

# Dubai English Speaking College

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

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Age Group: 11 to 18 years  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by four inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the college. 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 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 and clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped the staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.**

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 carers 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

Dubai English Speaking College (DESC) is a not-for-profit, co-educational secondary school that follows the British curriculum. The college, located in Academic City, Dubai opened on its current site in 2005. The head of school has been in post since 2014. Due to high demand, DESC is oversubscribed and carefully selects pupils to maintain a balanced population while promoting inclusivity.

DESC, along with its sister school Dubai English Speaking School (DESS) collectively known as DESSC, shares the same principal and board of trustees. The vast majority of pupils transfer from DESS primary school to DESC.

There are currently 1851 pupils on roll aged 11 to 18 years, making DESC larger than other similar international secondary schools in the UAE. It has the largest sixth form in Dubai.

The college community is culturally diverse, representing 70 nationalities with nearly half of the pupils being of British origin. While some pupils speak English as another language (EAL) none require extra language support. DESC has 225 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Each has a pupil passport and an assigned inclusion link member of staff. The college has identified 137 gifted and talented pupils, and 810 more-able pupils based on their high cognitive ability test scores.

The college's vision is, 'To nurture independent, confident and resilient learners who respond to challenge and aspire to reach their full potential.' Their motto 'Dare Excel Share Create' (DESC) captures the ethos of the college.

## 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 82 part-lessons. Seven of the lessons visited were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. They also observed assemblies, form time and extra-curricular activities (ECA). There were 32 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the college's governing board.

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

## Evaluation of the school

**Dubai English Speaking College is an outstanding college and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from 11 to 18 years.**

**The college 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.**

Pupils' attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding.

Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress from their different starting points. Pupils build on their knowledge effectively as they move through the college's ambitious curriculum. Pupils with SEND and those who speak EAL make rapid progress as a result of highly effective teaching and well-targeted additional tuition.

In Years 7, 8 and 9 virtually all pupils achieve standards that are in line with expectations of the national curriculum of England. Over half of them attain above expectations for their age in reading and writing in each year group. Those with lower starting points in reading make rapid gains in their skills as a result of wide-ranging interventions.

The outstanding progress continues through key stage 4, where most pupils exceed their predicted grades based on their starting points. Pupils' attainment in English language and English literature GCSEs and iGCSEs is consistently well above England and international averages. Around half the cohort typically achieve the higher 7-9 grades in each qualification. English is an increasingly popular A level choice. Students' attainment at the highest A\* to A grades is well above the England averages in both language and literature.

Pupils' work in their notebooks and on their electronic devices is of high quality. In Year 9, pupils build tension in their narrative, using techniques such as short sentences, panic conjunctions, and interrupted dialogue. In Year 11 pupils skilfully compare poems based on structure, themes, language choice and perspective. Sixth-form students

use well-chosen quotations to exemplify themes, author technique and language features as they analyse 'Othello' in depth.

Across the college attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding. There is no significant variation in the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils including boys, girls and pupils with SEND and EAL. At GCSE and A level, pupils attain results in mathematics and further mathematics that significantly exceed England averages. The three-year trend shows that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in mathematics continues to be outstanding.

At key stage 3, pupils develop mathematical conceptual understanding and the ability to recall and apply knowledge rapidly and accurately. They use mathematical language with confidence and effectively use their reasoning skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils are confident in using compound units such as speed, unit pricing and density to solve problems.

In key stage 4, pupils build on their learning from key stage 3 to further develop their fluency, mathematical reasoning, and competence in solving increasingly sophisticated problems. They apply their mathematical knowledge with confidence wherever relevant in other subjects and in financial contexts. By the end of Year 11, pupils can apply the concepts of congruence and similarity. Almost half of all pupils achieve grades 7 to 9 in GCSE mathematics. They achieve half a grade higher than their predicted grades and almost a grade higher in further mathematics.

