

# Sunmarke School Dubai

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 6 February to 9 February 2023

Lead Inspector: Nadine Powrie

Team: Robin Attfield, Rekha Bakoo, Lenford White

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 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 DfE, 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 BSOs. These were updated with effect from September 2017. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations.

**The DfE issued a policy update in October 2018. The Department confirmed that 'our policy is now to accredit schools in countries where to meet certain standards would be in breach of the host country laws, as long as there is evidence to substantiate this, and all other standards are met'.**

The standards are as follows:

1. The quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching and assessment)
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

5. The premises and accommodation
6. The provision of information
7. The manner in which complaints are handled
8. The leadership and management of the school
9. The quality of provision for boarding

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare
- provide rigorous and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and celebrate their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses
- inform parents and carers and the wider public of the quality of BSOs by placing reports in the public domain.

### Key for inspection grades

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

### Proportions used in the report

90–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
75–90%	Very large majority, most
65–74%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none/very few

## Information about the school

Sunmarke School is a British co-educational school located in district 5 of Jumeirah Village Triangle, Dubai. It is part of the Fortes Education group of schools. The current executive head also supports a sister school in the Fortes Education group.

The school opened in September 2016. Currently, Sunmarke school has 1,889 students, having grown from 727 students in 2016, making it larger than most schools of the same type. There are 91 different nationalities, the largest national groups being from Russia and the UK.

The school is a fully inclusive school and meets the needs of all pupils. There are 111 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who receive additional support. A very large majority of pupils have a principal language other than English and 14% need extra support to give them access to the curriculum.

The school offers the English national curriculum. In foundation stage children follow the English early years framework, ensuring an appropriate balance between teaching and child-initiated learning, to ensure that each individual child is prepared for future learning and healthy development. In primary and key stage 3, the school's curriculum is based on the English national curriculum adapted to contextualise learning within the international setting. At key stage 4, the school offers an extensive selection of GCSE and iGCSE courses. GCSEs in English, mathematics and science are compulsory for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. These courses are supplemented by a choice of BTEC courses in Years 10 and 11. A wide range of subjects is available for students to study in Years 12 to 13 at A level, BTEC level 3 and as part of the International Baccalaureate. Most students will go onto studying to universities, a majority of which will go to UK universities.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the school community academically, socially and in relation to well-being. The highly effective use of technology enabled all pupils to continue learning. The school has continued support for pupils' emotional and social well-being through the positive-education programme.

## 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 school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the school before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 128 lessons. An Inspector and a senior member of staff inspected two lessons jointly.

There were 31 meetings which took place with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board.

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

## Evaluation of the school

Sunmarke 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.

Overall, across the school attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding, including for those with SEND and those who are learning English as an additional language (EAL). Across all phases pupils achieve high standards, above those seen in England. Early years children are immersed in language from the moment they enter the school. By the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected

standard in their phonics skills was well above the UK 2021/22 average. This strong start helps them to read and write with increasing fluency as they move up the school.

By the end of key stage 1, the majority of pupils reach standards that are above those expected for their age. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils construct complex sentences using subordinate clauses and descriptive language. This valuable development of language skills enables them to proceed into the secondary school and further develop their writing ability. Pupils of all ages take advantage of the wealth of books available in libraries to read for pleasure.

By the end of key stage 3 the majority of pupils read and write with fluency, using the appropriate tone for different audiences. Pupils are able to make connections across a wide range of literature, analysing and evaluating a writer's choices of language and structure. For example, in Year 9 pupils evaluate the key features of successful diary entries to help them to develop their own pieces of transactional writing. Preparation for examinations is thorough and highly effective. External examination results at GCSE in English literature and language are consistently higher than UK averages. In addition, those who continue post-16 achieve outstanding levels of attainment in relation to UK and world averages.

