

Safa Community School, Dubai

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

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Age Group: 3 to 18
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by four inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four 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 (BSO) must have an inspection report which shows that its performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be added to the register 'Get information about schools'.

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO) accreditation. 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 updated the standards in August 2023. The new standards aligned the BSO standards with the Independent School Standards (ISS) and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding applied to schools in England; clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.

The British Schools Overseas standards are as follows:

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).

Part 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

- Part 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
- Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.
- Part 5. The premises and accommodation.
- Part 6. The provision of information.
- Part 7. The manner in which complaints are handled.
- Part 8. The leadership and management of the school.
- Part 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 carers and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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, established in September 2014, operates as a non-selective school and is part of the Safa group. Situated in Al Barsha South, Dubai, the school

accommodates 2,585 pupils on roll aged from three years to 18 years, making it significantly larger than many similar all-age schools in the region. There are 295 children in the early years provision, 1305 pupils in the primary school and 818 in the secondary school, of whom 167 are in key stage 5, that is Years 12 and 13.

The school has a diverse community, representing 82 nationalities, with British and Arab pupils forming the largest groups. Safa Community School demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity, catering to a wide range of learners. There are 422 pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A minority of pupils use English as an additional language (EAL).

Children in the nursery follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. Pupils in primary school and key stage 3 follow the national curriculum for England (NCfE), while those in key stage 4 choose from a wide range of GCSEs, IGCSEs, and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) level 2 qualifications. At key stage 5, the school offers 24 AS and A-level courses alongside six BTEC international level 3 diplomas. There are currently 78 students in Year 12 and 62 students in Year 13. Class sizes are small. The vast majority of students move on to universities worldwide with 41% going to the UK.

In September 2022, the school extended its facilities by opening a new purpose-built space for pupils in Years 9 to 13. The school now operates across two closely located sites. In November 2024, the school introduced a raised football pitch, providing enhanced opportunities for sports and recreation while increasing space for break-time activities.

Safa Community School is accredited by British Schools Middle East (BSME) and the Council of British International Schools (COBIS). It is also authorised by examination boards such as AQA, Oxford AQA, Pearson Edexcel (including BTEC levels 2 and 3), Rocks School Limited (RSL) Music Awards, and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA).

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 and the inspection dates were agreed upon with the college with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the

inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the college before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 95 lessons. Thirty-two of the lessons visited were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. There were 41 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents, and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies, and strategic plans. They inspected the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, pupils and staff expressed in the BSO survey, which was sent to parents and teachers just prior to the inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Safa Community School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years.

The school meets all of the BSO standards except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. These are explained later in the report. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified in relation to these unmet standards and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Attainment and progress in **English** are consistently outstanding across the school, with no significant achievement gaps between boys and girls. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent progress in line with their peers, due to the high-quality inclusive provision and tailored support.

Children enter the EYFS with skills typical for their age and make rapid progress as a result of skilful teaching and immersion in a language-rich environment. By the end of EYFS, 91% achieve the expected level for Communication and Language and 86% for Literacy, both significantly exceeding England averages. The school's systematic phonics approach strengthens children's reading and writing, with Year 1 phonics screening results consistently surpassing the England average and improving annually.

In the primary phase, pupils continue to excel, with 88% achieving beyond age-related expectations. Over the past three years, results have continued to exceed both England and international averages. Primary pupils develop a strong mastery of vocabulary and grammar, enabling them to craft imaginative and creative writing. For example, in Year 2, pupils create detailed character profiles using precise adjectives. In Year 5, pupils write engaging narrative openings using expanded noun phrases and fronted adverbials.

In the secondary phase, IGCSE results show exceptional performance, with 72% achieving the highest grades in English language and 76% in literature. Attainment has consistently exceeded England averages at these levels over the past three years. Pupils demonstrate their ability to evaluate writers' choices and demonstrate deep analytical skills. In Year 7, pupils analyse Wilfred Owen's poetry, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of imagery and historical context. As Year 8 pupils explore detective and mystery genres, they articulate confidently how language and structure shape meaning.