In the sixth form, students extend their range of mathematical skills and techniques to make logical reasoned decisions in solving complex problems in a variety of contexts. They communicate with confidence and clarity the mathematical rationale for their methods. By the end of Year 13, pupils can integrate parametric equations to find the area under a curve. The majority of pupils secure grades A\* to A at A level. They achieve half a grade higher than their predicted grade in both A level mathematics and further mathematics. In 2023 the school achieved one of the highest scores in further mathematics in the UAE.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding across the college. Results have been consistently high over a number of years and were outstanding in both GCSE and A level examinations in 2023. In GCSE single sciences, the percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades of 7 to 9 was close to double the England average. Pupils who took combined sciences performed well above the England average. A level results were above the England national average in biology and chemistry at the highest grades of A\* to B. On average, pupils performed above their target grades in all GCSE and A level sciences. In BTEC applied science, students gained over two

grades higher on average than predicted. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress and perform well in examinations due to the quality of support they receive from both subject teachers and specialist staff. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls.

Teachers work very well collaboratively to provide an interesting and challenging curriculum which enables pupils to think scientifically and form ideas and opinions based on information and data. They develop pupils' skills to develop and apply knowledge through practical investigations. Pupils in Year 7, for example, used their knowledge of sound to design a model soundproofed room. They undertake experiments thoughtfully and record their findings. For example, pupils in Year 9 reduced copper oxide and Year 12 students designed experiments to test Newton's second law of force, mass and acceleration. Many students leave the college to study science-related courses in prestigious universities.

Pupils achieve highly in a wide range of **other subjects**. In the previous year almost half of the cohort achieved, on average, grade 7 to 9 in their GCSE subjects. This is double the England average. In all subjects, on average, pupils made progress above their predicted grades. The progress in media studies and physical education (PE) was particularly good, where on average pupils achieved around 1.5 grades higher than predicted.

Similarly at A level, approximately half of all students achieved A\* to A grades, significantly higher than the England average. Students' progress above predictions was higher in 2022-23 than in the previous two years when on average students gained a grade higher. Students' rates of progress in BTEC level 3 are particularly high. In creative media, students gained 3.5 grades higher than predicted. Diligent independent students keen to succeed characterised all BTEC lessons.

Pupils enjoy the subjects in the wider curriculum, particularly creative subjects where they are very active.

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

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Standard 1 below).
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall (see Standard 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Standard 2 below).

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

**As a result of this inspection, undertaken during January 2024, the college has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. The college'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.**

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

The college's curriculum aligns with the shared values that underpin the vision statement. The curriculum is meticulously planned, broad and well matched to pupils' abilities and interests. It provides a rich learning experience for all pupils, including those with SEND, effectively preparing them for their next stage of learning.

The curriculum is appropriately adapted to meet the requirements of the national curriculum of England. At key stage 4, pupils choose from a selection of 20 GCSE and IGCSE options. Pupils can focus on their areas of interest or choose new subjects, including media, business, economics and psychology or the Higher Project

Qualification (HPQ). The college offers a broad range of academic enrichment opportunities referred to as the 'super curriculum'; for example, the Model United Nations, E-sports or the enterprise club. The impressive and popular programme of over 175 weekly enrichment activities fosters the development of pupils' personal, social and leadership skills extremely well.

In the sixth form students can choose an academic or vocational pathway, choosing A Levels and/or BTEC/Rock School London (RSL) qualifications. The college offers 24 A level and eight BTEC/RSL vocational courses alongside the opportunity to complete an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). In the sixth form, the 'super curriculum' gives students the choice of 22 societies during lunchtime or after school. These include the podcast society, chess club or philosophy and politics societies which contribute significantly to students' all-round development.

