

# Safa Community School

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 31 January – 3 February 2022

Lead Inspector: Nadine Powrie

Team: David Bowles

Liz Kelly

Allan Strange

Age Group: 3 – 18 years

Report Published: 14 March 2022

Report Reference Number: 03/011/2022



## 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 xxx inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent xxx 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 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

Safa Community School was established in September 2014 and is a non-selective school. It is a member of the Safa group. It is situated in Al Barsha South, Dubai and has 2066 pupils on roll, making it bigger than many similar all-age schools in Dubai. The school's vision is 'to enable our learners to have success for today and to be prepared for tomorrow'.

There are 77 different nationalities, of which the largest groups are British and Irish. Safa Community School is an inclusive school. 12.7% of pupils are identified as having special learning needs, for whom it makes additional or special provision. For 38.9% of pupils, English is not the principal language.

At the end of the 2020-2021 academic year, the vice principal, who had been in post for six years, was appointed as the new principal and the deputy head of primary of four years was appointed head of primary. Staff retention has remained very strong for this academic year.

Children in the early years follow the new English early years framework. Pupils in the primary school and key stage 3 follow the English national curriculum with an international perspective. The school offers a wide range of 30 courses in key stage 4 and 14 A levels, six BTEC programmes and one Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course in key stage 5.

As part of the growth plan, the originally planned building development of the Safa Senior School started in June 2021 and is scheduled to open at the start of the 2022 academic year, when pupils from Years 9-13 will move to a purpose-built space. This will result in all pupils having larger accommodation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school closed between March 2020 and June 2020. The school ensured that all pupils had equal access to distance learning. Rigorous processes were put in place to ensure that standards were maintained. Attendance remained very high. The school has worked hard to assess and close gaps in learning through a modified recovery curriculum. Safeguarding arrangements and highly effective communication with all stakeholders were put in place.

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

This BSO inspection was carried out by four 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 66 lessons. Six lessons were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. Inspectors gave feedback to four members of staff.

28 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 digitally. They evaluated a wide range of documentation relating to operational and strategic plans. They observed pupils' arrival and departure from the school, breaktimes and lunchtimes. They conducted face-to-face interviews and analysed parents', staff and pupils' surveys.

## Evaluation of the school

Safa Community School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from foundation stage to Year 13.

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.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the school put in place a highly effective distance-learning programme, maintaining pupils' outcomes in almost all phases and subjects. It ensured that all pupils had equal access to online learning. However, team sports, swimming and practical science were affected. As a result of the well-devised recovery curriculum, pupils have caught up. Attendance remained outstanding at 97%.

Attainment and progress in **English** language and literature are outstanding.

Children enter Nursery with listening and speaking skills which are better developed than is typical for their age. As pupils move up the school, they make outstanding progress in every year group. The school's examination results in all aspects of English and in all phases are above UK averages and have improved with each successive year. Teaching staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who have English as an additional language (EAL) in making outstanding progress through the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Throughout the school pupils understand and use vocabulary, structure and idiom which are beyond their years.

In the early years, skilled teaching staff use every opportunity to develop language. Children confidently read aloud and engage in extended conversations with adults. They listen to stories with sustained concentration. By the end of the Reception Year, they are ready to make a flying start to the demands of Year 1.

In key stages 1 and 2 pupils' language skills continue to improve rapidly. Pupils respond to questions with confidence. They debate themes such as climate change using the language of polite disagreement. By the end of Year 6 they write with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar in differing styles and for a wide variety of purposes.

By key stage 4 pupils use the language of literary criticism with ease. They write and speak about literature and contemporary themes with insight and maturity. They compare and contrast a wide range of texts, giving mature personal responses based on evidence.

Pupils read widely for pleasure. Curriculum resources and the school's libraries allow them to choose texts representing many races and cultures. They address themes related to British values such as tolerance and respect. Books reflect the full range of English literary heritage, from classic texts to those which demonstrate the diversity of the modern English-speaking world.