By Year 12, students excel in critical analysis and literary techniques, producing high-quality analytical writing. Attainment in A level English literature is significantly above England and international averages, with 100% achieving the grades of A* or A, although the small cohort limits statistical reliability. Predictions for the current Year 12 indicate continued high attainment, despite the absence of a Year 13 cohort.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding across all phases in the school. Pupils achieve consistently high standards, surpassing those typically seen in England. Over the past three years, there has been a continued trend of improvement in attainment across almost all phases. Students with SEND and EAL thrive and make sustained progress, in line with their peers, benefiting from expertly designed inclusive teaching and targeted support that meets their individual needs.

In the early years, almost all children make consistently strong progress from their starting points. They rapidly develop foundational skills in number, shape, and measure through practical, investigative activities that connect learning to real-life contexts. By the end of EYFS, 91% achieve the expected level for mathematics exceeding the England average.

In the primary phase, pupils continue to excel, with 81% achieving beyond age-related expectations against 73% in the England. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent

progress in line with their peers. In Year 1, the vast majority of pupils are able to count backwards and substitute single digits. Most pupils in Year 2 can divide using the bar model. By Year 6, pupils demonstrate strong proficiency in forming equations and solving complex multi-step problems. They solve problems with money using British pounds and pence.

In the secondary phase, early entry GCSE mathematics outcomes were exceptionally high, with 23% of pupils achieving a grade 9, which is 23 percentage points above the England average. All students who took statistics GCSE achieved grades 9 to 8. All students who took their early entry in mathematics IGCSE achieved grades 9 to 8. This is significantly above England and international averages. By the end of Year 11, a vast majority of pupils are able to solve simultaneous equations.

By Year 12, students confidently use Venn diagrams to analyse and solve complex problems, demonstrating their ability to apply mathematical reasoning and deepen their understanding of probability and set theory. In Year 13, students are able to convert parametric equations into Cartesian form using trigonometric identities. The majority of students achieve grades A* to B. Predictions for the current Year 13 indicate that the majority of students are on track to achieve grades A* to A.

In **science**, pupils across all phases of the school make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Their attainment is also outstanding in relation to England averages.

Children in EYFS learn good habits of mind by questioning and evaluating evidence. They use appropriate scientific language and good fine motor skills when handling apparatus. They create, for example, a fish from modelling dough and then label it accurately. By the end of EYFS, 94% achieve the expected level for understanding the world exceeding the England average.

In the primary school, pupils learn to observe, predict and evaluate. They understand the role of variables in their investigations and can describe a fair test. They develop their manual skills well, measuring accurately and recording their findings in tables and bar charts. Pupils continue to excel, with 85% achieving beyond age-related expectations against 73% in England. Pupils in Years 4, 5, and 6 benefit from access to the secondary science laboratory to deepen their understanding of topics such as soil and space.

Secondary school pupils continue to make rapid and secure progress, building on sound foundations. The consistency of approach in teaching means that they think critically and approach investigations methodically. Results at GCSE are well above the averages for England across combined and triple science, with boys and girls, those with EAL, and those with SEND achieving results broadly in line with the cohort as a whole. At 57%, the majority of students achieved a grade 9 in biology, 79% in chemistry and 50% in physics. Over the past three years, pupils have achieved almost two grades higher than targets based on their starting points, reflecting sustained improvements in pupils' progress.

In the sixth form, students understand the different characteristics of pathogens, for example. They show independence and high levels of motivation, with around three-quarters going on to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects at university. 100% of students achieved distinctions in BTEC applied science in 2024. In A-level physics, students achieved some of the highest scores internationally. Projected grades in 2025 continue to show a similar high trend. A quarter of grades in A-level biology and physics were at grades A* to A, just above the England average for biology and slightly below for physics as the cohort was very small. In chemistry, the proportion gaining grades A* to A was 40%, eight percentage points higher than the England average.

Pupils make exceptional progress in a range of **other subjects** across the curriculum.

In primary, pupils excel in art, music, languages, physical education (PE), and STEM, benefiting from high-quality teaching that fosters active engagement, inspires creativity and develops pupils' critical thinking skills.

At GCSE, pupils consistently achieve results well above England averages. Over the past three years, they have significantly exceeded UK standards. The majority achieve three grades higher than targets based on their entry points-in subjects such as food and nutrition, geography, history, French, and German; two grades higher in drama and Spanish; and one grade higher in business studies, art and design, and computer science. A significant number of pupils achieve distinctions in BTEC level 2 courses, including business, sport, and LAMDA examinations.

