

# Safa British School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 7 February – 10 February 2022

Lead Inspector: Nadine Powrie

Team: David Bowles

Liz Kelly

Age Group: 3 – 14 years

Report Published: 21 March 2022

Report Reference Number: 03/012/2022



## 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 three 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 their 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 the UK Government's Get Information about Schools (GIAS) website**

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

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

Safa British School is a British international school located in Al Safa 1, close to Jumeirah, Dubai. Safa British School opened in September 2004. There are 1185 pupils aged three to 14 years. The primary phase is slightly larger than the average primary phase in Dubai.

The secondary phase opened in September 2019 and now has pupils from Years 7 to 9. In 2020, Safa British School celebrated a move to a new, larger campus and there are further opportunities for expansion in September 2022 with the current Year 9 cohort moving into key stage 4. 18 new members of teaching staff joined the school in September 2021 and a further 10 have been appointed for September 2022.

Safa British School Dubai follows the English early years framework for the early years foundation stage (EYFS). This prepares pupils for the English national curriculum, which continues throughout key stages 1, 2 and 3. The school proudly embraces an ethos of inclusivity, with well-established Link support to challenge, boost and support pupils. Leaders are innovative. The diverse curriculum, including the Bridge provision, an alternative education option for pupils with developmental delay, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN),

GCSE and BTEC options, ensures that pupils are ably supported in continuing their education in prestigious institutions, regionally and internationally.

The majority of pupils are Arab (29%), Asian (18%) and British (12%). Overall, there are 78 different nationalities represented in the school population. A majority of pupils do not have English as their first language. There are 225 pupils with identified additional needs. Safa British School is committed to providing authentic inclusive provision for pupils of all abilities, as well as embracing the multicultural environment within which it is situated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school closed between March 2020 and June 2020. All pupils had equal access to distance learning. The school put in place rigorous processes to ensure that standards were maintained. Attendance remained very high. Safeguarding arrangements, including a well-being risk assessment for staff and pupils, were implemented. Communication with all stakeholders was described by them as 'highly effective'. Following the school's assessment to identify gaps in learning for a very small minority of pupils, it put in place a modified 'recovery curriculum' which has enabled all pupils to catch up.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed in December 2021 and the inspection dates were agreed upon with the school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the school before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 56 lessons in classes and one live online lesson. Four were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. Inspectors gave feedback to three members of staff.

Thirty-two meetings took place with leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, parents and carers and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and the work produced digitally. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies, and operational and strategic plans. The school's safeguarding arrangements were inspected. The views of parents, pupils and staff were also considered.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Safa British School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 14 years.

The school meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of legislation in the United Arab Emirates. 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.

In **English**, pupils across the school make outstanding progress and almost all reach standards that are above national averages in England. Many pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and a large number join the school other than at the usual times. Teachers assess pupils frequently. They expertly use the information gained to identify and address gaps in learning. As a result, late joiners, as well as those who have EAL and those with special educational needs

---

and/or disabilities (SEND), catch up very quickly with their peers and can successfully follow the same ambitious English curriculum.

Most children in the early years arrive with skills in English language and communication that are below those typical for their age. The language-rich learning environment and skilful teaching provide excellent opportunities for children to enjoy developing strong listening and speaking skills. Children leaving the Reception Year are very well prepared for the demands of the English national curriculum in Year 1.

By the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in phonics is above the UK average. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make outstanding progress. By the time they leave Year 6, they have reached standards in reading and writing that are above those typically found in England. By Year 6, pupils write in a wide range of genres with increasing confidence and sophistication. Over the past three years, reading standards were higher than those in writing. However, these differences are now diminishing.

In key stage 3, pupils continue to make outstanding progress and reach standards above those expected for their age. They study a wide range of texts and are beginning to use the language of literary criticism with insight and ease.

From the moment children arrive at the school, staff foster in them a love of reading. In every year group adults encourage children to read an increasingly diverse range of texts for pleasure.

