

Safa British School

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

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Age Group: 3 to 17
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection was carried out by four inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the school. Education Development Trust is a body approved by the British government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Education Development Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally. Education Development Trust employs over 2,500 staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

To be recognised by the Department for Education, a British School Overseas (BSO) must have an inspection report which shows that its performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be added to the register, 'Get information about schools'.

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO) accreditation. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations.

The DfE updated the standards in August 2023. The new standards aligned the BSO standards with the Independent School Standards (ISS) and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding applied to schools in England; clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.

The British Schools Overseas standards are as follows:

- Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).
- Part 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Part 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
- Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.

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

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

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

Key for inspection grades

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

Proportions used in the report

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

Information about the school

Safa British School (SBS) is an inclusive, co-educational, British school in Al Safa 1 Dubai. The school opened in 2004 as a primary school only, but moved to a new site in 2020 as an all-through school. It will celebrate its twentieth anniversary this month.

With a current enrolment of 1,667 pupils aged 3 to 17 years, SBS is slightly larger than many comparable international schools in Dubai. The sixth form is, however, small with the first students joining Year 12 in the current academic year. There are 83 different nationalities represented and 69% of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), but only 99 pupils require specialist English language learner (ELL) intervention. SBS offers support for 328 pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) through tailored specialist provision on the basis of need. The Bridge Learning Centre (Bridge) supports 27 pupils with complex needs. Seven pupils with high needs in mainstream classes benefit from the Nurture Programme which includes learning support assistant (LSA) support, speech and language sessions, occupational and behaviour therapy, as needed.

The curriculum is a blend of the early years foundation stage (EYFS), the national curriculum for England (NCfE), and the UAE statutory requirements and aligns with UK expectations and best practice. At the end of key stage 4, pupils can take GCSE and IGCSE, BTEC and the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) examinations. In the sixth form, students can choose three academic pathways of study, including 13 A levels and seven BTECs.

Safa British School's vision is: 'Unlocking the potential of every child' and Safa's values are: 'Embracing individuality in a nurturing community to foster personal excellence.'

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 74 part-lessons and conducted learning walks, looking at extra-curricular and other activities. Seventeen of the lessons visited were jointly observed by an inspector and a senior member of staff. Inspectors also observed an assembly. There were 27 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and strategic plans. They inspected the school's safeguarding

arrangements. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and staff expressed in the BSO survey, which was sent just prior to the inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Safa British School is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 17 years.

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

Attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding across all phases.

Almost all pupils exceed the expected standards for their age when compared to England. From low starting points, children in the early years develop strong communication and language skills. Teachers skilfully deliver a structured phonics programme that strengthens children's word recognition and writing skills. As a result, 82% of Year 1 pupils met the expected phonics standard in 2024, significantly surpassing the England average. By the end of the early years, most children are able to read and write short sentences, confidently retell their favourite stories and talk about their favourite characters.

In primary, pupils rapidly expand their grammar, punctuation and comprehension skills. They acquire a wide vocabulary by engaging with different literary genres and analysing short texts. There is a strong focus on oracy and reading for pleasure in lessons across the curriculum. External reading assessments show that most pupils across the school perform significantly above England averages.

By the end of Year 6, most pupils can construct well-argued oral and written viewpoints. They recognise how authors use emotive and persuasive language to inform, influence, and challenge readers. Moderated internal assessments confirm that most pupils in Year 6 achieve reading and writing levels above curriculum expectations.

In secondary, teachers guide pupils in analysing increasingly complex texts, sharpening their critical evaluation skills and strengthening their transactional writing. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of literary techniques and recognise how language

and structure are used to convey the writer's viewpoint. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils confidently presented critical and evaluative arguments, debating the ethical implications of being a war photographer.

Attainment in GCSE English language and English literature is significantly above England and international averages. In English language 67% of pupils achieved grades 9 to 7 while 64% attained the same grades in English literature. Almost all pupils surpass their predicted results, particularly in English language where, on average, they attained over two grades higher. Gender differences in language attainment remain insignificant, with only a small gap in literature. The school has identified this difference and implemented strategies to narrow this gap. Targeted interventions enable pupils with EAL and those with SEND to make excellent progress in line with their peers.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding across all phases.