At A level, the majority of students excel beyond England averages. Notable achievements include 43% A* to A grades in business studies, 100% in French, and 50% in PE. A large majority secure distinctions in BTEC level 3 courses such as business,

sport, information and communication technology (ICT), travel and tourism, and RSL music.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Part 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall (see Part 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Part 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Part 3 below).
- The Standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Part 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the Standard (see Part 5 below).
- The provision of information for parents meets the requirements of this Standard (see Part 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the requirements of the Standard (see Part 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Part 8 below).

As a result of this inspection, undertaken between Monday 20 January and Thursday 23 January 2025, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the independent school system in England. This judgement is endorsed by the British government, quality assured by Ofsted and is valid for a period of three years.

Part 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 quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding.

The school delivers an outstanding curriculum that meets the EYFS framework and the National curriculum for England. Pupils choose from 17 GCSE options, while sixth-form students benefit from a diverse range of pathways, including A level, BTEC, or a combination of options. Senior leaders review curriculum policies rigorously, acting on pupils' feedback so that the curriculum meets their needs. In 2024, the school added new subjects, including media studies, sociology, and BTEC engineering.

Teachers meticulously plan the curriculum to ensure inclusivity. They use the feedback from routine progress meetings in their lesson plans that they tailor for pupils with EAL and SEND needs. The inclusion team responds swiftly with one-to-one support, specialist resources, and differentiated learning strategies. Pupils explore British values through rich opportunities. The school embeds the rule of law in its culture, equipping pupils with tools to resolve conflicts at school and home. Pupils engage in democracy by participating in student council elections and following a behaviour code that promotes tolerance and diversity. They sharpen their critical thinking skills by debating global matters, such as climate change, in their preparation for the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28).

The school offers over 400 extra-curricular activities to strengthen pupils' academic and holistic skills. Pupils excel in competitions such as International Olympiads and engage in projects such as research circles at the Museum of the Future. Partnerships with Hamilton Aquatics, Berklee College of Music, and the Dubai Basketball League enrich their learning further. Specialist talks, such as those for International Women's Day, inspire pupils' personal development and aspiration.

Staff promote respect through Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship, and Economic Education (PSHCEE) lessons that emphasise compassion and fairness, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation. For example, pupils celebrate different cultures and beliefs, including World Kindness Day. Leadership opportunities flourish through the school council and performing arts partnerships with local organisations.

The careers programme prepares pupils to make informed decisions. The annual Careers and University Fair engages pupils and families across all phases. Partnerships

with health- and business-related companies create excellent hands-on work experience for pupils in Year 10. Students in the sixth form participate in the career guidance and development programme, REACH, which encourages them to explore interests beyond A level or BTEC studies. These initiatives ensure pupils leave school equipped with confidence, skills, and aspirations for their futures.

The quality of **teaching, learning, and assessment** across the school is outstanding. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject expertise, designing engaging lessons with clear learning outcomes. Teachers' integrated use of the Safa Learning Gears, empowering identity, curiosity, and collaboration in all lessons, fosters essential life skills and prepares students for academic success and real-world challenges. Strong relationships between pupils and teachers create an environment of mutual respect and trust, promoting excellent behaviour and collaboration.

Lessons challenge all learners, inspiring them to excel. The creative use of high-quality resources, coupled with a purposeful and dynamic pace, keeps pupils highly motivated, enthusiastic, and deeply engaged across all phases. For example, children in early years maintain their curiosity for extended periods of time as they investigate how to melt ice to rescue their favourite superheroes. In Year 10, pupils access technology to compare British schools from the 1970s with those of today, enabling them to make insightful connections between historical and contemporary experiences. In a foundation art lesson, the teacher used artificial intelligence (AI) effectively to provide personalised instructions adapted to the needs of each pupil. The children were highly engaged, demonstrating exceptional focus, and producing work of outstanding quality. The use of artificial intelligence is not yet consistently integrated in lessons across the school to further enrich pupils' learning experiences.