Overall, across the school attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding. Children enter the early years often with varied and sometimes low skills in numeracy and limited ability in English. Many have not attended a nursery. As a result of very carefully planned activities linked to their personal interests and excellent teaching, they make rapid progress in developing their understanding in both number and number patterns. By the time they enter the primary phase 91% have attained the level expected in the UK and 72% have exceeded it.

As a result of the well-developed curriculum and consistently high level of teaching pupils' progress continues throughout the primary phase and is outstanding for those who have been in school the longest. Pupils of all abilities, those who speak EAL and those with SEND make at least good progress against their starting points and the progress of the majority of pupils is outstanding. In Year 6, the majority perform well above UK and international averages as measured by both teacher and external assessments.

Standards in GCSE examinations have consistently exceeded UK and international averages over the last three years with over 80% achieving at least a level 5, of whom

36% attain one of the two highest possible grades. A growing number of pupils take their mathematics examination a year early and perform equally well.

The number of students taking both International Baccalaureate and further mathematics is currently small. More students take A level and achieve grades well above UK and international averages with 70% achieving grade B or above.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding across all phases of the school. The standards reached in science across the school are above UK averages. Almost all children in the early years make expected progress from their starting points and most make more than expected progress. There is little difference in the progress of different groups of children. Consequently, most achieve the UK early learning goals related to Understanding the World. Children are given many opportunities to engage in 'hands on' activities such as growing herbs, mixing 'concoctions' and creating perfumes.

As pupils move through the primary phase, teachers help them to refine their scientific understanding. For example, in Year 1 they start to classify different animals. Pupils in Year 2 develop their understanding of life cycles and how plants and animals reproduce. The school's outstanding SpaceX centre enhances pupils' scientific understanding further. Key stage 2 pupils embark on projects which deepen their understanding of subjects such as physics. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 embark on making mini electric planetariums.

In key stage 3, pupils excel in biology and chemistry. They develop their understanding of evolutionary processes and the function of different cells exceptionally well. In key stage 4, they refine their understanding of the principles of scientific investigation. They know how to develop hypotheses, test ideas, make observations and record their findings.

By the end of key stage 4, pupils make outstanding progress in physics, chemistry and biology. In addition, A-level students' outstanding progress leads to exceptionally strong outcomes which are well above UK and international averages.

Pupils make outstanding progress in a range of **other subjects** across the curriculum. Their progress and levels of attainment are rigorously monitored. Pupils with SEND and/or EAL make outstanding progress from their starting point. There is no significant gap between girls and boys. In primary, teachers work closely with

specialist teachers and use thematic approaches such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEAM) and Space X to deepen pupils' understanding of the world. As a result, most pupils know how to apply their learning to real-world contexts. French is successfully taught from early years and Mandarin is taught in the primary phase. Physical education, art and music contribute positively to pupils' overall success. In secondary, pupils' attainment and progress are outstanding in GCSEs in all subjects and all pathways and are significantly better than the UK average. At A level, students' attainment and progress are outstanding in almost all subjects and significantly higher than the UK average. International Baccalaureate results are outstanding and above the world-wide average by six points.

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

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during February 2023, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards (2017 updated) 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 UK independent school system. 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 curriculum is vibrant in all phases of the school and is based soundly on the English national curriculum and early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements as well those of the UAE. The school meets its stated ambition to develop pupils of character who achieve academic excellence. British values and knowledge of Britain are embedded. The curriculum includes English texts and the study of English systems of governance, democracy and law, many of which are studied alongside those of the UAE and other countries. Pupils in the primary department recently studied the Vikings in history and the British coastline in geography. The work of David Attenborough was highlighted when studying sustainability. All lessons, other than modern-foreign-language lessons, are taught in English and equip pupils effectively to enter or re-enter the UK educational system.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is taught both explicitly in subjects such as moral education and 'Values in Action', in assemblies and form time and throughout many other subjects. It addresses issues including well-being, disability, beliefs and conflict. The study of restorative justice helps pupils recognise the impact of behaviour on others and to articulate concerns. Through roles such as student ambassadors and well-being champions, pupils make a significant contribution to curriculum development. They created, for example, a cultural calendar with details of national days, festivals and religious celebrations. The annual international day is a highlight of the school year and a celebration of the school community's rich diversity and culture. The theme of equality related to maternity and pregnancy is woven into the curriculum.

