

# Sunmarke School, Dubai

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: Sunday 13 October – Wednesday 16 October 2019

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Team: Kim Dorian-Kemp, John Shutt

Age Group: 3 – 18 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 11 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.

The DfE issued a policy update 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 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 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

Sunmarke School is a large, independent, co-educational school for pupils aged from 3 to 18 years, located in the Jumeirah Village Triangle of Dubai. It is owned by Fortes Education, who also operate nurseries and a primary school in Dubai. The school opened in 2016 with 727 pupils and currently has 1461 pupils. There are 200 children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), 561 pupils in primary and 700 pupils in secondary and post-16. The number of pupils who left the school in 2018-19 for further or higher education was 78 and 55 transferred to other schools in Dubai.

Pupils come from 89 nationalities. The largest percentages are 15% from the UK, 21% from other European nations, 7% from Egypt and 5% from Russia. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) account for 10% of pupils and 72% are bilingual. There are 158 teachers, 88% of whom come from the UK. There are 76 classes and an achievement centre for pupils requiring additional support.

The principal was appointed in August 2019. He leads the headteachers of EYFS, primary and secondary. They are supported by senior and middle leaders.

The curriculum is based on the English national curriculum and the International Baccalaureate curriculum modified for the UAE context. It complies with UAE requirements for Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies. Pupils can enter or re-enter UK schools without significant disruption.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors, who spent 11 days in the school. The school requested the inspection ten weeks before it started and agreed the date. Prior to the inspection the team examined the school's self-review, BSO compliance documents and other information. Inspectors visited 49 lessons and held 20

meetings with the owners, leaders, staff, parents and pupils. They observed the start and end of the day, attended assemblies, reviewed samples of pupils' work, analysed information, reviewed computer records and observed diverse aspects of the school's activity. In addition to meeting pupils and parents, they reviewed recent surveys to gather the views of stakeholders, including staff, parents and pupils. Inspectors paid particular attention to safeguarding policies and arrangements.

## Evaluation of the school

Sunmarke School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for all its pupils. **The school meets all 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.**

**Progress and attainment in English are at least good and frequently outstanding.** The majority of pupils achieve standards that are well above UK averages by the end of each key stage. Over 55% of pupils use English as an additional language. Internal and external assessments confirm that most make at least good progress. Children in the EYFS make outstanding progress in developing spoken and written English. The emphasis on nurturing a love of reading extends across the school.

In EYFS and key stage 1, systematic phonics teaching helps children to understand the relationship between letter shapes in written language and sounds in spoken language. They use this to compose sentences using simple grammar. Pupils acquire and use an extensive English vocabulary in lessons and when at leisure.

Writing is well developed and supported in key stage 1 by the 'talking the text' approach that establishes language structures. In key stage 2, pupils write inventively in a range of genres. In Year 10, inspired by a witness account, they wrote evocatively in the character of a child soldier.

Secondary pupils and post-16 students debate regularly, make presentations and performances to diverse audiences and participate in world debating championships and the Emirates Literacy Festival. Post-16 students studying Othello compared racial prejudice in the play to that in modern society and inferred powerful meaning from Shakespeare's writing.

Pupils with English as an additional language, or in the early stages of learning English, follow a six-week English immersion programme, where rich and experiential learning builds and reinforces language and understanding.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding. Children in EYFS build their understanding of number, shape and measures through exciting, yet challenging, activities in cross-curricular themes. Classrooms and informal areas are transformed and become magical settings where children explore, create and communicate, building knowledge and skills while having fun. Progress is consistently above the school's expectations.

In primary, progress and attainment using analyses by a commercial assessment scheme are consistently above the expectations of the scheme. Outcomes for boys and girls show minimal variation. Tackling interesting mathematical questions and taking the initiative to explore different

calculation methods extends their knowledge of number operations. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in cross-curricular topics, problem-solving tasks and investigations.