Teachers set high expectations and employ effective questioning techniques to develop pupils' critical thinking skills. Probing questions and adequate thinking time, especially in subjects such as mathematics and psychology, encourage pupils to process complex concepts and develop their independent problem-solving skills. Retrieval practice is a prominent feature in all lessons, allowing students to connect prior knowledge to new concepts. For example, in a performing arts lesson pupils drew on their prior knowledge of storytelling techniques to bring their scripts to life with creativity, emotional depth, and exceptional engagement. Across the school, a consistent approach to fostering good thinking habits enables pupils to deeply engage with subjects such as science, where they develop analytical, experimental, and reasoning skills through the rigorous evaluation of evidence.

Teachers' feedback is integral to the learning process, provided both verbally and in written form, empowering pupils to reflect on their progress and identify specific areas of strength and improvement. The feedback system includes self-assessment, peer review, and teachers' input, helping pupils track their learning journey and take ownership of their own development. Throughout the school, pupils rapidly become self-motivated, confident and independent learners. In Year 6, pupils use success criteria to create sentences describing characters and settings inspired by Greek myths.

Teachers' assessment is an ongoing process that informs daily instruction. Internal assessments provide a comprehensive view of pupils' knowledge, understanding, and skills. This data is meticulously analysed and aligned with benchmarked external assessment to ensure a thorough overview of each pupil's progress. Data is then expertly used by teachers to craft targeted, well-structured learning that ensures each pupil's individual needs are effectively supported. The inclusion department provides exceptional support, collaborating with teaching staff to ensure that all pupils receive the necessary adaptations. Teaching assistants play an instrumental role in supporting pupils with EAL and SEND, significantly enhancing their outcomes.

Professional development is a key priority, driving continual improvement. Teachers and teaching assistants engage in professional growth opportunities and collaborate across phases to share best practice. This commitment ensures teaching remains innovative, cohesive, and highly effective, enhancing the school's outstanding educational provision.

Part 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). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The **spiritual, moral, social, and cultural** (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding.

Across all phases, pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning, reflecting the school's core value of being: 'A safe and happy place'. Strong and

respectful relationships between pupils and staff create a supportive, inclusive environment where kindness, trust, and collaboration flourish. Pupils play happily with friends at break times, contributing to a joyful and secure atmosphere.

The rule of law is firmly embedded in the school's culture, with pupils demonstrating an exceptional understanding of what is right and wrong. For example, they uphold fairness by taking turns during group activities and listen respectfully when their peers lead assemblies in Year 7. This strong moral foundation is actively reinforced through the highly effective house points system, which promotes and rewards exemplary behaviour.

British values are deeply embedded across the curriculum and underpin the school's broader ethos. The active and highly effective student council plays a pivotal role in promoting pupils' strong understanding of democracy, which significantly enhances their personal development and readiness for life in Britain. The school actively listens to and values pupils' views, as seen in Years 7, 8 and 9, where feedback highlighted the need to make house points in the 'Epraise' system more meaningful. For example, pupils stated that rewards such as a lesson that focused on nurturing their hobbies in gaming would be more meaningful and engaging.

Safa Community School provides an exceptional environment where pupils from diverse backgrounds thrive as global citizens. International Day exemplifies the school's commitment to cultural appreciation, with parents hosting over 40 stalls representing different countries, offering pupils a rich cultural experience. Pupils collaborate exceptionally well in groups and pairs, demonstrating outstanding teamwork and mutual support. Thoughtful acts, such as giving gifts to bus drivers during Eid and Diwali, highlight the school's dedication to fostering inclusivity and respect. In a Year 12 politics lesson, students explored the 1997 General Election, analysing key policies and campaign strategies from major parties. A balanced discussion encouraged students to evaluate differing perspectives from across the political spectrum, fostering critical thinking and informed, independent thought while maintaining political neutrality.

Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of UK public institutions and can confidently discuss key organisations such as Parliament, the monarchy, and the National Health Service (NHS). Pupils rose to the challenge when presented with the scenario: 'to throw the Department for Education (DfE) rule book out of the window' and proposed innovative suggestions to enhance their education in a Year 7 assembly.

The school provides exceptional leadership opportunities, with over 400 pupils undertaking roles such as digital leaders, art leaders, and sustainability leaders. These meaningful responsibilities enable pupils to develop self-esteem, confidence, and a strong sense of responsibility. Sixth-form students actively support younger pupils through peer mentorship programmes, while secondary pupils demonstrate their commitment to global citizenship through initiatives such as a desert clean-up.