The curriculum policy and plans pay due regard to the protected characteristics outlined in the UK Equality Act 2010. However, the school cannot address equality in relation to marriage and civil partnerships, sex and sexual orientation or gender reassignment due to the laws of the UAE.

Teachers plan collaboratively. Both teachers and leaders review constantly what is taught and how well pupils progress, both academically and socially. There is a high degree of consistency within departments and each subject or aspect is developed within a clear whole-school framework and curriculum policy. As a result, pupils continue to develop their skills and attitudes. In mathematics, for example, pupils are encouraged to articulate the strategies they use to solve problems, which strengthens their communication and independent learning skills as well as mathematical accuracy. Meticulous attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage in their education so that they are confident as they move up into new classes or to other educational settings.

The curriculum is imaginative, exciting and innovative and designed with clear and relevant outcomes for pupils. The implementation of STEAM in the primary school and the use of nature as a catalyst for learning in the early years and primary phases, promote the development of creative, thoughtful, imaginative and collaborative learners who welcome challenge.

The curriculum is adapted fully to meet the varied needs of pupils. Multiple pathways to learning are available to meet their needs and aspirations. A wide range of courses leads to qualifications that are academic, vocational or based around life skills. The choice of options is wide with GCSE, A-level and International Baccalaureate courses. Pupils receive excellent advice and support before making their option choices. Careers education from Year 9 onwards is comprehensive and the 'Think and Thrive' programme for post-sixteen students provides excellent preparation for higher education and next steps in life.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy taking part in 100 different activities. Visitors to the school, especially from the business community, enhance learning opportunities and older pupils play a significant role in developing younger pupils. Over 147 older pupils and students are active in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and many participate in national competitions and challenges in diverse areas from car design to the World Scholar Challenge and Model United Nations.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** is outstanding across the whole school. This contributes to pupils almost always making strong progress from their

starting points and achieving consistently high standards across the curriculum. As a result of high-quality teaching, almost all pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding of the school's coherently implemented curriculum. It prepares pupils to enter or re-enter the UK system extremely well.

Teachers are well qualified with strong subject knowledge. They provide explanations and engaging tasks which are carefully planned to promote excellent progress. Inspiring learning environments and creative use of displays contribute to effective learning. Pupils say that teachers are kind, helpful and know them well, both as learners and as people. Teachers work with leaders to identify any potential underachievement early and provide the necessary interventions to keep pupils on track. Teachers intervene early when required to ensure that there is no loss of momentum in progress and to close any emerging gaps in attainment.

Often, outstanding teaching ensures detailed feedback, targeted questioning and mini plenaries which help pupils to learn well and enable them to think more deeply about how to give insightful responses. Teachers' questioning is highly developed across the school. It is used to make sure that pupils understand new ideas and to assess their progress carefully. In addition, teachers' clear explanations sharply focus pupils' minds on learning and motivate them to succeed. The quality of learning and teaching is routinely monitored through an embedded and structured quality-assurance programme.

Teachers ensure that the pace of lessons meets the needs of different groups of pupils. However, at times the activities chosen by teachers do not fully meet the learning needs of the most able pupils. When this happens, it slows their rate of learning. Teachers model learning well and at the same time encourage pupils to find things out for themselves and discuss their ideas with confidence. The use of a wide range of technology is successful in capturing pupils' interests as well as enabling them to become self-reliant learners.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and learn through discussions with their peers. They feel confident in seeking clarification or help if they are having difficulty. As a result, the learning environment in lessons is very productive and pupils say that they enjoy lessons. A strong work ethic permeates the school. Pupils consistently behave well and are respectful to the teachers and all other adults. The relationships established between staff and pupils are indicators of the highly positive ethos.