In 2019, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) inspection identified inconsistency in the quality of cursive handwriting. Teachers have addressed this. By the end of Year 4, almost all pupils produce cursive writing which is neat and legible.

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

In **mathematics**, pupils achieve standards that are high and above those seen in England. Progress is outstanding in all phases of the school. The trend for attainment over the last three years, for pupils in all phases, is one of improvement.

The development of mathematical language is a focus which continues through all phases. All pupils are expected to explain their thinking and justify their answers. Consequently, their conceptual understanding is well developed.

Almost all children in the early years make consistently good progress from their starting points. Children quickly acquire skills in number, shape and measure, through practical and investigative activities. They connect learning to real-life situations.

In primary, most pupils also make more than expected progress from their starting points. Most pupils in Year 2 can use arrays to demonstrate the commutative property of multiplication. By Year 6, pupils are skilled at mental calculations and a majority can apply the order of operations accurately. They regularly solve complex multi-step problems. They solve problems with money using British pounds and pence.

In secondary, most pupils continue to make more than expected progress. By Year 9, almost all can find missing angles in a right-angled triangle using the inverse of trigonometric functions. By Year 11, the accelerated maths group is successfully integrating functions. By Year 13, most students are making links with physics and can calculate the resultant forces on an object. GCSE, AS and A-level results are outstanding.

Transition between phases is smooth. Teachers liaise to use similar approaches and materials and pupils meet their new teachers in advance. Year 1 teachers adapt their pedagogy and learning environment to ease the transition of children moving from the Reception Year.

All groups of learners, including those who have EAL and pupils with SEND, make at least good progress in mathematics.

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

---

In **science** pupils achieve standards that are high and 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 in line with those typical for their age. Excellent teaching means that they make rapid progress in their use of scientific language and their scientific understanding. Projects such as growing seeds and floating boats with holes in them to see what happens enable the children to develop their understanding of predictions and experimentation. Most children show a real desire to find out about how the natural world works and enjoy exploring bones and fossils through play and the shapes and sizes of vegetables in art.

In primary, most pupils continue to attain very well and to make rapid progress through Years 1 to 6. Purposely designed transition arrangements from the early years, combined with excellent teaching, allow pupils to progress quickly and reach high standards in their understanding of scientific ideas and processes. Pupils become confident in formulating a hypothesis and testing it. In a Year 6 lesson on circuits, pupils hypothesised the relationship between the length of a wire and the brightness of a bulb. They planned their investigation, wrote a prediction and made sure that they were carrying out a 'fair test'.

In the secondary school, pupils broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and methods because the curriculum is more demanding. In a Year 9 lesson, as a consequence of activities that stretched and challenged them, pupils developed a deep understanding of why cells replicate. The progress pupils make is outstanding and by Year 11 they are completing work that prepares them well for study in the sixth form.

Sixth-form students are confident and highly independent learners. As a result of explicit guidance on their choice of science subjects and excellent teaching, they reach very high standards at A level. Attainment is high when compared to A-level results in England.

A very large majority of pupils achieved outstanding results in their non-core subjects in all GCSEs and A levels. Exceptional provision ensures that all groups of pupils, including those with SEND and/or EAL, make outstanding progress and achieve highly. Their overall attainment at GCSE is consistently above UK national averages; for example, 75% of pupils achieved grade 9 in French and 45% achieved grade 9 in art and design. 88% of all non-core subjects were graded A\* to A in 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that, from March 2020 to June 2020, staff taught lessons remotely. Highly effective online resources and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment have minimised the negative impact on the academic progress of pupils. Where gaps were identified for a very small minority of pupils, the school put in place a recovery programme which has enabled all pupils to catch up.

#### **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 in 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 carefully designed curriculum is outstanding and pupils make outstanding progress.

Pupils are prepared fully to enter or re-enter the UK educational system at any age. For example, in the early years, the school has introduced the latest UK EYFS curriculum.

The broad, balanced and flexible curriculum is planned meticulously to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. There are long-term curriculum plans, thorough schemes of work and very detailed lesson plans. Key learning priorities are central and create successful, independent thinkers who enjoy learning and contribute to creating a thriving learning community. There is a strong careers education programme for pupils from Year 7 onwards.