The school prioritises pupils' well-being, embedding it at the core of its culture. The school demonstrates its commitment through the introduction of a digital platform that monitors pupils' emotional well-being and enables meaningful engagement on pupils' emotional literacy and mental health. A full-time occupational therapist swiftly and effectively meets pupils' needs, reflecting the school's strong commitment to inclusion. The school further promotes empathy and inclusivity through impactful initiatives, such as World Tolerance Day. During a special event, pupils learnt about how those with disabilities overcome challenges. This event deeply raised pupils' awareness, fostering mutual respect and exemplifying the school's dedication to nurturing a compassionate and inclusive community.

Part 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The **welfare, health and safety** of pupils and staff are outstanding .

The vast majority of pupils feel happy, safe and know whom to go to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils and their parents confirm this. On arrival, pupils settle quickly into school life. Staff report any safeguarding concerns promptly and diligently, and the safeguarding team monitors records closely. Pupils know how to make disclosures and seek advice. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Effective internet filters protect them in school.

The school's welfare provision is highly effective. Assemblies and PSHCEE lessons, mental health training for staff and pupils, and the recent launch of a well-being platform all contribute to the development of a supportive and nurturing environment. Pupils also have access to weekly opportunities to check in with their tutors and speak to counsellors and occupational therapists. The school's positive approach to inclusion involves regular reviews of sanctions, records, and monitoring of pupils' participation in activities to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all.

The safeguarding team benefits from effective leadership, and it is highly knowledgeable and proactive in its work. Child protection has strong governing board oversight with effective links to external agencies for advice and support.

Through the effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy, the environment is safe for the whole community. Leaders assess risks and take steps to minimise them. School leaders approve off-site activities only when they meet stringent safety standards. As with safeguarding, health and safety is regarded as everyone's responsibility. Reporting and recording systems are highly effective.

School leaders monitor the school's environment through weekly visual checks, and a governing board member conducts unannounced visits with the same purpose. The school's maintenance staff deal with concerns promptly and effectively. Partnerships with external agencies ensure that the school operates in line with local legal requirements: civil defence, police, the fire authority, and catering standards. Lockdown procedures are in place and regularly rehearsed. There is a thorough fire safety policy which the school implements effectively. It also manages traffic around the school and bus transport for pupils to a high standard. The school monitors the quality of the air, water in the swimming pools, and the safety of portable appliances systematically.

Supervision of pupils outside lessons is discreet and effective with pupils meeting the high expectations of outstanding behaviour. The school acts promptly and effectively to deal with the rare cases of bullying.

Medical provision, including the first aid policy, is highly effective, with three clinics, four nurses and a full-time doctor. Over a third of the staff have undertaken first-aid training.

Attendance is well above the average for schools in England, and pupils' punctuality is excellent.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully meets the requirements of this standard.

The school benefits from a dedicated human resources team of two members who ensure that all necessary background checks are conducted to meet the required standards for staff working with pupils. This extends to individuals not directly

employed by the school, such as governing board members, contractors, and outsourced companies, ensuring a comprehensive safeguarding approach.

A meticulously maintained single central record (SCR) is in place for all staff, covering checks on start dates, identity verification, medical fitness, the right to work in the host country, qualifications, criminal record checks, and references. This record is robust, securely stored, and reviewed regularly by the principal and the safeguarding lead to ensure strict compliance and confidentiality. As of September 2024, the school has implemented thorough checks on social media accounts and digital footprints to further safeguard its community.

A safer recruitment policy is in place. The recruitment process is rigorous, verifying the identity of prospective staff, their medical fitness, qualifications, right to work, police clearances, and character references from current and previous employers to ensure suitability for working with children. All senior leaders involved in staff recruitment have undergone safer-recruitment training to uphold the highest safeguarding standards.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The two adjacent school sites are secure with an effective system of signing in, identity checks and coloured lanyards for all visitors. The school maintains the whole campus to a very high standard. It is in excellent decorative order, clean and hygienic. Acoustics and lighting are appropriate. Classrooms, libraries and laboratories are well equipped, spacious, fresh and welcoming, and offer exceptional support for learning.