The Britishness of the curriculum is evident through the Getting Ready for the Outside World (GROW) curriculum from Year 7 to Year 11. This fosters in pupils a deep understanding of the world and of life in British society. Teachers routinely incorporate democratic processes in their classrooms, allowing pupils to vote on options; for example, during GROW time, such as 'happy headspace', 'afternoon tea' or 'green fingers'. DESC celebrates and embraces diverse cultures and beliefs, celebrating the 70 different nationalities of pupils in the college. For example, during events such as UAE National Day and International Day. Pupils state that, 'The diversity is incredible and as a result, we learn about everybody's background'. Pupils learn about empathy, respect and tolerance for the values of others, appreciating the protected characteristics. In geography, pupils explore cultural norms while Year 11 pupils critically examine "Of Mice and Men", exploring themes of racial segregation and prejudice.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of education. Project 10.5 and Project 11.5 are both year-long projects providing a seamless transition from key stage 4 to 5, helping pupils make informed choices. A dedicated Head of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) supported by a very able team, offers careers guidance through a wide range of weekly events, including talks, newsletters, and coaching. However, the availability of work-based experience is currently limited in Year 10 and parents have requested further work-related opportunities.

Curriculum policies and plans are frequently reviewed by middle and senior leaders, resulting in continuous improvement. Parents and pupils actively contribute to the changes implemented, such as the introduction of AS classics in Year 12 in the previous year.

The college makes highly effective use of the local community to enhance pupils learning. For example, the local Marriott Hotel provides internships for students in Years 12 and 13 taking the BTEC hospitality qualification.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** in the college is outstanding.

The DESC approach to teaching and learning motivates teachers and pupils to 'Dare, Excel, Share, and Create' together. Teachers participate in well-researched professional development, which promotes high quality teaching across all subjects. They inspire and motivate pupils with memorable learning experiences. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects and develop lifelong learning skills.

Teachers and learning support assistants (LSA) have positive and constructive relationships with pupils. They create an encouraging environment where pupils feel safe to share ideas and 'have a go' at challenging tasks. LSAs make a valuable contribution to class-based teaching and provide effective targeted support to small groups and individuals.

Teachers personalise learning to provide the right amount of challenge and support for each pupil. They are able to do this because they have excellent subject knowledge and know pupils extremely well. Teachers use information from progress checks and curriculum-based assessments to build on each pupils' knowledge sequentially. They provide additional support wherever pupils have gaps in their knowledge. In lessons, teachers constantly check pupils' understanding so that every pupil achieves success. Pupils with SEND receive precisely targeted support so that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

Lessons are orderly, well-paced and productive. Teachers use stimulating resources and imaginative approaches that interest and engage pupils. In Year 8 history, for example, pupils used various sources of information and searched for hidden facts in the classroom and outside about the Great Plague of 1665. They collaborated to record their findings and evaluate symptoms, causes, cures and preventative measures of the time.

Teachers explain and exemplify new learning clearly. Their skilled questioning probes and deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding. In Year 13 mathematics for example, the teacher addressed students' misconception by asking 'what does it tell you if you end up with a fraction?' Teachers help pupils to embed knowledge by providing frequent opportunities for them to recall and apply their knowledge to challenging tasks.

Teachers' strong focus on vocabulary development enables pupils to articulate their learning clearly. Pupils across the college confidently participate in discussion and collaborative work. Teachers encourage pupils to read widely. Pupils benefit from a comprehensively stocked library where they can conduct their own research and read for pleasure.

Teachers are adept at integrating technology to enhance teaching and facilitate learning. They use a wide range of digital resources to exemplify and illustrate key learning points. They give pupils instant feedback to improve their work. Pupils use technology extremely proficiently to gain access to resources and to record their work.

Alongside the knowledge rich curriculum, teachers promote important learning skills that empower pupils to steer their own learning. Teachers provide rich opportunities for pupils to investigate, explore, debate and organise their learning. Pupils persevere and work diligently to produce high quality independent work. This was particularly evident in BTEC subjects. Teachers explicitly coach pupils in how to reflect on, evaluate and improve their work against clear success criteria. For example, in inspiring Year 7 and Year 13 drama lessons, the teacher demonstrated how to provide constructive feedback on each other's performance. As a result, pupils developed their skills in communication and evaluation as well as improving their dramatic technique.