Pupils with SEND and EAL are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers have a wealth of assessment information about all pupils in all areas of the curriculum and understand their needs well. Assessment information is analysed forensically and any concerns are addressed swiftly. Plans for raising attainment and progress are carefully structured to help pupils to reach their full potential. Teachers use assessment information well to adapt the curriculum and refine teaching strategies.

## **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.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Provision is outstanding as the emphasis on pupils' personal development, built around British values, is embedded throughout all aspects of school life. The school is meeting its ambition to create an environment which builds pupils' character alongside achieving academic excellence. The school's 'positive education' is central to its culture and develops pupils who are increasingly aware of their own needs and those of others. Values are discussed in many lessons and are acknowledged through 'flourish points' and 'spirit of Sunmarke' certificates. Pupils become emotionally intelligent and self-confident, preparing to be responsible citizens in a rapidly changing world.

From the moment they arrive in the school, pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and immediate environment and learn and develop language which helps them express how they feel. The restorative-justice system helps them to understand the impact their behaviour has on others and to differentiate between right and wrong.

Pupils learn about British governance and democratic processes, seeing them exemplified in student leadership roles, for example. Pupils feel listened to and able to influence aspects of school life. They benefit from many leadership opportunities, including ambassadorial roles. They receive the results of students' pastoral surveys

and work with staff in resultant planning for improvement. They are proud of the school, its inclusivity and its cultural diversity. They learn about many cultures, not only through the curriculum but from each other. Their knowledge of public institutions and services in the UAE, in the UK and internationally is well developed. They talk with confidence about the Russell Group universities, the monarchy and the NHS. They enjoy presenting and performing to live audiences, for example through Ted Talks, or debating in their weekly 'Values in Action' lessons.

On international day pupils represent their culture, visit stalls and attend activities to develop understanding and awareness of diverse cultures. Pupils express pride in the school's diversity and inclusivity. New pupils are welcomed and the 'You'll Never Sit Alone' initiative is indicative of how they actively take care of each other.

Pupils learn well together. They are ambitious to do well but work collaboratively to develop each other's understanding. They become increasingly aware of how they learn and how to make improvements and take increasing responsibility for what they achieve. They compete against themselves but are equally eager to support the learning of others and demonstrate excellent teaching skills when helping their peers. They know that learning is much more than getting the right answer.

Teachers help pupils to develop balanced views and appreciate different perspectives, as for example when learning about the Vikings and their reasons for invading Britain. They plan choice and alternatives so that pupils are engaged and take increasing ownership of what they do.

Pupils are actively involved in charity work. This includes raising funds for particular charitable or health events, box appeals for local workers and support staff, arranging teacher-appreciation events and cleaning up local beaches. The wide range of extra-curricular clubs provides many opportunities for pupils to extend all aspects of their personal development. Environment and sustainability clubs are particularly popular. Post-sixteen students often play a lead role in developing clubs and coach younger pupils who themselves may coach those even younger than themselves. Primary pupils and children in the early years benefit hugely from the opportunities for creativity and teamwork provided in the very different, stimulating environment of the school's wooded area.

Pupils show great pride in their school and enjoy vibrant learning experiences which combine challenges and support in a helpful family atmosphere.

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

The schools' care for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is outstanding.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' health, welfare and safety is outstanding. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils feel exceptionally safe. They are confident that they can talk to any member of staff if they are concerned. Parents are of the view that their children are safe at school. Those who spoke with the inspector indicated that safeguarding procedures are strong.

Teachers make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Internet safety is an essential part of the computing and information and communications technology curriculums. This helps to make certain that pupils know how to use electronic devices and surf the internet safely. Pupils learn how to maintain their well-being and mental health through different aspects of the curriculum. For example, they attend practical and effective mindfulness sessions. The school has significantly invested in providing capacity to support the emotional well-being of pupils. There are two well-being counsellors and lead pastoral staff who are also trained in counselling skills and mental-health first aid. Staff ensure that children in the early years and pupils who join the school in other year groups settle in well and are happy in school.