Secondary pupils enjoy working independently to solve demanding and complex questions by generating alternative solutions as they seek answers. They explain their mathematical reasoning using geometric, algebraic and arithmetical language correctly. When answers need graphs, pupils draw axes and plot values clearly. They show a thorough understanding of how to present and organise mathematical work, as well as using computers to analyse complex data sets using spreadsheets and pivot tables. A-level and GCSE results are consistently outstanding. However, the number of pupils taking A-level is small, limiting valid statistical comparison.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding. Commercial assessment scheme analyses confirm consistently high outcomes in comparison with primary pupils in the UK. Children in the EYFS use their natural curiosity to explore the world around them; identify differences between living and non-living things and start to build a scientific vocabulary. They explored light and dark during an imaginative lesson to design a costume visible in darkness as part of a space project linked to the national excitement over the first Emirati astronaut. Curiosity and interest in all scientific disciplines are evident throughout primary, secondary and post-16. Pupils in Year 4 worked diligently to investigate human digestion, record their observations and annotate drawings. They confidently tackle challenging tasks using scientific methods, boosted by teachers' high expectations and perception of them as scientists.

Secondary pupils move on to become biologists, chemists and physicists using complex scientific terms accurately in each scientific discipline. They handle resources and hazardous materials carefully; checking measurements and calibrating equipment as needed. They explain, make deductions, create and test hypotheses naturally. They collaborate to deepen understanding, for example when a Year 9 pupil asked, 'Why didn't it react like I thought it would?' Another answered, 'How do you know the volume of the catalyst was correct?'

While following examination syllabuses, pupils and students make meaningful links between theoretical content and real-life situations. They are highly motivated to understand differences between type 1 and type 2 diabetes; calculate amounts of methane and carbon dioxide in greenhouse gases; and test theories to deepen their understanding. They record information accurately and clearly, following expectations for GCSE, A-level and International Baccalaureate examinations.

Children and pupils attain high standards and make outstanding progress in **technology**. Children in the EYFS are confident users of tablet computers and programmable toys and are excited when exploring different controls and functions. Primary pupils use a range of applications to record or organise their work, analyse results and carry out research. They understand the principles of programming and use tablet computers to programme moving toys. The use of technology is an integral part of learning and teaching throughout the school and secondary pupils are adept at using computing, including multi-media, either in discrete lessons or as a support to other subjects.

Children and pupils attain high standards and make excellent progress in **other subjects**. They relish gaining knowledge and skills through the broad curriculum. This starts from EYFS when

young children confidently explore being creative through different art media and the performing arts. Older pupils and students apply knowledge and skills from the core subjects to extend their learning, for example powerfully using spoken and written English in history. The stunning displays throughout the school include exceptional art by pupils of all ages. Physical education and sports allow pupils to develop skills, stamina, teamwork and coordination, both indoors and outdoors, and many have ambitions to participate at high levels.

Sunmarke is fully inclusive and endeavours to identify both unique and common barriers to learning that face individual pupils with **SEND**. There is also a specific programme to support pupils with speech and language difficulties. These pupils receive carefully tailored support, enabling them to thrive and grow both personally and academically. Achievement centre staff and class teachers design individual achievement plans based on individual interests, diagnostic assessments and knowledge of the whole child. Consequently, their pupils make at least good progress against targets. All pupils are valued members of Sunmarke, whether in lessons alongside their peers, working in small groups or receiving individual support.

### **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 are 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).

### **Brief references to any key strengths and weaknesses**

The philosophy of positive education, where governance, leadership and management show exceptional commitment to achieve excellence, is firmly established. The school's promise of 'Where amazing happens' is fulfilled for children, pupils and students. Teachers are empowered to plan innovative lessons where they share their subject knowledge and skills successfully to motivate pupils, who regularly exceed their teacher's expectations and personal targets. The positive educational approach is reflected in pupils' exemplary behaviour, eagerness to learn and commitment to Sunmarke school as a family.

Leadership combines high ambitions with realism, recognising the challenge of sustaining high standards and excellence as the school continues to grow. Refining existing practice to remain at the forefront of outstanding practice forms part of that challenge.

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during October 2019, 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**

**protected characteristics of the UK Equality Act 2010 which are precluded by local laws are marriage and civil partnership; gender reassignment; sex and sexual orientation. 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**

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met but the standard in paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) is not met because of the requirements of the host country. This relates to the provisions of the UK Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics of the UK Equality Act 2010 which are precluded by local laws are marriage and civil partnership; gender reassignment; sex and sexual orientation.