Consistently outstanding teaching prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and equips them with the knowledge and skills to make the most of life's challenges and opportunities.

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

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5(b)(vi). 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. DESC actively promotes three strong core values within the DESSCares initiative which brings together the college's vision. These values encompass kindness, gratitude and humanity. Pupils are caring, courteous, calm and act in a respectful, enthusiastic and mature manner. As a result, behaviour is exemplary. The college nurtures leadership skills in pupils throughout the college. Staff and student relationships are excellent and a sense of mutual respect permeates college life.

The house system facilitates highly effective individual tutorials, fostering positive relationships between pastoral staff and their tutees. These tutorial conversations give tutors a deep insight into pupils' personal and academic development, allowing them to provide support in a targeted way. Pupils state that, 'The house system brings us together. It's something we can all share.'

Pupils are proud to be part of the college, saying that, 'The college culture is all about celebrating success. It makes you want to do it. The college cares about me, my grades and my future.' House awards such as Desert Demeanour, Earth Ethos, Sky Stars and Coast Culture motivate pupils to take part in the life of the school. A total of 96 pupils hold leadership responsibilities around the college with two ambassadors for every tutor group and five pupil leaders in each house. They frequently lead college assemblies alongside other activities that develop their initiative. Older pupils initiated 'pop-up cafe' sessions to help key stage 3 pupils with their work.

The GROW and pastoral calendar actively explore the values of tolerance, respect, kindness, gratitude and generosity. The house system enhances pupils' sense of belonging as part of a team, resulting in only very rare instances of bullying. Swift resolution is possible through the use of an efficient restorative justice process, supported by 28 members of staff who are qualified mental health first aiders. Fully accredited pastoral coaches lead conversations to support pupils. In assemblies, pupils enjoy celebrating each other's differences and the importance of being kind. Pupils state that, 'It's nice to say thank you and to write gratitude letters.'

Pupils appreciate the regular surveys as they feel empowered to make suggestions and senior leaders systematically listen to their input. For example, the senior student leadership team now leads the International Day; EPQ and HPQ are now on the curriculum and TEDex talks are now part of sixth-form culture.

Pupils are knowledgeable about public institutions and services in the UK, including the monarchy, the NHS, parliament and the impact of Brexit on the economy. The British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance are highly evident throughout the college. Pupil ambassadors, house leaders and sixth-form senior leadership all provide excellent role models. In Year 8 history, pupils learn about the evolution of the power shifts in British democracy, moving from an upper-class, elitist parliamentary system to the rise of the working class and the growth of trade unions. In Year 12 performing arts, students who undertake their grade 8 Speaking in Public qualification make presentations on a range of political topics, including policy, race, and religion. In English, pupils study tolerance through texts such as 'Othello' or 'An Inspector Calls'. In the moral, social and cultural curriculum, pupils

create cultural calendars recognising the importance of worldwide key dates, including UAE National Day, Islamic New Year, Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, Diwali, and UN days. The 'Zero discrimination week' celebrates over 70 nationalities around the college. All DESC pupils strive to become responsible global citizens.

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

The welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff is outstanding.

The college's arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding. Its detailed policies underpin and prioritise a systematic approach to all health and safety matters.

The safeguarding and child protection policies and practice fully align with UK and UAE expectations, ensuring pupils are safe from harm, including cyber-bullying or exposure to inappropriate materials. All staff receive training appropriate to their role and understand their individual responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Parents confirm their child's education is in a very safe setting.

Leaders' analysis of regular fire safety and lockdown drills ensure ongoing improvement. Detailed risk assessments and standardised procedures guarantee pupils' safety in potentially dangerous situations on college premises and during trips. Supervision levels are high at all times. Senior staff regularly report to governors who closely monitor all matters related to welfare, health, safety and safeguarding.