Leaders do all they can to eliminate dangers and risks to pupils. A thorough health and safety policy and a comprehensive risk-assessment policy, including for trips and residential visits, are in place and fully implemented consistently by staff. Leaders place a high priority on site security. School records indicate that fire drills take place regularly and fully conform to UK practices and requirements. The school also runs lockdown and lockout drills. Leaders take all necessary precautions to ensure that pupils are safe when they are on the school premises. Stringent security systems are in operation, including CCTV and security guards.

The school's safeguarding policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the expectations of UAE and UK law. Leaders make sure that staff are familiar with the school's procedure for reporting any concerns that they may have about pupils.

Designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs) are trained to a high standard. They make sure that staff are aware of the UK government's latest guidelines on keeping pupils safe in education. Leaders also ensure that DSL training complies with UAE law. In addition, they make certain that a written health and safety policy is in place and implemented effectively by staff.

Leaders have implemented an effective anti-bullying strategy. On the rare occasions that bullying happens, they deal with it effectively. Relationships between pupils and adults are exceptionally strong. Pupils behave sensibly when they are moving between lessons. They are mature, polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding.

Staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently and fairly and all records are kept up to date. The restorative-justice approach that staff use to manage behaviour and to help pupils to manage their emotions is highly effective. Pupils understand the 'respect, responsibility, repair and reintegration' approach of the school, which they respond to very well.

Pupils arrive at the start of the school day prepared and ready to learn. The attendance figure, at 94%, is close to the national average for UK schools.

The school has a first-aid policy, which is available to parents on request. Staff who administer first aid are appropriately trained. Minor injuries are diligently recorded.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Rigorous recruitment checks are in place for all staff. Background checks and the required staff safeguarding training comply with UK and UAE expectations to ensure the suitability of adults working with children and young people in the school.

The human resources department keeps a detailed single central record (SCR) of all members of staff who are or have been employed at the school. This is shared with both the principal and the DSLs. A suitably trained safeguarding governor oversees this key aspect of the school's work.

The SCR contains evidence of identity checks and right to work, a medical assessment, references from previous employers and proof of qualifications. In addition, a police check is carried out to ensure that potential employees have not been barred from teaching. The data in the record is held securely and updated when required. All teachers from Britain have clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the school subscribes to the DBS updating service.

All members of non-teaching staff undergo a police check prior to beginning work at the school. The school uses the International Child Protection Service to check that no potential employee has been involved in any child protection issues.

Staff and governors on the appointments panel have completed the safer-recruitment training. Over half of the teachers are UK trained. This contributes to the British ethos of the school.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

The school's facilities are exceptionally well maintained. There is an outstanding array of sports facilities available to pupils, including two swimming pools, sports halls and football pitches. Pupils have access to a large gym and multi-purpose sports halls. Excellent library facilities are in place as well as an auditorium. The school provides several green spaces, including a well-established Zen garden and hydroponic vertical gardens. Such facilities engage pupils well and significantly enhance their learning.

The well-stocked library and specialist facilities for art, music, science and computing are used well to enhance learning. Pupils enjoy socialising in several shaded areas and meeting places. Leaders are especially proud of Space X, a state-of-the-art facility for scientific investigation and research for pupils in key stage 2.

There are ample appropriate spaces for pupils to learn. The early years provision has been exceptionally well thought out to maximise opportunities for children to engage in outdoor learning and play. All classrooms are exceptionally well resourced. Typically, electronic white boards, projectors and computing equipment are available. The outstanding range of resources and equipment available helps to ensure that pupils in all phases make outstanding progress and attain highly.