**The curriculum is outstanding** and meets the needs of all pupils, enabling them to make excellent progress in their academic studies and personal development. It is based on the English national curriculum and the EYFS curriculum, with the addition of the International Baccalaureate and the UAE curriculum for Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies.

Sunmarke prepares pupils to enter or re-enter the British education system at primary, secondary or tertiary level. It has sufficient flexibility to accommodate the needs of pupils moving on to higher education in the UK, UAE or other countries.

The curriculum is ambitious, highly creative and broad, providing rich experiences which deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, enabling them to thrive and adapt in an ever-changing world. The school's 'Positive Education' strategy underpins teaching and learning, allowing pupils to develop the skills to analyse information objectively and make reasoned judgments. Pupils acquire a genuine understanding of their rights and responsibilities as members of a diverse international community. Careers education allows older pupils to consider how their choice of post-16 courses may affect their options for university courses or professional training.

Dialogue in lessons is stimulating and draws on pupils' perspectives, leading to them thinking critically and engage in meaningful discussions to extend their learning. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrated this during a mature debate on the long-term impact of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking occupations of England. Pupils consider and build on the contributions of others, for example, when Year 13 business studies students debated the evaluation of risk in making investment decisions. Pupils' use of technical language and higher-order questions demonstrates deep conceptual understanding and enables them to tackle demanding topics with confidence.

The school recruits staff carefully to meet the demands of the curriculum. Teachers, support staff, resources and facilities are organised to enhance teaching and learning and meet the needs of all pupils. Individual pupils benefit from a tailored curriculum which meets their needs and interests through a fully inclusive unique and aspirational pathway. Planning identifies the needs of different learners, with lesson plans amended to reflect the results of formative or summative assessments. This includes those who are gifted and talented, have SEND and those for whom English is an additional language or are in the early stages of learning English.

As a result, their progress is exceptionally good and often outstanding. Cross-curricular learning allows pupils to apply knowledge and skills in meaningful ways.

Curriculum review is established as part of ongoing self-evaluation and the relentless drive for improvement. Minor adjustments are considered equally valuable as more strategic ones, for example changing examination boards and subjects. All decisions are based on evidence and frequently reflect highly regarded academic research.

Classrooms and learning areas inspire pupils' imagination. The outdoor area for children in EYFS provides boundless opportunities to be curious and explore. The promise of 'Where amazing happens' begins here. Children make the most of the giant stage of the Sunmarke Opera House to show their creativity and performing arts skills.

Projects in the EYFS are unique, bespoke and build on individual children's curiosity and interests. Activities use an imaginative 'hook' to motivate or spark interest. For example, building vocabulary and use of language to identify position and spatial relationships between objects by helping a toy fireman locate the source of a fire.

Resources are well chosen to support all subjects and allow pupils to thrive. Teachers draw on the context of Dubai, the UAE and the Gulf, making connections with other locations and links with cross-curricular themes. Environmental concerns are openly discussed, always with a focus on finding solutions and taking personal responsibility for sustainability and tackling pollution.

The range of extra-curricular activities is impressive and well supported. Options for primary school pupils include performing and creative arts, sports, science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics inquiry projects and languages. Options for secondary pupils extend these with the Duke of Edinburgh award, Model United Nations, application of media studies, enterprise, preparation for university and life skills and mindfulness.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.** The school meets the requirements of this standard. Pupils, including those with SEND, make outstanding progress as a result of inspirational teaching. Teachers confidently use their subject knowledge and understanding of how their pupils learn in planning and delivering lessons which inspire and engage, so learning is highly successful.

In the EYFS, all staff have a deep understanding of how children learn and provide a personalised curriculum to develop independent learning skills and knowledge of the world around them. Children play a vital role in their learning and through careful observations and higher-order questions teachers use every opportunity to develop and deepen children's knowledge and learning.

Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is evident in their planning and delivery of highly engaging lessons. Their deep understanding of every pupils' needs, combined with knowledge of the chosen curriculum and examination expectations, leads to outstanding progress. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for the next stage in their education, including transferring to a school in the UK.