Teachers know their pupils well, paying detailed attention to both their academic progress and well-being. College staff respond quickly to changing individual needs, prioritising personalised interventions. The college ensures parents stay fully informed by providing them with access to detailed information about their children's progress. The college shows a commitment to removing all barriers affecting pupils' academic and social development. Skilled specialist staff diligently support pupils with SEND. Medical and counselling advisers support pupils' health and personal needs exceptionally well. Arrangements when pupils join the college ensure pupils settle in quickly, whether they have transferred from DESS or another school.

Effective communication systems provide staff with the necessary information to support individual pupils while respecting confidentiality. Many staff hold additional qualifications relating to pupils' welfare. The college produces an annual pastoral calendar, promoting ongoing attention to pupils' well-being. The detailed behaviour

policy encourages, recognises and rewards good behaviour. Isolated incidents of misbehaviour are promptly and appropriately remedied. Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly. A dedicated member of staff follows up on absences immediately and college attendance is 94%, above the current UK average. Punctuality in the morning and between lessons is very good because pupils value learning time.

The college has created a positive and caring culture where safety is everyone's responsibility. At the heart of the college's well-constructed pastoral approach are its four houses. Pupils view the house system as a way to unite them with a collective purpose and provide regular access to trusted adults. Pupils actively care for their environment and support each other well. Those in house leadership roles contribute significantly to supporting younger pupils who may need help.

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

The college meets the requirements of this standard.

The Human Resources (HR) staff at the college conduct rigorous and comprehensive checks on all staff and external providers. These include checks for identity, police records, qualifications, three references, suitability to work with children and the right to work in the UAE. A single central register (SCR) is in place for the whole organisation to record this information as well as safeguarding training. HR also keeps a recruitment tracker. These documents are secure and only accessible to the HR department.

All HR staff and senior leaders undergo training in safer recruitment. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the three deputy DSLs have completed advanced training. They in turn deliver face-to-face training for all staff at the start of each academic year. Staff demonstrate a strong awareness of their responsibilities in safeguarding and prioritise the welfare of pupils.

In the current year, the college has recruited 18 new teachers. Staff turnover is low. The college is highly successful in recruiting high-quality staff, predominantly trained in the UK. They settle into the college quickly because induction starts in the UK with senior leaders. A weekend session reinforces the high standards and ethos expected. Induction continues in the college through regular observation of lessons and practice. While probation can last up to six months, most achieve the expected level of excellence in their teaching by the end of the first term.

## Standard 5. The premises and accommodation

The college meets the requirements of this standard.

The college's premises and accommodation are outstanding. Modern, attractive and well-maintained facilities support learning extremely well with plentiful, high-quality resources that enhance teaching and learning. The college's highly efficient operations team maintain the college well and implement ongoing improvements. Safety across the college is a priority for all. Security staff control the entrances to the college and manage the procedures for pupils' arrival and departure well.

Excellent provision, including shaded and seated areas, provides space for pupils to congregate socially around the college. Two cafes provide a relaxing environment in which pupils can enjoy healthy food. Classrooms are of a good size and well-equipped with technology. Information displayed on house screens, especially about house activities and performances, interests pupils. The sixth form centre, with its areas for social interaction and private and group study areas, provides excellent preparation for students' transition into higher education.

Corridors are wide and water dispensers and fire extinguishers are present throughout the college. The lifts ensure accessibility for all and evacuation chairs support emergency exits in case of fire. Washrooms are sufficient and well maintained.

Excellent sporting facilities include an indoor and a temperature-controlled outside pool, a large sports hall, fitness centre, and real grass and all-weather pitches. Plentiful science laboratories allow practical work in safe conditions. A new state-of-the-art design technology room has extensive up-to-date equipment including a 3-D laser printer to enhance pupils learning. Facilities for art, drama and music are equally impressive and numerous, with excellent storage and preparation areas. The centrally located library is popular, attractive, and well stocked with books in four languages.

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

The college meets the requirements of this BSO standard.