Outstanding facilities are in place to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils and the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. Washing facilities and toilets are also available to pupils. A doctor and two nurses care for pupils and administer medicines when necessary. The building is accessible. Facilities are available to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Stringent procedures are in place to make sure that the school campus is safe. For example, electronic systems alert leaders when the shelf life of chemicals has expired. The start and ending of the school day are exceptionally well managed. Leaders make sure that pupils are safe when entering and leaving the premises. An effective lanyard system identifies all staff and visitors at the gates. As a result, the school is a safe place to be. Staff, including senior leaders, are trained to manage traffic and to ensure that any potential dangers to pupils are minimised.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

The school has a strong partnership with parents and others. Parents described staff as being 'approachable and caring'. Many opportunities are available for parents to engage with the school. They feel that their opinions and ideas are listened to by leaders, who give them regular opportunities to express their views about the school through meetings or surveys. They are confident that their children are safe and making strong progress in different areas of the curriculum.

The school's website is up to date. It provides parents with a wealth of information about educational trips, visits and extra-curricular activities. It also informs parents about opportunities available for them to participate in their child's education including by attending assemblies and parents' evenings. Details of how parents can contact senior leaders and the proprietor are available on the school's website.

Parents enjoy helping with reading clubs and participating in popular events such as monthly Wellness Wednesdays. Regular newsletters celebrate pupils' academic and sporting achievements and provide an additional outlet for keeping parents informed.

Parents are of the view that the school's website is an informative and a useful source of information. They have access to a wide range of policies, including the school's

complaints and behaviour policies. They are especially complimentary about the different platforms available for them to keep abreast of developments at school. They feel well informed via the schools virtual learning environment (VLE) and other social media platforms.

Leaders provide parents with annual written reports on their children's progress and attainment. In addition, parents receive regular termly reports on their children's social development. They know precisely how well their children are performing and appreciate the advice available from teachers about how they can help their children to learn at home. Parents value the regular face-to-face meetings with staff, including parents' evenings. Parents of children with SEND describe the school as 'very inclusive' and sensitive to their children's individual needs.

The Friends of Sunmarke School (FOSS) are very active. They work in close collaboration with staff and pupils to plan exciting events. They regularly host coffee mornings to welcome new parents to the school. Leaders and parents work in close collaboration to celebrate and maintain the international and culturally diverse nature of the school. For example, FOSS work with the school to arrange interesting events such as a cultural breakfast, a flea market, an orthodox Christmas event and bake-off competitions. International Day took place during the inspection and was exceptionally well planned. All members of the school community enjoyed learning more about the many nations represented at the school and sampling food and drink.

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

The school meets the requirements of the standard.

The school has a detailed up-to-date complaints policy readily available to parents on the school website and VLE. It is clear how they can raise a complaint, either formally or informally. The procedures followed include timescales and relevant personnel. Parents are fully aware of this policy and the steps they need to take to raise a concern or make a complaint.

Parents have been very happy with the way concerns have been handled. There have been no formal complaints this academic year. Parental surveys and feedback demonstrate clearly that parents feel they have been listened to and complaints dealt with appropriately and sensitively.

## Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are fully met. Leaders' records of highly effective planning and successful actions indicate that the school has outstanding capacity to continue its strong trajectory of improvement.

Leadership and management at all levels in the school are exemplary. Middle leaders are highly skilled and lead strong teams. All leaders consistently and systematically promote the school's vision through continuing professional development (CPD), staff and planning meetings and when monitoring standards. Respect is modelled very effectively by leaders. They have high expectations and strive to deliver the best outcomes for pupils. They fully support the continued growth of the school and are committed to raising standards and attainment further.

The school is driven by the BSO UK standards which are tracked during frequent meetings with the board, learning walks and stakeholder surveys.

The Fortes Education group has a board of directors which includes the owners. They are responsible for securing improvement, healthy finances, investment in provision and compliance with legal requirements. They understand their separate role in relation to that of the principal and fulfil all these responsibilities well. The school has an advisory committee comprising parents and teachers selected according to their skills. Within the committee there are three effective subcommittees responsible for improvements in different areas.