All subjects come to life where pupils are absorbed and motivated and as a result make exceptionally good progress. Year 4 pupils carried out practical investigations of digestion in humans. The teacher's high expectations led them to explain, "Solids are broken down into liquids by enzyme chemical action that provides nourishment to all organs". In Year 5 science, pupils created an animated simulation of a lunar month, introduced by the teacher as an urgent mission from Professor Brian Cox. She told pupils they needed to 'be cognitively sweating'. In Year 11 drama, pupils communicated profound concepts and artistic intent about the war on drugs through dynamic facial expressions, gesture, stillness and stance.

Teachers and pupils use technology imaginatively throughout the school. Year 2 pupils used computer programming to build a sequence of commands to move a robotic toy forwards and make it change direction. They described what they had achieved, then extended the challenge by exploring how to programme the robot to move backwards. In Year 11, pupils applied extensive digital literacy to corporate business with sophisticated word processing, data handling and multi-media culminating in a presentation on developing biometrics for e-safety.

Support staff are highly trained and used effectively to support teaching and learning. Pupils with SEND are supported exceptionally well in the achievement centre and individual achievement plans guide carefully planned and targeted provision.

Assessment information is analysed forensically and any concerns are addressed swiftly. Raising achievement plans and intervention measures are rooted in research and carefully structured to support pupils in reaching their full potential. Academic enrichment for high attainers and wise deployment of individual needs teachers and teaching assistants for pupils needing additional support ensure that the needs of all are met.

Assessment information is focused, up to date, used to set targets and clearly shows progress in learning. Assessment for learning is established and thorough. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly during lessons and respond promptly when additional support, stretch or challenge is required.

Pupils have exceptional attitudes to learning. Positive behaviour is the expectation and disruption in lessons is rare.

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

Sunmarke School meets the requirements for British Schools Overseas. 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 school is highly inclusive and teaches pupils to respect those who are different from themselves. Leaders pay due regard to promoting respect for age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief as set out in the Equality Act 2010. However, due to local laws, they are unable to meet fully the requirements of the Act in relation to civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is **outstanding**. The school's vision is underpinned by its 'Positive Education' ethos and reflects fundamental British values.

Teachers plan meaningful opportunities to learn about British culture, values, heritage and society across the curriculum. Examples include contemporary and classical English literature, history, social justice and responsibility, as well as practical use of British and European currencies in mathematics.

The celebration of individuality and diversity underpins the delicate blend of academic learning with character development and emotional well-being. It prepares pupils with crucial life-skills: strength of character, courage, optimism, resilience, growth mindset, kindness, empathy, teamworking skills, emotional and physical well-being and self-control. Teachers gently encourage children and pupils to reflect on their well-being and that of others, making it an accepted part of behaviour.

The 'Values in Action' programme explores one value in depth weekly, generating philosophical discussions rich in profound thought and reflection. In key stage 1, pupils gave mature and rational responses to 'Would you rather...?' questions. In key stage 4 they distinguished fact and opinion in televised debates between scientists and politicians. This led to them requesting a debate on the ethics of peer reviews of scientific evidence.

Pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes illustrate the strong moral fibre that runs through the school. They show immense respect for their peers and adults regardless of their role. Exceptional courtesy is evident, including their appreciation of the maintenance and cleaning teams expressed by opening doors and thanking those men and women for their work. This enhances the sense of genuine community and respect for others regardless of their different background and culture.

Everyone recognises and respects diversity and appreciates that some disabilities or limitations may not be visible. Pupils are encouraged to think about the impact of unkind words. 'Say Something Positive' displays exploit social media by using a Facebook-style design where pupils write kind words illustrating the power of words to harm or heal. The 'Restorative Justice' approach to behaviour management means that pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and are supported in healing the hurt caused by their actions or words during lapses of behaviour. It is highly successful in reducing unacceptable behaviour and builds personal and social responsibility.

The commitment to well-being and happiness is pervasive. It ranges from stress reduction for pupils taking external examinations to well-being during professional development and encouraging parents to adopt this approach and ensure consistency between home and school. The buddy system, counselling service and empowerment workshops form part of the established well-being approach.