Relationships and communication with parents are outstanding. Parents who met with inspectors stated that they are proud to be part of such a flourishing community. They describe DESC as a place where their children thrive, where teaching is excellent and where staff are extremely caring. Almost all parents who responded to the BSO parents'

survey agreed that the college is well led and that their children enjoy school and are safe.

Parents state that communication with the college is 'like a well-oiled machine'. Leaders keep parents fully informed through the parents' portal, letters and weekly emails. Consequently, parents state that they always know about college-wide developments, enrichment opportunities, educational trips and events. The college's website has all required policies, including admissions, safeguarding, complaints, and behaviour with information about procedures and the curriculum.

Parents are very well informed about their children's progress, attainment and effort in all subjects. They receive detailed termly reports and meet regularly with teachers to discuss their children's academic and all-round development. Staff act quickly to contact parents if there is anything that requires their immediate attention. Staff are also quick to communicate with parents to celebrate when their children excel and demonstrate DESC's values. Personal communications are effectively channelled through the house-based parent liaison arrangements. Parents state that they receive an immediate response to any concerns or queries they raise.

Parents of children with SEND describe DESC as a 'genuinely inclusive college' that welcomes all pupils. Staff do all they can to minimise barriers to learning and promote pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils make the best possible academic progress and grow in confidence.

Leaders actively seek parents' views through parents' surveys and regular meetings. Parents state that leaders listen to them and 'are always thinking about how they can do things better'. For example, leaders are looking for ways to make online communication platforms simpler to use. At the request of parents, they have brought meetings with teachers earlier in the year and enhanced the sixth form curriculum. Parents expressed a desire for more work-based learning opportunities for pupils in Year 10. Leaders take account of parents' feedback in development planning.

Regular workshops and meetings are open to all parents. They provide an opportunity for parental feedback as well as helpful information and advice. Recent themes have included pupils' well-being and revision skills. Parents appreciate the information and advice that they receive about how they can promote their children's well-being and support learning at home.

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

The college meets the requirements of this standard.

The college has a clear, up-to-date staged complaints policy available on the website in the parents' area. The college has yet to receive any formal complaints. The college has five staff with dedicated house Parent Liaison (PL) roles in post to deal with parental concerns. Parents receive their PL's email and phone contact details during induction. Parents must address all their queries and concerns to their designated PL. Parents understand that the PL will promptly deal with their concerns in accordance with the policy. If the PL cannot resolve the concern themselves, they will refer it to the appropriate person as necessary. The PL ensures resolution of all concerns before archiving any concern.

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

The leadership and management of the college are outstanding. The leadership fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are fully met.

The headteacher, head of school and all senior leaders communicate the vision of the college clearly. Pupils and teachers embody the motto: 'Dare Excel Share Create' all around the college.

The leadership team is stable. Responsibilities have changed, but changes have never compromised the strong reputation or the ethos of the college.

Many middle leaders have been at the college for a number of years. Many of them have earned promotions to their current roles, such as heads of department or heads of house. They have developed their skills in these roles because leaders have inspired them to have confidence in themselves and have provided encouragement for them to take calculated risks. All are high achieving and ambitious to grow and pursue their ideas. All leaders provide good role models and have the capacity to improve still further. The college has a mantra of 'not being perfect' even though it has a very strong reputation for excellence.

The college has a fully consolidated cycle of quality self-evaluation. Leaders have worked collaboratively to create the DESC five-year development plan. This plan, along

with examination results' analysis and inspection findings, contributes to the identification of priorities in the one-year action plan and departmental subject plans. Improvements are highly evident across the college. For example, the development of the pastoral calendar, which is continually monitored and improved has led to more meaningful pastoral experiences for pupils.

Leaders have established a clear vision for teaching and learning. The college has an outstanding professional development programme that enhances teachers' pedagogical skills. This programme relies on comprehensive quality assurance processes for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. All staff complete a self-reflection exercise and their line manager reviews it to help set clear personal targets. Expert guidance from the teaching and learning team, alongside opportunities to observe colleagues and share best practice, leads to a commitment for teachers to 'get even better'.