Standards in **mathematics** are high and progress is outstanding for all pupils, including those with SEND and those with EAL. There is no significant gender gap. Detailed lesson planning, high expectations, outstanding subject knowledge, an ambitious curriculum, skilled teaching assistants, exemplary teaching and rigorous assessment enable all pupils to thrive in their lessons.

In the early years, children enter with skills below what is typical for their age. From low starting points, they make rapid progress. Provision in EYFS is extremely responsive to children's needs. The vast majority of children are engaged and motivated and as a result they concentrate for extended periods of time. The environment, both inside and outside, is inviting and stimulating, providing carefully chosen activities. Children develop their understanding through reasoning skills, using patterns and manipulatives. For example, pupils established the pattern of 20 in two tens' frames for organising counting.

By the time they reach Year 6 pupils attain well above UK standards. They enjoy the challenge of solving mathematical problems and carrying out investigation. The high quality of interventions with SEND and/or EAL pupils ensures that they are achieving as well as their peers. Throughout lessons, there is a strong emphasis on applying skills to solve problems through stimulating activities, including the use of digital learning with QR codes. The scrutiny of how pupils work out their answer is systematic in all classes. Teachers' questioning consistently promotes higher-order thinking skills and pupils enjoy the stimulation. For example, in a Year 6 lesson one pupil said, 'What if I've worked it out in a different way?' The vast majority of pupils are confident in comparing, ordering percentages and using decimal numbers and proper fractions. A few pupils are involved in the UK maths challenge.

Rapid progress continues in the secondary school and by the time they reach Year 9, a vast majority of pupils can calculate the frequency and angle of sectors and can convert fractions to decimals or percentages. Consistent and methodical recall from previous learning, a variety of independent and group work drawing on pupils' critical thinking, deep questioning, such as, 'How are you going to work out if that works or not?', enable all pupils to thrive in lessons.

---

In **science** pupils achieve standards that are above those expected in England. Progress is outstanding in all phases of the school.

In the early years children enter the school with skills which are less developed than is typical for their age. They make rapid progress because of a well-designed and imaginative curriculum that meets the needs of the children very well and stimulates their interest in the world around them. By the end of the early years, children are familiar with scientific terms such as exploring, investigating and observation. They use the natural environment to carry out experiments. They explore what happens to seeds to see if they can grow a beanstalk as big as in the story 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. They investigate what happens when they wash their hands and explore materials such as tin foil, bubble wrap and tissue paper.

In the primary school all groups of pupils continue to make rapid progress and by the end of Year 6, attainment is above that seen in England. Pupils with SEND attain at a level in line with other pupils. Well-planned lessons that provide topics and activities that the pupils find interesting, supported by very clear demonstrations by teachers, ensure that pupils rapidly develop scientific language, understanding and skills. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils investigated how animals adapt to their environment by scrutinising the effect of sand on camels' eyelashes and the impact of water on penguins' fur. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils investigated the links between gravity, light and dark. In both lessons pupils made predictions and careful observation and recorded their results.

In the secondary school pupils enter Year 7 with levels of attainment that are above those of pupils in England. They build upon the scientific knowledge and skills that they acquired in the primary school and make rapid progress up to and including in Year 9. Excellent teaching provided by subject specialists ensures that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are both broadened and deepened. In a Year 8 lesson on convection, pupils worked independently in setting up and carrying out an experiment. They demonstrated an excellent understanding of scientific processes. In a Year 9 lesson on forces, they used a range of scientific language confidently and accurately.

### **Other subjects**

Pupils make the same outstanding progress in subjects across the wider curriculum as they do in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The wider curriculum is equally well resourced and allows teachers to help pupils to identify links between subjects which contribute to deepening their understanding and long-term memory. Teachers of all subjects develop pupils' higher-order critical-thinking skills.

Leaders quickly ensured continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. When necessary, teachers deliver high-quality live and recorded lessons using video conferencing. They give guidance to parents on how to support their child's learning, for example by recording story time or a daily phonics session. A digital online application for pupils and teachers to upload and share learning was already in use before the pandemic. It has proved to be particularly helpful to teachers in setting work and giving feedback when groups of pupils need to learn at home. It has also enabled parents to understand the nature and quality of the home learning required. As a result of the pandemic, there are some gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. However, leaders have implemented very effective recovery plans and pupils are catching up quickly.