Pupils understand injustice and inequality in societies across the globe. Regular contributions to charities include those supporting mental illness and underprivilege. Pupils are proud of their school's hosting of the Infinity Games which was supported by the 'Special Olympics UAE'.

Numerous opportunities for pupil leadership and democracy include elections for peer counsellors, house captains, positivity patrol and head boy and head girl. In the EYFS, children elect 'eco-warriors' to champion their environmental concerns.

Pupils take the initiative to promote genuine inclusion, which is evident in the 'You'll Never Walk Alone Campaign' where every pupil is valued and contributes to the Sunmarke community. This

reflects the commitment and belief of the owners in developing the 'hearts, souls and minds' of each pupil alongside academic learning.

Differences of faith and belief are viewed positively, allowing pupils to increase awareness of global cultures. International Day celebrates cultural diversity and the rich heritage of pupils. Celebrations of religious festivals include Diwali, Eid, Chinese and Iranian New Year and Christian festivals. Significant events in British culture are marked and celebrated with respectful demeanour, including Armistice Day, when pupils created a World War 1 Remembrance Day installation.

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

The school **meets the requirements** of the standard, regulatory requirements and the cultural obligations of the UAE. Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and children are **outstanding**. Safeguarding policies, procedures and systems fully comply with local requirements and reflect UK requirements and guidance. Training to ensure all aspects of welfare, health and safety, particularly safeguarding, is extensive, ensuring that procedures are followed for all concerns. Actions are recorded, addressed and monitored. Parents and carers are well informed about safeguarding and value how the school strives to keep every child safe. Arrangements to care for children in EYFS and keep them safe are carefully designed and procedures followed throughout the day.

The exceptional care is evident in the commitment and skills of staff. Policies, procedures and training are diligently planned and followed in a friendly and supportive atmosphere where pupils and staff feel safe, secure and at ease. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and are confident to suggest improvements to strengthen welfare, health and safety further.

Children's and pupils' eagerness to attend school is reflected in excellent attendance. At 96.3% for 2018-19 this exceeds local expectations. Lateness is rare at the start of the day and for lessons.

Sophisticated systems keep pupils safe when using school buses and ensure that they travel on the correct bus, leave from the agreed location and are met by an approved adult with appropriate identification. Technology tracks the buses and pupils leaving the school and their bus. All buses have safety belts, first-aid kits and fire extinguishers. Drivers and escorts receive training in their use, as well as in safeguarding pupils.

Arrangements and resources to keep pupils and adults safe during emergencies are comprehensive and reviewed regularly. Emergency evacuations and lockdowns are practised frequently, making everyone familiar with their role and responsibility during any emergency. Practices are monitored and reviewed to identify possible improvements. Equipment is easily accessible throughout the school and specialist contractors carry out checks in line with regulations.

Pupils and children understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for eating nutritious food and exercising. Cross-curricular topics enable them to link events at home and school to academic learning and build personal responsibility for diet, hygiene and fitness.

Parents and pupils are confident that the school will not compromise safety, whether on the school site or during field visits or at other events. Risk assessments follow established policies

and are thorough. Appropriate actions are taken to mitigate risk and plan contingencies. Pupils acquire the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe and are confident in sharing their concerns with adults. This includes the need for care and vigilance when using technology, including mobile devices.

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

The school **meets all the requirements** of the standard and is fully compliant with all national requirements of the UAE. It also complies with the expectations for the suitability of staff working with children in the UK.

Extensive checks on identity, right to work and reside in the UAE, police records, medical fitness, previous employment, references and qualifications, as well as the suitability of leaders and staff at all levels are stringent and routinely followed before any appointment is made. Where applicants have no UK clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service, the school seeks an International Child Protection Certificate. All such information is held securely on a single comprehensive record.

The same procedures apply to members of the governing board, showing consistency and compliance at all levels. The suitability of school bus drivers and escorts is checked by the school and the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority, which also provides training on safeguarding before drivers are allowed to transport children and pupils of any age.

The number of designated safeguarding leaders has been increased to provide easy access for anyone needing to express a concern. The safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment systems are meticulously followed and reflect those in England and the requirements of the UAE.

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

The school **meets the requirements** of the standard.