Support for pupils with additional needs, including pupils with SEND, is outstanding. A highly experienced and dedicated inclusion team responds swiftly to concerns raised by staff with a rigorous programme of identification followed by a comprehensive package of support for individual pupils. Support in class is highly effective. As a result, pupils with additional needs make very good progress and attain well.

Popular extra-curricular activities enrich and extend the formal curriculum, allowing pupils to develop their personal interests and skills. Clubs include sports, digital technology, robotics, yoga, mindfulness, writing and the Duke of Edinburgh's award.

There are opportunities for pupils to engage with their local community, supporting foundations such as 'Dubai Cares'. Pupils lead on developing the school community outreach programme, 'Two for Tuesday', to help the less fortunate. They have raised funds for a local animal shelter. They enjoy visits from British universities and have visited local amenities including Expo 2020 and the Miracle Gardens.

Throughout the curriculum, there are opportunities to help pupils learn about Britain and being British. These include experiencing democracy in action through student council elections and following a code of behaviour that respects diversity and promotes tolerance. Key aspects of British society are studied, including public institutions such as parliament.

Pupils develop the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to make informed choices about their further education and employment. The curriculum offered is a careful balance of academic and work-based courses. Pupils are given opportunities to develop as leaders through membership of the school council and acting as sports prefects. The school actively promotes respect for people with protected characteristics. Pupils are taught to treat all members of the school community with respect. Teachers stress the importance of equality through the equal treatment of male and female pupils in lessons. The challenges associated with disability are explored in the English curriculum. Different cultures and beliefs are celebrated on International Day. In Year 8 Catholicism is explored from a historical perspective and race is investigated through a study of the British Empire. Pupils celebrate their own cultures by wearing traditional dress and bringing to school traditional foods to share. Female staff are given breastfeeding time and a dedicated space.

Covid affected team sports, swimming and practical science but all have now resumed. A well-devised recovery curriculum has allowed pupils to catch up on lost learning.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** across the school is outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who delight in discovering new ideas and improving their skills. Teachers have high expectations and demonstrate expert subject knowledge. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Consequently, pupils enjoy lessons and achieve very high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Lesson planning is thorough. Teachers plan lessons in detail, identify lesson outcomes and select activities that allow the outcomes to be met. Lessons are linked to schemes of work and long-term curriculum plans. Teachers devise presentations and activities that pupils find very thought provoking and accessible. Teaching engages pupils of all abilities.

All pupils are active participants in lessons including pupils who have additional needs. They are given work that challenges them at the appropriate level. The pace of learning is such that pupils are involved in all parts of a lesson.

Resources are deployed very efficiently. Classrooms are well-organised learning spaces. They are bright and well maintained and the wall displays enhance learning and celebrate pupils' work. Teachers use information technology extensively to present new information and pupils are expert users of devices such as iPads. Teaching assistants provide carefully designed support for groups of pupils. Teachers give pupils opportunities to talk and share ideas. These discussions enable pupils to reflect upon and refine their ideas and deepen their understanding.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They arrive punctually at lessons, bring the correct equipment and settle quickly. They listen carefully to instructions and cooperate and collaborate with each other effectively. They enjoy sharing ideas and listen respectfully to each other. Pupils relish working in pairs and groups to research and discover new information. They are keen to ask and answer questions. Little time is lost as they move from one lesson to the next.

Assessment arrangements are very effective. Teachers assess pupils regularly and frequently as they progress through the school. School leaders and teachers use a range of external and internal tests combined with continuous monitoring of progress in lessons. From the early years to the sixth form, pupils play an active part in assessing their own performance and that of their peers. They know what their targets are and how well they are progressing.

Teachers provide high-quality feedback on pupils' work including comments that recognise what has been done well and what needs to be done to improve. Teachers give oral feedback during lessons. Pupils respond to teachers' written and oral comments by making amendments to their work. Mistakes are rarely repeated.