### **Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:**

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall (see Standard 1 below).

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Standard 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Standard 3 below).
- The standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Standard 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 5 below).
- The provision of Information for parents meets the requirements of this standard (see Standard 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the standard (see Standard 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Standard 8 below).

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during February 2022, the school has demonstrated that it meets the Standards for British Schools Overseas 2017 except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the United Arab Emirates. 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 except for the standard in paragraph 2 (2) (d) (ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The **curriculum** is outstanding. It is carefully constructed to reflect the school's values and mission to 'create truly multinational citizens who will be leaders in their respective fields'. It is regularly reviewed to meet the changing needs of the pupils and it mirrors the latest English national curriculum. In the early years, the school introduced the latest UK EYFS curriculum in September 2021. Pupils are prepared fully to enter or re-enter the UK educational system at any age.

Pupils learn about Britain and being British throughout the curriculum. For example, they experience democracy through the process of standing for elections and campaign speeches in student council elections. High-quality displays around the school constantly remind pupils about the experience of life in British society.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It combines the study of academic subjects and a range of opportunities for pupils to develop social skills designed to help them become valued and productive members of society. The school meets the requirements of the English EYFS framework focusing on seven areas of learning and development and the English national curriculum. Pupils can choose between a large number of GCSEs, BTECs and ASDAN qualifications. Work-based skills are developed and there is effective careers education, information and advice and guidance from Year 6 onwards. The curriculum explicitly addresses social skills and British values such as democracy and respect. A moral-education programme explores monarchy in Britain. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils compared Margret Thatcher to Alexander the Great. The school actively promotes respect for people with protected characteristics. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils learned about gender and equality. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils identified the consequence of anti-social and aggressive behaviour such as racism.

The school's curriculum is carefully designed with long-term curriculum plans, thorough schemes of work and very detailed lesson plans that are aligned with UK expectations. It fosters a number of learning skills such as independence, creativity and enquiring minds that are developed through all phases and in all subjects. Teachers carefully develop pupils' learning skills as well as systematically encouraging them to use common terminology to explain what they can do and what they need to do to improve. The curriculum explores the issue of sustainable development as an explicit learning goal for pupils.

As pupils progress through the school, they become reflective learners who are critical thinkers and can work in teams. They are confident and resilient learners who show a deep enjoyment of learning. They are very well prepared for the next steps in their educational career with a strong career-education programme from Year 7 onwards.

The curriculum is constructed so that each pupil has a personalised curriculum based upon their abilities and interests. Pupils with SEND and/or EAL are supported very well by a highly experienced inclusion team and make very good progress. The most gifted and able pupils benefit from modifications to the curriculum that both stretch and challenge them.

A rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities successfully supports the formal curriculum, providing opportunities for all pupils to develop their personal interests and skills.

---

These include a range of sporting activities as well as activities such as yoga, mindfulness, Arabic creative writing and young entrepreneurs.

The school makes very good use of its local community to enhance the curriculum. Successful professionals such as pilots, lawyers and doctors are invited into the school to talk about their experiences. Parents visit the school to read to pupils and trips are arranged, for example to Expo 2020 and the Green Planet. Staff actively work with parents and pupils to promote recycling.

The curriculum was modified as a result of the pandemic. A blended curriculum was introduced, which was a mixture of recorded and live online lessons. The school provided extra information, communication and technology (ICT) resources for pupils to give them access to the curriculum at home.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** across the school is outstanding. As a result of excellent teaching pupils make very good progress across all phases and subjects. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to acquire new skills. Positive relations between pupils and staff create a learning environment where success is celebrated and where pupils are confident enough to try new ways of learning.

Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond accordingly. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and a deep understanding of how pupils learn. In the early years, practitioners have a good understanding of child development and teachers in all phases provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop both their academic knowledge and their skills. Open questioning is used to good effect to encourage pupils to think deeply about different topics and teachers use such questioning to encourage pupils to refine their initial ideas. This allows them to achieve high levels of attainment.