The premises, facilities and resources are **outstanding**. They are age appropriate and provide a safe and stimulating learning setting.

Pupils enjoy exceptional learning facilities both within the building and in all outdoor areas. The spacious entrance and grand staircase create a valued informal area where visitors, pupils, parents and staff interact informally. Careful attention has been given to creating a calm environment appealing to different senses through eye-catching motivational art and displays, subtle acoustic treatment and a fragrant aroma.

The spacious classrooms, shared areas and specialist facilities are enhanced by stunning presentations of pupils' work and an inspirational décor, all skilfully arranged to encourage thought and reflection in adults and pupils.

Specialist facilities allow easy access to the inspiring curriculum. These include exceptional EYFS areas for free-flow activities, an auditorium with stage and orchestra pit and well-stocked libraries for each phase. Computer suites are generously resourced and supplement technology in classrooms. Science laboratories, technology workshops and specialist areas for performing

and creative arts encourage all to succeed and thrive. Excellent sports facilities include a flood-lit pitch, a five-a-side pitch, two multi-use games areas, tennis courts, adventure zones, two pools and sports halls.

The dedicated achievement centre for pupils with complex needs provides individual and small group work areas and a hub for staff who support those pupils in their class groups. The importance of well-being is reflected in dedicated meeting rooms, the primary happiness hub and secondary well-being room.

Maintenance and hygiene are well planned, discretely delivered and coordinated. The building, swimming pools, sports facilities and equipment are safe, well-maintained, regularly serviced and meet or exceed required safety and hygiene regulations. Diligent cleaning teams keep all areas, including toilets, showers and changing facilities, immaculately clean and hygienic throughout the day.

Medical facilities and care are provided from the well-equipped clinic, containing treatment and recovery rooms, which is staffed by two nurses and a doctor. They ensure that first aid kits are complete and provide additional first-aid training for staff.

Canteens are scrupulously clean and staff uphold strict standards for hygiene and food handling.

This high-quality building, with its spacious and creative design does not appear overcrowded, despite the high number of pupils and numerous adults using the facilities. The resources and accommodation are used to enhance learning for children and pupils of all ages.

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

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

Recent surveys indicate that parents are extremely happy with communication from the school and they are well informed about all aspects of school life, including their child's progress. These views were also expressed at a meeting with parents during the inspection. They were extremely positive about Sunmarke school and appreciate being able to raise concerns and queries and compliment staff at all levels. The range of communication channels, with workshops and seminars for parents, allows them to be well-informed about how to help their child learn at home.

Parents are genuine partners in their child's learning, being encouraged to contribute to projects and activities in meaningful ways. The recent project linked to the UAE's first astronaut included parents and their children making model rockets at home, which were later 'launched' at the school. Parents spoke of gaining knowledge from their child and recognising their high-level skills when assembling and at times, redesigning, their models.

The leadership team welcomes parents and pupils warmly as they enter the school each morning, reflecting the caring ethos and ease of access to staff. The views of all stakeholders are gathered through regular surveys and both formal and informal meetings. The formal Parents Advisory Board provides a valuable channel for two-way communication between governors and parents and indicates the importance given to parents' views. The Parents

Advisory Board has a close working partnership with the owners and is valued for members' insight as parents and different professional perspectives.

The school uses technology in carefully planned ways to enhance communication with parents and other stakeholders. The comprehensive website contains clear and plentiful information including external inspection reports and headline results from public examinations. Statements of the school's purpose, ethos, admissions policies, safeguarding policies and procedures, key staff, academic calendar and curriculum are easily accessible and available in other formats. Parents of EYFS children are well informed and reassured by up-to-date information about their child in the online learning journal. Personal information is carefully protected with parents having access to a secure portal.

Formal reports about each pupil's behaviour, attainment and progress are produced five times each year and four times in Years 11 to 13. These reports are complemented by an extended report on attainment and progress in each subject once a year. Reports for secondary pupils also include information about attitudes to learning and predicted outcomes in external examinations.

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

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

The complaints process is very clear and easily accessible for parents and pupils. The focus is on addressing concerns at an early stage wherever possible and sets out the different actions when complaints are escalated. The policy includes an independent review of a complaint should this become necessary.