The board of directors conducts a rigorous annual appraisal of the executive principal and sets clear targets. Rigorous weekly and termly meetings ensure that key performance indicators are fully met.

Governors ensure that improvement priorities are sharp and focused. They scrutinise the school's detailed termly strategic plans, which cover all aspects of the school's academic performance as well as staff, parent and pupil feedback. Self-evaluation and improvement-planning procedures are highly rigorous. They provide a clear picture of the school's needs and actions required. The fast-paced drive to implement the school-improvement strategy is forensically evaluated drawing from an 'interrogative evaluation and impact action-planning' approach. Governors see

themselves as critical friends who 'validate the assumptions and interrogate the hypotheses'. Safeguarding procedures and the promotion of equality are very effective.

The board of directors has invested heavily in appointing proven outstanding teachers and leaders. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are deployed according to their skills and specialisms.

The school seeks the views of parents, pupils and staff on a regular basis through surveys and discussions. Pupils and parents are involved in all aspects of school life. The school has a highly effective 'you say, we did' approach, responding with weekly newsletters, coffee mornings through FOSS, 'Healthy Hub' and 'Wellness Wednesday'. All stakeholders contribute directly to the outstanding quality of education that the school provides.

A vast majority of the staff say they are proud to be at the school and speak highly of the strong management and clear expectations linked to the school's vision. New staff commented to inspectors that the induction programme is 'superb'. A high-quality bespoke internal leadership training programme (Fortes Leadership Programme) has been implemented successfully to ensure that leaders at all levels are challenged and encouraged to fulfil their potential. A well-informed CPD programme enables all teachers to share best practice, peer assess and be highly self-reflective through their coaching and professional-development reviews. This leads to outstanding outcomes for pupils.

A vast majority of parents say that their child enjoys being at school and that they feel safe. Pupils speak highly of the school. They enjoy the 'Values in Action' lessons and seamlessly apply the school's values in their school life. They told inspectors that they have opportunities to be creative and contribute to the life of the school. A typical comment was, 'We want to be the best version of ourselves, we are competing against ourselves, it's our mindset.'

Leaders and governors take their responsibilities for equal opportunities seriously. For example, governors say that they welcome new staff and give them ample time to settle in the UAE. Teacher turnover is low. Performance management is rigorous. Accountability is a strong feature of the school's culture.

The leadership of early years is outstanding, establishing strong foundations in children's knowledge and skills.

## EYFS provision

Leadership and provision in the early years are outstanding. From low starting points, children make outstanding progress towards achieving the England early learning goals. All groups of pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make similar rates of progress from their different starting points. Consequently, children are very well prepared to make an excellent start to Year 1.

On-entry assessments lead to teachers identifying the main areas of improvement. This knowledge then informs future teaching to maximise each child's learning in all key areas. All children receive a personalised target identifying any barriers to learning. This enables teachers to meet their needs. Teachers create an inclusive and supportive environment. As a result, children settle into routines very quickly and rapidly grow in confidence. The learning environment is excellent. It promotes independence and choice, giving children high levels of autonomy and ownership of their learning.

All teachers share a common vision of how young children learn. They strike an effective balance between encouraging children to initiate their own learning activities and the direct teaching of basic skills. Both the prime and specific areas of learning are interconnected with excellent opportunities for children to become active learners through developmental play and exploration.

Parents are fully involved in their child's learning experiences and progress. Ongoing children's achievements are regularly shared through online platforms and profiles of learning. Strong communication with parents has helped enforce the school's high expectations.

## Post-16 provision

Leadership and provision in the sixth form are outstanding.

In this multi-pathway school, pupils can choose between 20 A levels, 6 BTECs (level 3) and the International Baccalaureate qualifications, allowing them to pursue study anywhere in the world. The school offers English and mathematics retake options. Students choose either the extended project qualification or extended essay.

Students have extensive opportunities to complete open online courses such as philosophy, computer programming and business strategy. In addition, the excellent online library enables them to broaden their interests.