There is a consistent approach to lesson planning throughout the school. Teachers plan well-sequenced activities which match learning objectives. Resources are of a high quality and easily accessible to both staff and pupils. Well-established routines include starter activities, plenaries and open questioning. Pupils expect these features when they enter the classrooms and so lessons progress briskly with little learning time lost. Pupils know what they have to learn and understand what success looks like.

Learning is an inclusive experience because teachers challenge all pupils effectively. Lessons are designed to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Activities and material are carefully chosen so that they meet individual needs. Highly skilled specialists give additional support to pupils with SEND. They modify the curriculum to allow individual pupils to make significant gains in their learning.

Teachers and pupils make excellent use of information technology. Teachers produce very engaging presentations and use ICT platforms extensively to assess and record pupils' progress. Pupils use their individual devices for research and homework. They upload work for marking.

The assessment of pupils' work is regular and frequent. It is an integral part of every lesson, when teachers check on the progress made and pupils assess their own and each other's work. Written feedback is detailed, providing information on what the pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils respond to teachers' suggestions and make improvements to their work.

---

During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning consisted of a blended programme with recorded and live lessons. Expectations were clear and the school continued to ensure that the quality of the remote learning was maintained through thorough monitoring and survey feedback from parents and pupils.

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

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5 (b) (vi) of the UK Equality Act 2010 that cannot be met due to the laws of the host country. The school's provision promotes respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief and pregnancy and maternity. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are considerate, kind, thoughtful and welcoming to visitors and are pleased to be members of an inclusive school community. They cooperate very well with each other and see learning as a collaborative venture which enables them to become valued members of their society.

Attendance levels are high and closely monitored by senior leaders. Pupils recognise the importance of regular attendance and work hard in lessons and at home. They are very curious about the world around them and ask many questions. They complete assignments on time and show a determination to succeed. They value their teachers and other adults in the school and understand the role the school staff play in helping them to become successful learners.

They enjoy coming to school immensely and fully participate in school life. They are enthusiastic members of their pastoral houses and are active in school activities such as in designing the house logos. They relish the opportunity to take on leadership roles as members of the school council, prefects, peer mentors and well-being champions. In recent school council elections over 70 pupils in the secondary school applied for twelve places and over 800 pupils in the primary school applied for various leadership opportunities.

Respect, tolerance and equality are at the core of Safa British School. For example, pupils play a key role in designing the form-time lesson on 'Wellbeing Wednesday'. Inspectors observed that all pupils are encouraged to have a voice to discuss the bad effect of being ostracised and reflect on their actions.

Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. Consequently, rules are rarely broken and sanctions rarely applied. Far more common is the distribution of rewards that celebrate good behaviour.

The pupils are democratic in their approach to decision making and appreciate the importance of considering the views of the whole school community before deciding upon a course of action. Views are regularly collected by the student council and peer mentors.

The voice of the pupils is strong in influencing school developments. They use the pupil-led channels of communication to air their views and opinions. Recently, the student council requested that pupils have more opportunities to learn about health education and was successful in getting a practical first-aid course added to the programme of extra-curricular activities.

Pupils are very proud that their school is a harmonious community where pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are valued. They appreciate that different cultures should be celebrated and enjoy participating in cultural events. They recognise the challenges faced by fellow pupils with SEND and/or EAL and enjoy helping each other to learn. In the secondary school pupils have adopted the motto 'United we stand, divided we fall'.

Pupils have a very strong community spirit and recognise that they have a responsibility to support other members of their community. They promoted the school's campaign to support raising awareness of breast cancer with a range of information sessions delivered by the student council. They raised funds by selling cakes.

Pupils see themselves as members of the global community and are keen to learn about aspects of life in other countries, including the UK. They know about key aspects of British society, including the British Parliament and the monarchy. They understand that the UK is made up of four nations. They have a very good understanding of British values of tolerance, the rule of law, mutual respect, democracy and individual liberty.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard and the regulatory requirements and cultural obligations of the UAE.