Morale is exceptionally positive as shown in the college's recent happiness survey and the BSO survey. All confirmed that they were proud to be a member of staff and enjoyed working at the college. Staff work hard and have a feeling of joint responsibility to maintain high professional standards. The college also gathers the views of parents and pupils through surveys. These show overwhelmingly positive views of the college, its staff, and the culture of pupils' reaching their potential.

DESC has a strong safeguarding culture where all staff understand their responsibilities in reporting concerns. The college has recently had a detailed safeguarding audit of its practices and has made some improvements as a result.

The college's trustees, including parents and individuals with diverse skills and experience, ensure that the college operates legally and that its financial policies are sound. Governors have undertaken accredited training. They are trustees for both schools in DESSC, sharing meetings and sub-committees. They encourage the head boy and girl to present the ideas and initiatives on which they have been working.

Governors clearly know the college and its priorities well. They encourage open dialogue with leaders but understand and respect their separate responsibilities. They communicate ambition and appraise the principal for DESSC. He, in turn, sets the performance objectives of the two headteachers, overseen by governors.

Leaders and governors consistently promote inclusion and model equality. They are working hard to recognise unconscious bias and keenly ensure equality in all aspects of their work. The college regularly has themed events to celebrate inclusion such as the International Day of Persons with Disability. DESC acknowledges the unique

potential of each pupil and does all it can to help them realise and achieve their individual capabilities.

## Post-16 provision

Almost all of DESC pupils continue their sixth-form study at the college. There are currently 511 students in 32 tutor groups who choose from 24 different A level subjects and 8 different BTEC/RSL courses. This makes DESC the largest sixth form in Dubai.

Highly effective transition processes help pupils make informed choices. Project 13.5 prepares students for the broader world beyond DESC, bridging the gap between academic life and future endeavours. A rich and generous 'super curriculum' provides students with a wealth of enrichment opportunities and experiences. Students learn essential life skills in their 'LIFE class', ranging from financial literacy to self-defence. All students complete work experience either in Dubai or in the UK.

Highly skilled professional career, advice and guidance staff work with students in exploring future careers and potential university applications. For example, the comprehensive Oxbridge, Ivy League or medicine pathway demonstrate the excellent personalised guidance students receive.

Excellence is seen throughout the sixth form, from its leadership to outstanding teaching and excellent results. Almost half achieved an A\* to A grade and three quarters achieved A\* to B in 2023. Pupils continue their academic studies in universities around the world, and predominantly in the UK.

The excellent facilities in the sixth-form space help students thrive and learn. The lively sixth form centre is a hub for society meetings, debates and social activities. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding and the college encourages every student to serve as a role model and ambassador. Those who choose to pursue leadership roles gain a unique insight into the workings of the college with regular exposure to college leaders. Students actively engage in supporting global concerns, local culture and charitable causes.

Pastoral care is at the heart of the sixth form. A large, stable and expert team cares for students, nurturing independence, resilience, tolerance and a sense of global citizenship.

The leadership of the sixth form team is excellent. Senior leaders foster a culture of exceptionally high expectations for students' academic success.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

Dubai English Speaking College (DESC) 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 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 college might wish to consider the following point for development:

Parents have requested an increased focus on careers and work-related experiences in key stage 4. Leaders should enhance the current excellent careers programme to incorporate meaningful work-based experiences. This will widen pupils' perspectives on a range of potential work opportunities, both now and in the future.

## 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

<b>Name of school</b>	Dubai English Speaking College
<b>Type of school</b>	Private, not-for-profit
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2005
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1851
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	n/a
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Y7-11 78,720DHS. Y12&13 – 84,609DHS.
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	n/a
<b>Address of school</b>	Academic City Dubai, UAE
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 360 4866
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	DESC_headteacher@dessc.sch.ae
<b>Proprietor</b>	Christopher Vizzard (Headteacher) Andrew Gibbs (Principal)

## 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 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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