Since the previous inspection, the school has added a second artificial playing surface. All pupils continue, therefore, to have reliable access to high-quality outdoor and indoor facilities for physical education and recreation. The school has expanded the classrooms for the foundation stage. Each now has its own outdoor space, connecting it to the stream and tree-lined area in which it is set. The opening of the secondary school building in late 2022 has created a dedicated space for Years 10 to 13. This includes a sixth-form centre for study and social activity, and an additional auditorium, providing a dedicated space for examinations. School leaders plan further classroom and laboratory space in response to the projected increase in pupils. The new

accommodation for creative arts offers well-equipped, high-quality rooms. These will continue to enable the school to support the broad range of pathways offered in the curriculum, including BTEC and sports leadership courses. There are also now dedicated occupational therapy rooms on both sites, to support early intervention in both early years and key stage 1.

The catering department offers an increasingly popular range of nutritious meals and snacks, with drinking water freely available. Pupils have appropriate toilet, washing and changing facilities for their sole use, with hot and cold water for handwashing. There are three fully staffed clinics. These have isolation units for the care of any pupils who are unwell or injured with access to suitable toilet and washing areas.

Part 6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets the requirement of this standard.

The school's website contains a range of information. This comprises the school's policies on admissions, child protection, curriculum, behaviour, inclusion, complaints, and health and safety, including the administration of first aid and medicines. It also has links to the school's most recent inspection reports, its vision and mission, and details of the proprietors and governing board.

In discussion, parents confirmed their high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision, aligning with the judgements of the inspection team. In addition to full annual written reports, the school invites parents to termly parent and teacher meetings. Parents also benefit from frequent informal communication about their child's academic progress. The school publishes routine communication about the academic calendar in advance to enable parents to plan effectively.

Communication is prompt and efficient, with teachers responding without delay to parents' questions and comments. The school anticipated the strength of feeling, for example, about the local authority's recent plan to charge parents for parking when dropping off their children in the morning. Leaders independently brought about a change of policy.

Parents report that school leaders and staff are visible and approachable, readily available at the beginning and end of the school day. All members of the community are well known in the school, such that the road crossing supervisors, for example, greet pupils by name, or with a high-five hand movement as they arrive in the morning. It is common for parents to receive a message simply to reassure or offer praise. The school shares good news about events in the school day, and parents' groups keep in touch through social media, with the school valuing their useful feedback.

Some parents previously expressed concern that the volume of information coming from the school was hard to collate. As a result, the school gave them access to an application based on the school's information management system so that since October 2024 everything is available in one place.

Recently, school leaders have invited parents in Years 1, 2, 3 and 7 to observe their children's learning in the classroom. Under the heading: 'My Learning, My School', the school has found this popular and is extending it to other year groups. Similarly, the school runs curriculum workshops for parents of children in EYFS. This has offered the opportunity to explain to parents the different areas of learning. This, in turn, means that parents are better able to support their children in their learning.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedures meet the required standard.

The school has an exemplary complaints policy in place, demonstrating a clear and structured four stage process to managing concerns raised by parents. The policy is documented in writing and readily available to all parents of pupils. It outlines specific timeframes for addressing complaints and provides an opportunity for complaints to be initially considered on an informal basis. Should further action be required, the policy includes a formal procedure for submitting complaints in writing.

The school ensures transparency and fairness by making provisions for a hearing before a panel consisting of at least three individuals who were not directly involved in the matter under review. One member of the panel is independent of the school's

management and operations. Additionally, parents are allowed to attend these hearings and may be accompanied. The panel is responsible for making findings and recommendations, with copies provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual subject to the complaint.

A written record is meticulously kept of all complaints, whether resolved through informal measures, formal procedures, or escalated to a panel hearing. The school documents any actions taken in response to these complaints, regardless of whether the complaints are upheld.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to confidentiality, ensuring that all correspondence, statements, and records related to individual complaints are securely maintained, except in cases where host country laws necessitate access.

Parents and staff build strong relationships that foster trust and open communication, resolving most concerns informally, efficiently, and swiftly. There was one formal complaint in the last 12 months that has been fully resolved.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

The **leadership and management** of the school are outstanding.