A strong culture of safeguarding permeates all aspects of school life. Safeguarding is very well led by experienced staff who undertake regular training at a high level and disseminate it to all school staff.

Pupils are confident that they can report concerns to someone who will listen and help, including specific safeguarding staff, class teachers, form tutors, the school counsellor and the school's nurses and doctor. Pupils themselves play an important role in developing welfare and safeguarding systems. This year well-being mentors from Year 9 initiated Issue in a Box so that their peers can communicate worries anonymously.

Pupils and staff are exceptionally well cared for. Leaders have achieved their aim of creating 'a home away from home for students and an extended family for staff'. Teaching and pastoral staff help pupils new to the school to settle in quickly. Staff carefully assess the learning and pastoral needs of pupils with SEND and/or EAL so that class and subject teachers, as well as form tutors, can ensure that there are no barriers to learning or physical and emotional well-being.

Pupils speak exceptionally highly of how the school helps them to remain safe and happy. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including in water, on the road and when using the internet and social media. Parents have confidence in the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Pupils say that staff deal with the very rare instances of bullying very quickly so that they are not repeated.

The school's medical team and pastoral staff help pupils and parents whose mental well-being is suffering as a result of the pandemic. They keep in constant contact with pupils and their families to offer support and reassurance.

The school's leaders take a robust approach to all health and safety requirements. They undertake regular risk assessments and use external bodies to monitor and maintain equipment and facilities.

---

The school site is kept safe by a well-led team of security staff. Nobody can enter the premises without the correct identification and authorisation. At the start and end of the day, well-trained staff ensure that all adhere to agreed routes for vehicles and pedestrians.

The school complies with local and UK fire regulations. Equipment is routinely checked and drills are held regularly.

Staff record and monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality carefully. Attendance is in line with that seen in UK schools.

Leaders quickly put in place measures to ensure the safety of staff and pupils during the pandemic. Those who enter the school are checked for vaccination status or a recent negative test. There is clear signage indicating a one-way system and social distancing. Everyone in the school wears a mask at all times. All are required to sanitise their hands regularly at one of the many stations. There is an isolation room where those displaying symptoms wait to be collected. The school doctor and nurses have played a key role in raising the awareness of pupils and staff in relation to COVID-19 safety.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school maintains a comprehensive single central record of all staff and governors. All staff are licenced by the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). For each prospective member of staff, recruitment procedures check identity, right to work in the UAE, references, medical fitness and qualifications. This ensures that all employed by the school are suitable to work with children. Prohibition checks are also in place.

Audits of the single central record are regularly completed by the governing body. All external agencies, contractors and temporary staff members are fully checked by the school. There are no volunteers currently working at the school. The system alerts the school if any information is missing or if a key document or certificate is about to become out of date.

All staff on appointment panels have completed safer-recruitment training. Eighteen new staff joined the school in September 2021 due to the growth of the school.

Safeguarding and child-protection procedures are very thorough and mirror the expectations of both UK legislation and the host country.

High-quality professional development in the school and well-established networks in UAE and in the UK ensure that all staff continue to improve their teaching skills and leadership competencies.

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

The requirements of this standard are met.

The two inter-connecting buildings are well designed and attractive. They allow teachers to provide the full range of programmes of study of the English national curriculum in all subjects. The

---

grouping of phases together allows effective liaison and the sharing of good practice. Staff use the large communal areas between classrooms exceptionally well for group work and for more creative activities such as writing poetry.

Learning spaces are light and well ventilated. There are well-resourced specialist areas, including for music, art, drama and physical education and there is a mechanics area which houses a car for pupils to work on. Outside spaces are well planned for teaching and socialising. The very attractive courtyard with its maze and giant chess set is very popular with pupils at social times. Leaders have taken great care to keep pupils safe outdoors, for example by providing ample shade and regular access to filtered drinking water.

