

Newsletter

DESS Primary Oud Metha



As we bring this action-packed term to a close, I imagine you are filled with as much pride and gratitude for all that the children have achieved as we are. It has been a term overflowing with inspiring learning, incredible achievements and community connections - an exciting first term in our *Year of Being*. Whether "being mindful", "being creative" or "being kind", the children have embraced this year's theme with real DESS enthusiasm and determination.

One of the many highlights of the term was the Year 4 production of *The Lorax*, which left us all reflecting on its powerful message:

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

This poignant reminder of the importance of care and responsibility resonates deeply, not just with our children but with all of us. It underpins the values we aim to instill in our young learners as they grow into thoughtful, compassionate change makers of the future.

From amazing projects to creative performances and hands-on experiences, this term has been full of opportunities to inspire. We are so thankful for the ongoing support of our parent community, whether through attending events, volunteering or encouraging your children to give their best every day. Your involvement truly makes a difference.

Looking ahead to Term 2, we are excited to begin with another *Digital Detox*, helping us all reconnect with the world around us and for the children to approach their learning with refreshed focus.

Just before you get stuck into the rest of our newsletter, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your family a safe and peaceful break. Whether you're travelling or staying to enjoy the beautiful Dubai weather, we hope you find time to relax and create special memories together.

Thank you once again for being an integral part of this wonderful term. We look forward to welcoming everyone back for more exciting adventures in the New Year!

With kind regards

Tony Clarkson
Head of School

THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

This half term, we've embraced the power of positivity and connection through a range of wellbeing-focused initiatives. In November, we marked Promoting Positive Actions Week, which centered around five key themes: Respect, Connection, Joy, Kindness and Inclusion. We asked children and staff to engage in activities and discussions which promote positive actions, emphasising the importance of nurturing our culture of care, belonging and respect.

Our Student Wellbeing Leaders truly shone throughout this week as they planned and led engaging breaktime activities, such as friendship bracelet-making sessions, a running club, a chill-out reading zone, a board games area and a gratitude and appreciation letter-writing station.

On Wednesday, 13th November, we held a colourful celebration with our "Colour the World with Kindness" event for World Kindness Day. Children and staff wore bright clothing and participated in acts of kindness that spread positivity across the school community.

Another exciting "wellbeing win" this term has been the growing success of YouHQ, our child wellbeing platform. This innovative tool empowers students to regularly reflect and check in with their feelings, set personal goals and access helpful resources to support their mental and physical health.

Looking closer at the merging of wellbeing and tech, we hosted a Parent Forum: Finding Balance in the Digital Playground. This engaging discussion highlighted the importance of 'being'-ensuring we are present and connected in these tech-driven times. In the forum, we discussed the role of dopamine in technology use and how it impacts our brains, while exploring practical ways to achieve balance within our activity choices. The forum emphasised setting clear, healthy boundaries with technology and fostering mindful engagement.

As we wrap up another wonderful term, we're so proud of the energy, creativity, and care that the children have brought to our wellbeing initiatives.





BEING INSPIRED.....

This term, our talented Year 4 children brought the magic of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* to life on stage, delivering a powerful and thought-provoking message about sustainability. Inspired by our IEI lessons in Term 1.1, the children explored leading sustainable countries and the positive impact they are making on our planet. This learning journey fueled their creativity as they prepared for the production in Term 1.2.

In music lessons, the students dedicated themselves to learning a variety of songs and actions, while also honing their reading and performance skills to add expression and depth to their roles. Their hard work and enthusiasm shone through in every scene, captivating the audience and reminding us all of the importance of caring for the environment.

So DESS community, how will you be inspired by Year 4 to make a difference? As a school community, let's follow their example and take meaningful steps toward sustainability. Together, we can create a brighter, greener future!

MAGICAL PERFORMERS

It's been a very busy half term in the Performing Arts Department. Here is a little snapshot of everything that has been happening...

Some of our Year 3 children spent the term learning an orchestral instrument, culminating in a wonderful performance for their parents. We were delighted to be part of the Year 4 production of *The Lorax* where the children wowed everyone with their amazing singing, dancing and acting skills. As soon as the weather cooled down, we were straight outside to resume this year's Tuesday Tunes, and we are fortunate to have no shortage of children wanting to show off their talents. So much so, that we often must have a Thursday Tunes too!