---

Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan learning opportunities over time. Lesson planning starts from an up-to-date, accurate picture of what pupils know and can do.

When remote learning is necessary, teachers maintain a relentless focus on effective questioning, assessment and feedback.

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

The spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding.

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.

Safa Community School is an inclusive school and helps pupils with differing backgrounds and needs to thrive and become truly global citizens.

Staff encourage pupils to explore individual differences and to respect them, nurturing healthy relationships and celebrating differences. Pupils' positive attitudes, mutual respect and tolerance shine through open discussions in lessons.

British values are embedded in the curriculum and blended into the learning environment. Pupils have a thorough understanding of democracy. In the early years, children have access to voting stations to choose which story to read. Leaders actively seek the views of pupils when making decisions. For example, pupils agreed on what should be in the BYOD (bring your own device) policy.

Pupils arrive punctually for the start of the day and for lessons. Their thirst for learning and their determination to achieve the best results are reflected in high levels of attendance that are well above UK averages. Pupils understand the link between attendance and achievement.

British history, culture and democracy are at the core of the curriculum and a very large majority of pupils demonstrate strong knowledge of public institutions and services in the UK. In Year 7, pupils learn about the judicial system, including civil and criminal laws in Britain, through problem solving and the use of higher-level thinking skills.

Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and this is reflected in their exemplary behaviour in and outside lessons. The behaviour policy and the 3Rs (remind, reflect, resolve) in the secondary and primary phases are positive reinforcement. Well-being is at the core of the school's culture. Promoting empathy and considering the feelings of others are key themes in this area of the school's provision. The school holds 'inside out day' where all pupils wear an item of clothing inside out to remind them to stop and think about how appearances can be deceptive. This initiative is a meaningful way to continue to engage all pupils in discussions about emotional well-being and emotional literacy.

There is a strong culture of mutual respect throughout the school. Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers and one another. They are consistently self-disciplined. In English, pupils learn how to disagree politely and respectfully.

---

Pupils are keen to learn and take responsibility. They interact and collaborate very effectively in a wide range of learning situations, enjoying meeting challenges to achieve high goals. Pupils are appointed to leadership positions through a robust process. They confidently share innovative ideas and articulate opinions. The primary student council requested an improved pavement around the school, which was implemented to enhance health and safety. Lessons and texts often address personal development. For example, in English, pupils in Year 11 reflected on Michelle Obama's speech about developing personal aspirations and resilience.

Pupils' increasing maturity is reflected in the school's systems for communicating arrangements and reminders to parents. As pupils move up the school, staff expect them to become independently well organised, without the need for messages from school to home.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard, the regulatory requirements and the cultural obligations of the host country.

Safeguarding, behaviour and health and safety policies are comprehensive in number and coverage and meet UK and local requirements. They are consistently implemented across the school and reviewed annually. Almost all pupils believe that they are safe at school and almost all parents and pupils feel that the school deals well with bullying on the very rare occasions when it occurs.

Staff with specific responsibilities are clearly identified in policies. They perform their duties collaboratively and effectively. All staff are trained annually or on entry to the school. A bespoke system for recording and communicating incidents ensures appropriate levels of confidentiality. Pupils at risk were closely monitoring during remote learning and a virtual drop-in room, where pupils can share any concerns, was created. Pupils know who turn to for advice and support. New pupils are assigned a mentor to ease their transition.

The school has successfully met all local COVID-19 requirements. Classes have been separated into two 'bubbles' to minimise disruption to learning. Risk assessments have led to adapted practices for safe arrival, departure, eating and playing. Safety on school transport has been enhanced through temperature checks and sanitising seats after each journey. Appropriately, the school has a focus on well-being and mindfulness, with the pupils taking key roles in the process.

A fully equipped isolation room, with additional air filtration and CCTV, supplements the effective medical facilities. Three full-time nurses and a doctor, assisted by an administration assistant, staff the three clinic areas.