Attainment is higher than the UK average in most subjects at both A level and BTEC level 3. Results in the International Baccalaureate are outstanding and exceed the international average as students benefit from high-quality teaching and learning. Fifty-one per cent of students accepted university places in the UK last year, with 62% of those at Russell Group universities. All Year 13 pupils achieved their first choice of university, college or employment in 2022.

Students' attendance is in line with the UK average at 94% and retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is almost 100%. Behaviour is outstanding.

All students are well supported by the parent community for their work experience in Year 12. Students have high aspirations and benefit greatly from the effective school 'Think and Thrive' careers-education programme with external guest speakers. They have access to regular and personalised careers advice and receive guidance on university life abroad. They are very well supported by teachers and have access to a school counsellor for mental well-being.

There are many opportunities for students to lead whole-school initiatives, for example senior prefects, senior student leadership team, house captains and subject ambassadors. Leadership opportunities are designed to promote excellence, success, confidence and self-esteem while fostering an opportunity for student leaders to have a pivotal role in the future development of the school and its community. Highly effective 'needs- and solution-based' programmes allow students to give back to their peers, the school and the local community. They take a leading role in celebrations such as international day, sharing their own cultures and traditions with the community.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

Sunmarke School meets all of the required standards.

It cannot fully meet the standards set out below that relate to the UK Equality Act 2010.

2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil

partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;

5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

Some teaching does not meet the learning needs of some of the most-able pupils. Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently provide opportunities for this group of pupils to deepen their learning and reach their full academic potential.

## 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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### The quality of provision for boarding

	N/A			
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## School Details

<b>Name of school</b>	Sunmarke School
<b>Type of school</b>	Private
<b>Date school opened</b>	2016
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1889
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	N/A
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	46,700 – 78,679AED
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	N/A
<b>Address of school</b>	Jumeriah Village Triangle Dubai UAE PO Box 24877
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 (04) 391 8886
<b>Email address</b>	n.hopkin@forteseducation.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Neil Hopkin
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Sanjay Mankani

## GLOSSARY

**Achievement** – Progress made by a pupil taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

**Accreditation** – The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and if deemed as having achieved the standards required is provided with some form of official certification or recognition.

**Accreditation Board** – The body responsible for the strategic direction, operation and conduct of the accreditation service provided by Education Development Trust

**Assessment** – The process of finding out how well pupils have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

**Attainment** – The level pupils reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

**British Schools Overseas Inspection (BSO)** – Inspection framework and standards defined by the DfE for British schools overseas to opt to be inspected against.

**Education Development Trust** – Formerly CfBT Education Trust, we are one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally.

**Central Support Team** – Personnel based in Education Development Trust Head Office who are responsible for the administration of the various educational services provided to international schools.

**Combined or Joint Visit** – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards

against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

**Cycle of Inspection** – The period of three years between BSO inspection visits.

**Curriculum** – The educational programmes or courses of study taught by a school including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extra-curricular enrichment programmes.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB)** – All private schools in Dubai are required by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority to be inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). A joint DSIB/BSO inspection may be requested through the KHDA's strategic partner Education Development Trust.

**Leadership** – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

**Learning** – Pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

**Management** – The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of a school's work in an efficient and useful way.

**Ofsted** – The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England and is responsible for school inspections in England.

**Progress** – The gains in learning made between two points in time. A pupil can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

**School self-evaluation** – The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school's work on the outcomes for pupils.

**Standards** –

- (1) The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils and a school demonstrates at a particular point in time.
- (2) The evaluation requirements to be used in the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

**Teaching** – All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing pupils' learning.

With 40 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust exists solely to provide education for public benefit.

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train. As one of the top 30 charities in the UK, we work for and with individuals and communities in order to help them reach their potential.

Education Development Trust has built a reputation for providing high quality educational support and inspection services to national organisations such as Ofsted, the Teacher Training Agency and to schools in the north of England. Our main aim is to improve schools through high quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges. Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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

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