotive. This shows respect for the parents' view and their child's experience.

## Standard 8. Leadership and management

The school meets the requirements of this standard. The leadership and management of the school are **outstanding**.

The headteacher's warm and professional approach is reflected through the successful model of genuine distributed leadership. She works closely with the principal of both schools in the group, while retaining her authority as headteacher at DESS. The senior leaders and year leaders show great commitment to the school's aims and work diligently to make them a reality for every child and pupil. Each senior leader has a defined portfolio covering internal and community responsibilities, which provides a cohesive framework for strategic and operational leadership.

The school's vision and ethos for DESS pupils, teachers and family spirit are displayed throughout the school and in communications with parents. More importantly it is evident in daily life in and outside classrooms. The education philosophy of 'Creating irresistible learning' is more than an aim at DESS. It is how pupils learn and develop as well-rounded individuals.

The structure for governance makes clear the distinction between trustees and leaders. The trustees are careful to maintain the essential balance between their role in governance and their role in leadership. They achieve this by recognising their distinct responsibilities as trustees. At the same time, they maintain involvement in school life, which keeps them informed and able to challenge as critical friends. This includes holding the headteacher to account and ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are current and followed. The sub-committees of trustees add further breadth and depth to governance by providing focused support and challenge for leaders.

Strategic planning is set out in 'DESS Direction' stating how the school's priorities will be met, including meeting the requirements for BSO in the UAE. It is an easily accessible and informative document making clear each priority, how it will be achieved, interim monitoring and outcome measures. The priorities are separated into specific action plans for appropriate parts of the school, indicating the shared strategic ambition which allows all members of the DESS community to take pride in the school's achievements. Self-evaluation is explicitly linked to strategic planning. All aspects of the school's performance are measured and plans adjusted where the need is apparent.

The budget is carefully allocated and spending monitored. This ensures that priorities are achieved on schedule and within agreed financial parameters. It allows funds for agreed capital developments, fixed and non-fixed running costs and site maintenance. With the original buildings and infrastructure dating from 1963 the trustees, finance staff



and site supervisor ensure that capital and servicing costs are fully planned for to minimise the risks of disruption to education should services fail.

Teaching and non-teaching staff are carefully organised into teams with clear operational responsibilities and lines of accountability. All are accepted members of the DESS family. This is evident when observing maintenance teams encouraging pupils practising sporting skills on the pitch and the applause of security staff when listening to musical performances.

DESS is rightly proud of the programme of professional development for teachers, other staff and aspiring leaders. Successful participation does not guarantee promotion in the two DESS schools, as equal opportunities for recruitment apply and existing staff may apply for enhanced posts alongside external applicants. The blend of in-house and sponsored training aids staff retention and allows for continuity by encouraging colleagues to extend their minimum contract length. Teachers in EYFS place high value on grants to finance research into subjects relating to their role. Performance management is accepted and teachers spoke of the benefits of observation of actual classroom practice, including when they try a new approach or introduce an unfamiliar subject.

While the school has achieved successful recognition of its high standards, leaders and staff show no complacency as they continue to plan ahead for DESS and its present and future pupils.

## **Standard 9. The quality of provision for boarding**

Not applicable

## **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.

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:

1. Share the strengths of exceptional teaching and learning to ensure an even higher proportion of outstanding lessons.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

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

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	√			
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### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable				
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## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	Dubai English Speaking School
<b>Type of school</b>	International School
<b>Date school opened</b>	1963
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 – 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1009
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 37334 to AED 46204
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	NA
<b>Address of school</b>	Oud Metha Road Umm Hurair PO Box 2002 Dubai United Arab Emirates
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 04 3604864
<b>Email address</b>	Dess_reception@dessc.sch.ae
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Dando
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Andrew Gibbs

## 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 40 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust exists solely to provide education for public benefit.

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. As one of the top 30 charities in the UK, we work for and with individuals and communities in order to help them reach their potential

Education Development Trust has built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services to national organisations such as Ofsted, the Teacher Training Agency and to schools in the north of England. Our main aim 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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