The senior leadership team drives the school's vision, ambitions, and ethos with exceptional clarity and impact, embedding them throughout the school's community. The vision: 'We aim for our learners to achieve success today and be prepared for tomorrow' is evident in every aspect of school life. Leaders inspire and empower staff and pupils, fostering a culture of positivity, innovation, and resilience.

Leaders and governors have established a school where inclusion is at the core, driven by an ambitious vision for academic excellence and the personal development of all pupils. For example, the school enters all pupils for GCSE English language and literature. Staff proudly state that it is not all about grades and headline figures. The school fosters a well-rounded education, emphasising personal growth, well-being, and broader achievement alongside academic success, ensuring every pupil thrives in all aspects of their development.

Leadership ensures that the BSO standards are consistently met through structured discussions at governing board meetings. Governors maintain legal compliance and

clear financial policies, working closely with senior leaders to ensure mutual understanding of their responsibilities. Half-termly governing board meetings review detailed reports on pupils' academic results, attendance, behaviour, and other metrics. In addition, governors are taking an active role in developing a guidance policy that empowers staff to use AI effectively and responsibly in enhancing teaching and learning practices.

The principal's performance is rigorously assessed, with targets set annually. Performance management focuses on a coaching model, encouraging staff to take ownership of their professional development. Using the 'Safa Blueprint and Safa 6 Standards', staff identify areas for growth, such as effective planning, data usage, and feedback. This process ensures high-quality teaching and continuous improvement.

Governors serve as a vital link between the school and the wider community, leveraging contacts with local businesses and stakeholders to support innovative initiatives such as empowerment days, transatlantic rowing adventures, and UAE-wide programmes. They are actively involved in school life, contributing to leadership appointments, internal reviews, and consultative meetings with pupils and parents. Governors also lead mental health and well-being sessions, often bringing in external experts to support staff and pupils.

Leaders actively seek feedback from pupils, parents, and staff through surveys and verbal consultations. Regular newsletters celebrate pupils' achievements and provide updates to the community, fostering strong relationships and shared accountability.

Staff express immense pride in being part of the school, highlighting its exceptional culture of trust, respect, and collaboration. They feel supported and motivated by professional development opportunities, which drive innovation and contribute to the school's relentless pursuit of excellence. They say: 'You know exactly what is expected of you. Leaders are very supportive to all staff'.

Parents consistently praise the school's safe and nurturing environment, with many highlighting how staff go above and beyond to support pupils' academic, social, and emotional development. Surveys show that the vast majority of parents agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils, too, embrace leadership opportunities, and state that they are proud to actively contribute to positive changes in the school.

The school demonstrates an unwavering commitment to achieving exceptional outcomes for pupils through a robust self-evaluation process. Departmental action

plans align with strategic goals, ensuring continuous improvement. Leaders make decisions based on regular progress meetings and feedback from staff, pupils, and parents, using forensic detailed data analysis to ensure every pupil receives the support they need.

Leaders prioritise equality and inclusion by implementing consistent policies and initiatives, encouraging pupils to 'use your voice for change'. The school fosters a culture where all pupils, regardless of background, feel valued and supported to succeed. Programmes such as 'well-being pioneers', gender empowerment days and cross-cultural events highlight the school's dedication to equality and diversity. The school was actively involved in the British Embassy's 'GREAT Female Inspire programme' to support a number of British authors and talent.

Safeguarding is a cornerstone of the school's work, with robust procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety. Leaders ensure policies are rigorously implemented, and staff receive regular training to recognise and respond to concerns effectively.

Staff retention, particularly in leadership roles, is a priority for the governing board, ensuring continuity and excellence across all phases. As a result, the school benefits from a stable and dedicated workforce, with a turnover of 4%, that contributes to the school's ongoing success. Consequently, the school's environment is dynamic and nurturing, inspiring everyone to excel. Leaders, staff, and governors collectively uphold a vision that ensures pupils are not only prepared to achieve success today but are also equipped to thrive in the future.

EYFS provision

The leadership and management of the early years is outstanding. Children begin school with typical age-related skills and make rapid progress in their development. By the end of EYFS, the proportion achieving a Good Level of Development is significantly above the national average in England.

The school's vision for the early years is realised through a high-quality, child-led environment, fostering curiosity and a sense of awe and wonder. Children thrive with an abundance of opportunities to explore and engage with the world around them. They settle quickly, forming strong relationships with staff and show respect and kindness in their friendships.