The library is spacious, inviting and exciting. It has a wealth of books which reflect the diverse cultures which make up the school and Dubai, as well as reflecting the diversity of modern Britain. It is well used by pupils and teachers from Nursery through to Year 9 to foster in pupils a love of reading for pleasure.

Staff and pupils take great care of their learning environment and are proud of it.

In the design of the building, leaders have made sure that it is accessible to all. There is a lift in each building and where necessary there are ramps for wheelchair access. Corridors are wide and free of obstacles so that pupils can walk around the building in an orderly manner.

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

The school meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

The school keeps parents fully informed about their child's education. This continued during the school closure between March 2020 and July 2020. School policies, information about school life, the mission statement, core values, admissions and the curriculum are all available on the website. There is also information about how to contact staff and leaders. A school brochure outlining the inclusive provision is available on the website so that parents are informed about the commitment of the school to ensuring the safety and success of all the groups of pupils. Staff are available at the beginning and end of the day for informal discussions with parents.

Parents receive regular communications from the school, including weekly emails from the principal. The principal also posts weekly videos for parents. Termly parent information meetings have been taking place online since the start of the pandemic. Parents now say that they are ready to for face-to-face meetings to resume.

Parents are very pleased with the way the English national curriculum is delivered throughout the school. An overwhelming majority of parents feel that their child enjoys being at school and feels safe. Parents feel that the school is very well led and speak very highly of the inclusive culture of the school believing that it has a very inclusive system that supports and nurtures each child individually.

Parents' surveys are completed every term. Parents are keen to see the return of extra-curricular activities. This is planned for the beginning of next term. They receive a termly written report on their child's progress and have continuous access to reports on ongoing progress through an online platform.

Moving to a new building in September 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, made a few parents anxious. One said, 'The move was a make-or-break moment.' However, they were quickly reassured. Another said, 'They managed to make it seamlessly.'

Parents say that the school has gone above and beyond to support them during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has organised regular webinars for parents during the pandemic. For example in the early years there have been webinars on curriculum, phonics, mathematics and how to support children at home. Parents agree that the pandemic has strengthened their communication with the school.

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

The school meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

The school meets the requirements of this standard. The complaints policy is available on the website and is updated annually by the senior leadership team. The three-stage procedure outlines how complaints are resolved and the expectations of all parties within clear timescales. Day-to-day concerns and queries are usually managed by the class teacher. Parents all agree that their queries are always responded to in a highly efficient manner.

There have been three complaints made to the school and one to KHDA. All complaints were resolved promptly to the satisfaction of all involved.

During COVID-19 restrictions the school has dealt positively and fairly with a range of concerns to the satisfaction of all parents.

## **Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school**

Leadership and management across the school are outstanding. Leaders ensure that all the BSO standards are consistently met.

Leaders and governors have established a highly successful school. Staff are extremely ambitious for their pupils and a strong culture of learning and achievement runs through all phases of the school. The school's vision 'to create a school that unlocks the potential of every child' permeates all aspects of the life of the school. As a result, pupils in all phases make rapid progress and achieve well.

Senior leaders share a common goal for the ethos, vision and development of the school. They have high expectations for all pupils and strive to achieve high outcomes for them. Central to the success of the school is the relentless drive of leaders to improve teaching and learning for pupils. For example, the school has nine middle and senior leaders undertaking national professional qualifications. All staff are regularly involved in professional development to enhance their skills in the classroom. Nearly one third of all staff are educated to Master's degree level or are currently working towards it. One third of secondary staff are currently markers or verifiers for examination boards. Senior leaders are strong leadership role models who set high standards of accountability for themselves, show empathy and practise self-reflection. Staff are very proud of their school and its leaders. This is demonstrated by a comment made by one teacher: 'Senior leaders strive for the best and bring out the best in all staff.'

---

School development planning and self-evaluation are led by teachers and middle leaders. They make effective decisions, collaborate and challenge one another. The whole-school action plan reflects prioritised targets from middle leaders' action plans. The planning process is intrinsically linked to the monitoring and evaluation schedule, continuing professional development, assessment and reporting. Senior leaders have developed rigorous and forensic monitoring of pupils' performance throughout the school. All staff agreed that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for pupils.