The school's health and safety arrangements are thorough. The site manager leads a school maintenance team which effectively deals with any routine health and safety issues, night or day. He is supported by an emergency response team, which is ready to respond to major emergencies. All hazardous materials are stored securely. Any actions from external compliance reports are addressed in a timely manner.

Fire drills are at least termly. They are well recorded and reviewed. Any unforeseen problems are urgently addressed. Supervision, in and out of the buildings, is effective but low key.

Attendance is higher than UK averages, at 98%. During the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance for remote learning was almost equally high at 97%. Admissions and attendance procedures and policies are clear to staff, pupils and parents. There is effective recording of absences that keeps pupils safe and monitors lost school time. Pupils are keen to come to school.

---

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

Leaders ensure that all staff employed by the school are suitable to work with children. No staff are allowed to start work until all local and UK checks have been made. The school keeps an exemplary, comprehensive, electronic record of all staff, the checks made, the person or organisation making them, the date they were undertaken and the evidence seen. Included are: evidence of police confirmation that prospective staff are not barred from regulated activity relating to children, identity, right to work in the UAE, medical fitness and qualifications. The system alerts the school if any information is missing or if a key document or certificate is about to become out of date. It allows leaders to add categories such as vaccination status. Most teachers have British teaching qualifications and experience. They are well qualified and have subject or phase specialisms. Most have experience of teaching in at least one other school in the UAE. Those who do not have British qualifications have been authorised to teach at the school by the Dubai and UAE authorities. The proprietors underwent local checks to ensure that their background and experience did not prohibit them from opening a school.

## Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

The four school buildings are modern, light and well adapted to provide high-quality learning. The learning spaces are bright and of an appropriate size for the number of pupils in the class. They are adjacent to large breakout spaces, which provide opportunities for small group or individual learning. Each phase in the school has a range of appropriate specialist learning spaces, where specialist equipment is accessible. Lifts ensure that all pupils have access to all areas.

Younger pupils are on the ground floor. Children in the early years have dedicated, adjacent, external learning space for practical activities. The outside environment, complete with the Safa Stream, is shaded. It provides opportunities for relaxed or active play.

Pupils have access to a sports field, a newly refurbished running track and a swimming pool. Washing, changing, toileting and showering facilities are fit for purpose. To comply with COVID-19 protocols, the school sports day was held in Sports City, allowing a full programme of events with spectating families. The school has a sports hall, auditorium, fitness suite and specialist classrooms.

A new senior school is being built on the site, opening in the next school year. This will enhance facilities for all pupils.

The school site is safe and secure. Access and entrance are carefully monitored and all visitors wear colour-coded lanyards. The school has staggered departure and arrival times to ease congestion both of vehicles and pupils. Bus transport is well organised. Separate provision is made for different ages. Parents are notified that their child has been registered and young pupils are taken to their doors.

The school is resource rich. Appropriate, high-quality resources facilitate and enhance learning. Although the school operates a Bring Your Own Device policy, it has sufficient tablets to support families with distance learning. A secure Wi-Fi network allows filtered internet access both inside and outside the buildings.

Throughout the pandemic, leaders have ensured that pupils and adults remain safe by making well-planned adjustments to its provision. For example, all pupils and adults wear face coverings. All the COVID-19 protocols implemented at the school are regularly checked by the host country's officials.

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

The school meets the requirement of this standard.

The school keeps parents very well informed about all aspects of school life. Information is disseminated using informal and formal channels. The website is very well organised and easily navigable. It contains all the required information for prospective parents to use when choosing a school. Prospective parents can view a detailed list of extra-curricular activities, up-to-date policies and information about the school's curriculum and academic performance in every subject. An admissions policy outlines the process and how prospective pupils will be assessed. The website explains the school's core values and vision.

The inclusion policy outlines how the school supports pupils with SEND. The school's leaders gather the views of parents regularly. They conduct large-scale surveys about all aspects of the school twice per year. In addition, when leaders are planning a change such as the timing of the school day, they use online surveys to collect and analyse the opinions of parents. Parents receive the results of surveys so that they understand the rationale behind decisions.