The complaints policy is complemented by a whistle-blowing policy with an additional layer for feedback and raising concerns. Common to both policies is respect and confidentiality for all parties, as appropriate, and commitment to address and overcome the concern raised.

All information about complaints and concerns is stored confidentially.

### **Standard 8. Leadership and management**

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

The principal provides strong leadership and support for leaders and staff at all levels with a clear commitment to the school's purpose of 'inspiring students to flourish every day'. The unwavering focus on sharing the school's strategic direction and high expectations is perceptible throughout the school and throughout the day. The principal demonstrated total faith in his leaders and staff during the 2019 staff induction programme by making a stage dive, confident of the strength and trust in colleagues at all levels. This trust is evident in the dynamic working partnerships and relationships between leaders and staff.

The expansion of leadership teams reflects the increasing numbers of pupils. The cohesive framework of executive, senior and middle leadership with defined lines of accountability ensures

consistency and allows strategic decisions to be shared promptly. Careful planning for strategic leadership is evident in genuinely devolved responsibilities.

Leaders are highly visible and easily accessible to parents and other stakeholders, leading to very positive relationships that engender confidence, trust, and transparency. They are fully committed to the positive education approach to learning and personal development and they provide powerful role models.

The owners provide clear corporate governance, are actively involved in school life and fully committed to the school's purpose. This is achieved by careful balancing of visibility and governance, so maintaining the essential distinction between both roles. The owners and members of the Board are clear about their role and the contribution of governance as being 'only as strong as the organisation's collective wisdom'. They recognise the merit and benefit of including stakeholders' views and experience at a strategic level. The formal Parents Advisory Board is well informed and provides broad knowledge from different perspectives, yet stays focused on the relentless drive to improve teaching and learning. The owners meet the student council regularly to hear their reflections on existing practice and how the school can sustain advances and excellence. Stakeholders are encouraged to, and do, ask difficult questions at board meetings.

The comprehensive framework for school improvement planning is highly structured and builds on an established cycle of planning, monitoring, self-evaluation and review. Planning is informed by action research relating to academic and well-being development. Careful induction programmes ensure that all staff understand how to incorporate well-being into lessons and pastoral care. Highly structured improvement plans are focused and clear with teaching and learning driving the improvement priorities. Whole-school plans are shared by cascading plans for each area of the school, then further still into subject improvement plans. Policies and guidance documents are comprehensive, easy to understand and reviewed regularly, although school leaders are keen to refine existing systems to trigger reviews.

Self-evaluation is securely established as part of the commitment for continual improvement with a reflective culture at all levels. It is tailored to the needs of each part of the school and used to inform strategic plans and professional development.

The budget is carefully allocated across fixed and variable costs, allowing for strategic plans for expansion. The principal works closely with finance and marketing teams to monitor spending and budget forecasts, ensure compliance and meet pupils' needs

The owners invest heavily in the professional growth of staff at all levels through ongoing personalised and strategic development. The value of in-house coaches to challenge and support colleagues without fear of judgement is evident in teachers being confident enough to experiment and take risks in their lessons. Development opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders include English National Professional Qualification programmes. These also bring the benefits of leaders having current knowledge of UK education practice.

Leaders show great humility and are committed to an ongoing drive for improvement through agile and forward thinking. They recognise the challenge of attaining excellence at the same time as continuing to increase the number of pupils.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

Sunmarke 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 points for development;

1. School policies are extensive, easily accessible to staff and parents and incorporate guidance and working protocols from the UAE and UK. Leaders recognise that procedures to trigger reviews of policies and guidance when changes occur need to be refined.
2. The school needs to build upon and sustain the successful strategies that have led to the upward trend in standards, alongside the strategic development of new initiatives and innovation.

## 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>	Sunmarke School
<b>Type of school</b>	International school
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2016
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 – 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1461
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 44,900 – AED 73,900
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Address of school</b>	Jumeirah Village Triangle, Dubai United Arab Emirates PO Box 24877
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 04 423 8900
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:sunmarkeschool@forteseducation.com">sunmarkeschool@forteseducation.com</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Neil Hopkin
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Sanjay Mankani

## 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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