Teaching is consistently excellent. Staff use their comprehensive early years expertise to provide rich experiences that motivate children. They quickly respond to children's emerging interests, for example, introducing scientific or sensory-based activities.

Children eagerly participate in activities, such as role play with toy police cars, telephones, and dressing-up. Staff enhance children's early literacy skills by offering writing materials for children to write reports in their 'police station'. Lessons effectively develop children's phonics and understanding of story structure using visual props. Through effective questioning and scaffolding, teachers provide valuable opportunities for children to explore ideas, expand their vocabulary, and develop their imagination collaboratively.

Focused assessments and individual tracking ensure each child receives tailored support and challenge. Staff use praise and encouragement to boost children's self-esteem and instil a positive attitude, helping them persevere through challenges. For example, in developing their early mathematical skills, children solve problems using cubes as a unit of measurement to explore spaces and identify where best to hang their classroom picture.

Staff keep parents well-informed about their children's learning and achievements. Leadership in the early years is inspiring and drives further excellence. This supports children's outstanding progress and ensures that they are exceptionally well prepared for their transition to Year 1.

Post-16 provision

The sixth-form provision is outstanding, with 140 students enrolled and an exemplary retention rate of 100% from Year 12 to Year 13. Students consistently commend the high-quality support that they receive from teachers, form tutors, and careers staff. They value the expert guidance which enables them to make informed, confident decisions regarding the 24 A level and six BTEC options.

The head of the sixth form has a comprehensive understanding of each student's aspirations, ensuring that they receive tailored support for their future academic and career pathways. The leadership team works collaboratively to ensure that the school's vision is consistently realised, with a focus on academic excellence and a responsive curriculum that meets diverse students' needs. Recent additions, including

sociology, politics, and photography reflect the school's proactive approach to students' evolving demands and interests.

Teaching and learning are consistently exceptional, underpinned by strong subject expertise and innovative pedagogical practices. Teachers prepare students effectively for assignments and assessments, using past examination papers to inform their approach. Regular assessment and personalised feedback support all students in achieving their very best. The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) promotes students' independent research well, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Students benefit from a modern, well-resourced environment, including a spacious common room, library, and dedicated study areas. They actively take part in the annual Careers and University Fair, which attracts over 100 universities and industry professionals. The school's dedicated careers counsellor provides exceptional support, keeping students well-informed through a monthly 'Career and University Updates' newsletter, which offers valuable insights and tailored advice to guide their academic and career pathways.

Personal development is a key strength, with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Model United Nations, and LAMDA, that cultivate confidence, independence, and resilience. All Year 12 and 13 students undertake a self-directed work placement as part of the REACH programme. Additionally, peer mentoring and healthy lifestyle initiatives further support the holistic development of all students. Just over 40% of students attend British universities, while others take up places at institutions in the Netherlands, Canada, or the USA.

Behaviour and welfare are exemplary, with positive, respectful relationships evident throughout the school, fostering a supportive and inclusive school community.

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. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards that relate to 2(2)(d)(ii) or 5 (b)(vi). Safa Community School encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected

characteristics of age; disability; pregnancy and maternity; race and religion or belief, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

The school's use of artificial intelligence (AI) lacks consistency. Leaders should ensure that there is a strategic approach to the integration of AI in lessons. As a result, pupils will enhance their learning and be prepared for the increasing use of AI both in their education and future lives.

Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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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			
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Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			
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School Details

Name of school	Safa Community School
Type of school	Private – for profit
Date school opened	2014
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	2532
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	Average Fees: EYFS – 53,187 AED Primary – 57,715 AED Secondary – 78,084 AED
Annual fees (boarders)	N/A
Address of school	Umm Suqeim Road Al Barsha South 3 Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number	+97143851810
Email address	principal@safacommunityschool.com
Headteacher	Ms. Leanne Fridd
Proprietor	Louay Khatib Sameer Merchant

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 His 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 50 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust's vision is a world in which all lives are transformed through excellent education. We strive to improve education for learners globally, grounding our work in research and evidence. We support leaders to raise standards, improve school performance, develop great teachers and open career pathways.

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.

We have built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services. One of our main aims is to improve schools through high quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges.

Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then, we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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