This Term, as always, finished with some amazing events. This year our Senior Choir were lucky enough to be invited to sing at the tree lighting ceremony at Ski Dubai. It was a truly magical event for everyone involved and the children particularly loved getting to play in the Snow Park afterwards. Our Senior Choir were also one of the groups that performed at our Winter Concert, an event that showcases our fantastic ECA groups including Guitar Group, Bell Chorus, Dance Squad, Junior Choir, Rock Band and of course our amazing DESS Primary Oud Metha Orchestra, which keeps going from strength to strength. We also had so much fun singing along with FS1, FS2, Year 1 and Year 2 as they performed for their parents in our Festive Sing-alongs and concerts.

We are very excited already for Term 2, which will see our Senior Dance Squad perform at Desert Dance, the Year 2 production and of course the announcement of our Year 6 production.

Thank you, parents, as always for your wonderful support this term.



A DAY TO CELEBRATE THE UAE

This year's recent Union Day celebration was particularly special at DESS. As we gathered to honour the rich heritage and culture of the United Arab Emirates, we reflected on the importance of unity and community, inline with the #ZayedAndRashid campaign.

One of the key focuses of our Union Day this year was art, with the children taking part in collaborative projects. Throughout the day, these talented young artists worked together to create stunning murals celebrating Emirati culture and landscapes. The final pieces will be displayed across both Primary school sites, showcasing the creativity and teamwork of our children, while enhancing the school's festive atmosphere.

In addition, we transformed part of the school grounds into a Heritage Village, with the help of the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU), where attendees could immerse themselves in authentic Emirati culture. This area featured traditional displays, demonstrating customs and practices that reflect the UAE's history. The children had the opportunity to learn about various aspects of Emirati life and engage in hands-on activities that highlighted the rich heritage.

Our Union Day celebration also included a variety of specialist workshops, which offered the children unique experiences in archery, pearl diving, singing and dancing. These engaging sessions allowed them to explore traditional skills and arts, fostering an appreciation for Emirati culture in a fun and interactive manner. Technology and Literacy also played important roles in our celebration. Special ICT sessions were organised, encouraging the children to utilise digital tools to enhance their understanding of the UAE. In addition, our library hosted sessions focused on stories and literature that reflect the traditional culture, further enriching our knowledge and appreciation of Emirati heritage.

We are incredibly grateful to our Emirati parents, children and staff who contributed to making this Union Day a success. Your enthusiastic participation and support have strengthened our school community and provided our children with memorable learning experiences. We encourage families to continue celebrating the values of unity and diversity that make our country so unique. At DESS, we remain dedicated to fostering a vibrant environment where children can explore and celebrate the UAE's culture.

YEAR 6 RESIDENTIAL AT BAB AL NOJOURM, ABU DHABI

The Year 6 residential at Bab Al Nojourn, Abu Dhabi, proved to be an unforgettable adventure, offering children an enriching blend of physical challenge, team-building and personal growth. Set along the coast of Hydayriat Island, the experience allowed children to step out of their comfort zones and create lasting memories.

One of the highlights of the trip was the zip line, which tested the children's bravery and determination. Initially daunting for many, the zip line soon became a favourite activity, as children cheered each other (and their teachers!) on and overcame their fears. The 'Leap of Faith' was another standout feature - aptly named, this free fall activity pushed children to trust in themselves and their instructors, embodying the very essence of resilience and courage.

The high ropes circuit and climbing wall further encouraged our Year 6 children to engage in physical problem-solving whilst developing their confidence.

The water-based activities added another layer of excitement and camaraderie. Paddleboarding was a great way to test their balance and co-ordination, while kayaking offered more exploration of the water. The calm waters were the perfect setting for the children to try a new skill as well as use a number of the 6Cs to kayak in unison. Key skills of critical thinking and communication were also used during raft building, as well as gaining new skills in knot tying. Watching the groups collaborate, plan and eventually test their rafts in the water was both inspiring and entertaining, with plenty of laughter all round.

A big, heartfelt thank you to The Adventure Centre staff for providing the children (and our staff!) with fun-filled evenings around the campfire and playing 'Minute to Win it' - a team game in which the teachers and children alike enjoyed displaying their competitive spirit!



DESS SITE STAFF CRICKET SHOWDOWN

The cricket field at DESS College was alive with energy over the Union Day weekend as the DESS Primary Oud Metha site staff took on DESS College site staff in a friendly yet fiercely competitive match. Led by our own Director of Cricket, Mr Grenville, the Primary team showcased incredible passion, determination and teamwork.

The College site staff batted first, setting a challenging target with a mix of powerful strokes and smart running between the wickets. The Primary Oud Metha bowlers kept their cool under pressure, with sharp fielding and timely wickets keeping the game competitive.

In reply, the Primary Oud Metha staff put up a spirited chase. The entire team rallied around, contributing crucial runs and supporting one another in the tense moments. As the match came down to the wire, the crowd was on the edge of their seats. Despite their valiant efforts, in the final over, the Primary staff fell just short, making for an exhilarating finish.