The school uses social-media platforms for each class and year, with strict protocols for purpose and use, to communicate practical information such as reminders about bringing specific kit or equipment. Parents are fully involved in running these groups and find them very useful.

Regular emails from teachers and leaders are the main means of communicating information. Parents say that they receive just the right amount of information and that it is timely. Staff respond very quickly to messages from parents. A school calendar is available well in advance so that parents can take school events into account when organising other aspects of their lives.

Parents appreciate the regular review evenings, which are currently conducted via video conferencing. Leaders and staff are very approachable. They are available at the start and end of the day for informal discussions.

Parents say that communication about arrangements for the safe continuation of education during the COVID-19 pandemic is clear, speedy and empathetic. They believe that the school's response to the pandemic has been excellent, with the move to online learning almost immediate. Written reports are very useful in informing parents of their child's academic and social progress. Parents also appreciate the occasional communication of individual praise such as, 'Your child did so well in PE today!' A favourite of parents is the school's electronic system for teachers and pupils to record and share what they have done during the school day.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The complaints policy is clear and published on the school's website. It meets all requirements. Parents know how to make a formal complaint. The policy is rarely used because of the high quality

---

of communication and relationships between parents, leaders and staff. If a parent has a concern, staff respond quickly and effectively to ensure that the problem is resolved without delay. On the rare occasions when official complaints have been made, leaders have adhered to the agreed processes and procedures. They have taken speedy and effective action to resolve the issue raised to the satisfaction of all involved.

## Standard 8. Quality of leadership in and management

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

The highly effective senior leadership team ensures that the school's vision, ambitions and ethos are understood by all. The school's vision 'to enable our learners to have success for today and to be prepared for tomorrow' is fully realised. Leaders inspire staff and pupils. They promote a positive mindset, creativity and resilience, seeding the conditions that result in a safe and happy environment where all staff and pupils are keen to give their best.

They demonstrate consistently high expectations through strong presence, enhanced communication and focused discussions, creating a culture of relentless enthusiasm. As a result, pupils across all year groups are ambitious, consistently challenge themselves and make excellent progress across the school in all subjects. Their pride in the school plays a significant part in their successful learning. Leaders, along with staff, work closely with parents every step of the way to achieve excellent results.

Parents say that the school is very well led and have nothing but praise for it. They are extremely positive about all aspects of the school.

The focus on pupils' outcomes is relentless. Rigorous and forensic data analysis takes place regularly to monitor pupils' progress and attainment across all phases. Leaders pay particular attention not only to the seamless transition of new starters into school life but also between the different phases of the school. Pupils with SEND and EAL make very strong progress from their starting points because they are assessed and tracked rigorously. The heads of teaching and learning in secondary and primary regularly conduct joint lesson observations from EYFS to Year 13 to evaluate pupils' learning in relation to their aspirational targets.

Leaders at all levels take responsibility for achieving the ambitious goals in the strategic plan. They are encouraged to think creatively, shaping an environment where it is comfortable to experiment and where staff and pupils feel equally comfortable discussing what went well and what could be improved. Leaders are building coaching into their team interactions by questioning rather than directing solutions.

The school is expanding quickly with the opening of a new building planned for September 2022. Leaders acknowledge that this will put additional pressure on leadership capacity within the school. Suitable plans are in place to ensure that sufficient, high-quality leaders are appointed.

Governance is highly effective. The board has clear financial policies so that the school is compliant with all requirements. Its drive and determination ensure that pupils develop and achieve as well as possible. Governors support and challenge leaders very well with clear accountability procedures. They conduct the headteacher's appraisal with rigour. Meticulous records made of internal reviews show a deep understanding of the strengths of the school and an accurate evaluation of what could be improved. The live school development, plan along with the self-evaluation, are detailed and rigorously monitored. Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet the same expectations as in the UK. The board is forward thinking. For example, members visited educational institutions in Finland to learn from good practice.

---

Safa Community School is an inclusive school that promotes equality.

Teaching staff, including teaching assistants, are highly qualified, astutely deployed and have completed a range of training to sustain their outstanding practice. The school supports leaders on their National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and Master of Education programmes at prestigious universities. It encourages staff to undertake 'action research'.