Leaders and governors take their responsibilities for equal opportunities seriously. For example, female staff are given breastfeeding time and a dedicated space.

The governing body of the school is highly effective. It ensures that the school is compliant with all requirements and that safeguarding procedures are effective. All statutory requirements related to safeguarding are met and child protection arrangements are exemplary. Governors are passionate about their school and have an excellent understanding of the quality and performance of teachers and leaders in all phases. They regularly seek pupils', teachers' and parents' opinions to ensure that their views influence decision making. They are rigorous in finding out what is truly going on in the school by ensuring that they conduct regular learning walks. Accountability matters and a rigorous performance management process ensures that the principal knows the school's targets well. Middle and senior leaders are challenged to deliver outstanding progress. The board has every confidence in the leadership team and respects its separate responsibilities. The leadership and management of early years are outstanding.

Governors have put clear financial policies in place. As a result, the successful growth of the school strikes a balance between short-, medium- and long-term actions for the opening of key stage 4 in September 2022 and key stage 5 in September 2024. Resourcing a high-quality curriculum at key stages 4 and 5 is central to leaders' plans. They have put leadership capacity at the core of their strategic plan so that they can maintain high standards while expanding provision. Eight new members of staff have already been appointed for next academic year. Further plans are in place to ensure the recruitment of more high-quality leaders.

The school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been very well managed. Well-being is a major strength of the school and as a result, most staff and pupils continue to feel happy at school. A typical comment from one member of staff was: 'All the people working here go hand in hand to help one another to ensure that all pupils are well taken care of, physically, emotionally and mentally.' One parent added, 'This is a place where kids are happy and thriving.'

## Early Years Provision

In the Nursery and Reception classes, from low starting points, children make outstanding progress through the English EYFS curriculum. Teachers track progress against all of the early learning goals. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above the average in England. Consequently, children are very well prepared to make an excellent start to Year 1.

Very strong and experienced leadership of the early years has resulted in highly effective provision. Leaders prioritise partnerships with parents and communication between them and the early years staff is excellent. Well-established routines run smoothly and contribute to children's well-being and successful progress through a well-devised and challenging curriculum. Children learn to behave well, take turns and listen with sustained concentration.

Staff make sure that children settle into the early years very quickly and remain safe and happy. Very strong care, welfare and safeguarding systems reflect those seen in the rest of the school. Children enjoy learning. At the start of the day each child sticks his or her photograph on an emotions chart to indicate to staff how they are feeling. If they are sad, because of leaving a parent for example, teachers and teaching assistants settle them in with compassion and empathy. Staff place significant emphasis on all aspects of personal development so that children grow in confidence and become increasingly independent.

Teachers and teaching assistants in the early years use their strong knowledge of how young children learn to plan well-devised activities which children enjoy while they develop skills, particularly in language and number.

The learning environment, inside and outside, is very well planned and used to maximise children's learning experiences. Children benefit from excellent resources and equipment including two different-sized climbing frames outside, an indoor climbing wall and a woodwork room with tools.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

Safa British School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country's 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:

The school is expanding rapidly. By 2022, there will be pupils in key stage 4 and by 2024, students will be studying post-16. Leaders should ensure that appropriate staffing and resources are in place to extend the high-quality curriculum that is currently in place for pupils from EYFS to key stage 3.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### The quality of education

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

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

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	x			
--	---	--	--	--

### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			
--	---	--	--	--

## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	Safa British School
<b>Type of school</b>	Private. For profit
<b>Date school opened</b>	March 2005
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 -14 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1185
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 32,000 - AED 58,000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	N/A
<b>Address of school</b>	Al Safa Dubai PO Box 71091 United Arab Emirates
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 (0) 4 3884300
<b>Email address</b>	reception@safabritishschool.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Zara Harrington
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Sameer Merchant and Mr Louay Khatib

## 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.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Education Development Trust  
16-18 Duke Street  
Reading  
RG1 4RU  
UK

Report reference no: 03/012/2022