A big congratulations to Mr Anis, who deservedly took home the Man of the Match award for his exceptional all-round performance.

It was heartwarming to see so many staff members, and even a few parents, turn up to cheer for both teams, creating a vibrant and supportive atmosphere. This match truly exemplified the spirit of the DESS community. We can't wait for the rematch in February!



PE & SPORT – A FANTASTIC END TO THE TERM

The second half of term in PE and Sport has been action-packed, with children across all year groups making impressive strides in both skill development and teamwork.

In PE lessons, the younger age groups focused on developing their gross motor and individual ball skills, before progressing to running, jumping and throwing. The KS2 children have been learning about fitness, while refining their skills across a wide range of athletics events.

In the pool, our younger FS and KS1 children have flourished, making huge gains in their swimming confidence and technique. Meanwhile, KS2 students have been honing their water polo skills and focusing on swimming for fitness.

On the sporting field and courts our teams have had an exciting term, achieving some great results in their league matches, with many teams competing in the league finals during this last week of term. Plus, it was great to host our ever-popular end of term Football and Netball tournaments. To make the final of the Netball and to win the Football made the day an even greater success!

Other highlights this term included the Year 4 Netball team winning the Dubai Schools Games competition, our Swim Squad taking first place at the DASSA Sprint Gala, the Under 11 Rugby team coming Runners-Up at the DC 7's and our Under 11 Netball team competing in the Plate Final at the Dubai Rugby 7's!

We've also seen fantastic individual performances at the DASSA Aquathlon and Cross-Country events, with our athletes demonstrating resilience, determination and school spirit in these challenging competitions.

Looking ahead, we are excited for next term as we build towards Sports Days and shift our team sports focus to Rugby and Girls Football. There is also a lot to look forward to, with the BSME Netball Tournament, BSME Games and an exciting overseas trip to Qatar for the BSME Football Tournament and the inaugural "DESS Cup" against DESS Doha.

Keep up the fantastic work everyone and have a wonderful winter break!



A FITNESS FRENZY

The Dubai Fitness Challenge 30x30 brought an incredible wave of energy and excitement to our school community this year, with students, staff and families enthusiastically committing to 30 minutes of daily activity for 30 days. From our vibrant launch assembly to the spectacular finale event, this initiative was a resounding success, highlighting the importance of health, fitness and wellbeing.

Our journey began with a high-energy launch assembly, inspiring children to embrace the challenge and make fitness a fun, daily priority. This event set the tone for an action-packed month, offering opportunities to stay active, try new sports and foster a strong sense of community.

Throughout the month, our daily sporting offer ensured there was something for everyone. From engaging athletics relays to dynamic fitness circuits, the schedule was thoughtfully designed to cater to a variety of interests and abilities. Special golfing opportunities added an exciting twist, introducing many children to a new sport while helping them develop coordination and precision.

The challenge culminated in a memorable finale event, a true celebration of fitness, teamwork and fun. The day featured afrofit dance sessions, cricket matches, cheerleading routines, fun pool activities and games of ultimate frisbee. The joy and camaraderie on display were a testament to the success of the initiative, leaving everyone with lasting memories of an incredible day.

We are immensely proud of how our school community came together to embrace the Dubai Fitness Challenge. The energy, enthusiasm and teamwork displayed throughout the 30 days have been truly inspiring. Here's to an active and healthy future! We can't wait to take on the challenge again in 2025!



LOOKING AHEAD.....

Next term, as we dive into the 'Explore' theme of our curriculum, we will be taking full advantage of every opportunity for adventure, both inside and outside the classroom. From getting messy in hands-on activities to discovering new things about our local area, our community and even further afield, it's set to be a term of exploration and discovery.

After the fantastic success of our Year 6 residential trip, we're thrilled to share it's the turn of Year 4 and Year 5 to embark on their own overnight adventures to Hatta and Al Ain this term! But that's not all – our ski trip and environmental studies trip to Cyprus are also on the horizon, promising a term full of thrilling residential experiences.

In addition to our exciting trips and events, and with the weather on our side, the term will also be filled with thrilling sporting fixtures and inspiring musical moments, as our DESS children continue to showcase their talents and teamwork.

We're also gearing up for our Cultural Day, ready to celebrate the vibrant and diverse cultures that make up our beloved school community, and as we approach Children's Mental Health Week, we'll embrace the theme 'Yourself, Grow Yourself,' supporting our young people in nurturing their wellbeing and personal growth.

There's so much to look forward to, it's set to be a fun-filled and memorable half-term.