The school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely well managed. Well-being is a major strength of the school and as a result, most staff and pupils feel happy at school.

## Standard 9. The quality of provision for boarding

Not Applicable

### EYFS provision

On entry, most children have skills that are typical for their age in communication and language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Those who have not attended a nursery are slightly behind those that have. A small minority of the children have EAL, so their communication and language are less developed. By the time that they leave the foundation stage, a large majority of children with EAL have made strong progress and have skills that are typical for their age.

The leadership of the early years is outstanding. All leaders have an early years background and share a child-led approach to education. They provide regular bespoke training to class teachers as well as the teaching assistants. The leadership team ensures that staff can effectively collaborate and share areas of expertise.

There are excellent transition arrangements for children for admission, including pre-visits and staggered entry. Consequently, children rapidly gain confidence in their new routines and demonstrate independence in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of the children. They accurately assess their performance daily. Assessments are effectively recorded and shared with parents through an online platform. The outcomes are used to influence subsequent teachers' planning. Excellent transition arrangements are also in place for transition to Year 1 so that rapid progress can continue smoothly.

Children are well behaved, keen and happy learners, willing to take risks because of the supportive nature of the early years. Teachers value their opinions. The school has adopted a positive reinforcement model towards managing behaviour. Communication with parents is central to each child's welfare and parents value the online platform for recording information. During the period of remote learning, staff conducted regular virtual meetings with parents and children. A newly appointed students of determination co-ordinator for EYFS-key stage 1 oversees the entire phase and works closely with the Head of EYFS.

### Post 16 provision

The sixth form is smaller than most, with 50 students on roll. It opened three years ago and numbers are increasing each year as the school grows. Currently the school offers 10 subjects at A level, 7 at AS level and 6 at BTEC Level 3. Students in Year 12 can also undertake the Extended Project Qualification. Attainment is higher than UK averages. In 2021, most students obtained grades A\* to B at A level and 100% obtained a distinction at BTEC Level 3. This represents

---

outstanding progress, with students performing better than their prior attainment at GCSE would predict. The COVID-19 pandemic has not affected progress in the sixth form as staff quickly organised distance learning, bubble days and virtual academic interventions.

Until the pandemic curtailed the programme, Year 12 students benefited from work placements. Visitors from universities and the world of work continue to run face-to-face sessions in the school and students have attended virtual university open days. They have access to regular careers advice. They also receive guidance on university life abroad. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities for sixth formers including robotics, triathlon, bakery and the World Scholar Club.

The leadership of the sixth form is strong. All aspects of provision are regularly reviewed. There are robust plans for the growth of the sixth form and the move to better facilities in the new building.

Students' attendance is above the UK average. Students have ambitious plans and know what they need to do to achieve them. The school gives sixth formers many opportunities to develop beyond the academic. Many undertake leadership responsibilities for well-being, sport or academic subjects.

The safety and welfare of students remain a priority in the sixth form. Students have access to a counsellor for mental well-being.

The outstanding quality of teaching and learning is maintained in the sixth form. Students benefit from individual attention in small groups. Teachers generate very positive relationships with students and their passion for their subjects inspires high endeavour.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

Safa Community 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:

The school is expanding quickly with the opening of a new building planned for September 2022. Leaders should ensure that there is enough leadership capacity to manage the growth in pupil numbers so that the very high quality of education provided by the school is maintained.

---

## 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			
--	---	--	--	--

### The quality of provision for boarding

N/A				
-----	--	--	--	--

## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	Safa Community School
<b>Type of school</b>	Private - For profit
<b>Date school opened</b>	2014
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 - 18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	2066
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	AED 49,700 - 81656 AED
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	N/A
<b>Address of school</b>	Umm Suqeim Road Al Barsha South 3 Dubai, United Arab Emirates
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 (0) 4 385 1810
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:school@safacommunityschool.com">school@safacommunityschool.com</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Leanne Fridd
<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: 03/011/2022