In mathematics, internal assessment data shows a positive three-year trend across the school. IGCSE results consistently exceed England and international averages, although boys significantly outperform girls. Acknowledging this gap, the school is implementing strategies to reduce it. Pupils with SEND make progress in line with their peers from their starting points.

By the end of early years, almost all children reach standards above those expected for their age, ensuring preparation for Year 1 and beyond. Most develop a strong understanding of measurement, and accurately identify basic lengths and mass and recognise the importance of units.

In primary, pupils build on their existing mathematical competencies and strengthen their mathematical reasoning skills, equipping them for Year 7. In Year 2, pupils can complete basic multiplication while in Year 4, pupils demonstrate an understanding of fractions and can reason well, using numerators and denominators. By Year 6, pupils can effectively calculate area and recognise relationships between different polygons.

In secondary, pupils apply advanced mathematical reasoning. They can use mensuration for area calculation and distinguish between theoretical and experimental probability through problem solving. In key stage 4, pupils apply calculus to solve complex equations, with 69% of students achieving grades 9 to 7 in IGCSE. In the sixth form, students refine these skills further by analysing and evaluating qualitative data to deepen their understanding of statistical applications.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding across the school.

There is little difference between the progress of boys and girls. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent progress in relation to their different starting points as a result of high-quality targeted support.

Early years classrooms have embraced the curiosity approach which has significantly enhanced children's natural curiosity and enquiry skills. This, in turn, has impacted positively on the skills needed for their understanding of the world curriculum. In the Reception Year, children can already distinguish between wildflowers and garden flowers found in the UK. Both early years and primary pupils learn the scientific method and develop a strong scientific vocabulary, which they use effectively. Primary science follows an enquiry-based learning approach with a strong focus on pupils' research skills. They are set a 'big question' in which parents are involved so that pupils continue to learn outside the classroom.

By the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve above-expected results in the Progress Test (PT) in science. In Year 5, pupils can explain the effects of gravity on objects of different weights. Overall, pupils develop a solid understanding of scientific concepts, ensuring a smooth transition to the secondary phase.

By Year 8, pupils can predict how different elements react when immersed in water. In Year 11, pupils conduct investigations to demonstrate the half-life of a radioactive isotope. Throughout all key stages there is a whole-school focus on developing and improving pupils' oracy skills through effective questioning and dialogue, promoting the use of scientific language and deeper thinking.

In 2024, pupils took their first IGCSE examinations in biology, chemistry and physics. This small cohort outperformed both England and international pupils significantly. In biology and physics all pupils achieved grades 9 to 7. In chemistry, 92% achieved grades 9 to 7. A-level results are not yet available as the first cohort of Year 13 students will take their examinations in 2025-26.

Pupils' attainment and progress across a wide range of **other subjects** is outstanding.

In the first year of IGCSE, 24% of all grades were at grade 9 with 42% at grades 9 to 7. On average, pupils achieved nearly two grades higher than predicted. Most pupils outperformed England and international averages at grades 9 to 7. Geography, French, Spanish and history had particularly strong results, significantly above England averages, with pupils exceeding expectations by over two grades.

Overall, boys make slightly better progress than girls at IGCSE. On average boys attain over two grades higher than predicted and girls one and a half. Pupils new to the school make accelerated progress to reach similar levels to their peers. Differences between the rates of progress of different groups are generally minimal.

In primary and early years pupils benefit from specialist teachers in art, digital learning, languages, music, performing arts, physical education (PE) and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Progress in these subjects is tracked similarly to core subjects, demonstrating strong outcomes and progress for all groups of pupils. Cross-curricular connections are developed through enrichment days with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, teaching appropriately integrates technology highly effectively into all areas of learning, further enhancing the curriculum.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

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

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

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met except for the standard in paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding. The curriculum provides stimulating learning opportunities for all pupils regardless of ability. It is broad and balanced and aligned with the school's core values and vision. Flexible and evolving, it incorporates feedback from pupils and teachers to ensure relevance and engagement.

The early years programme follows the EYFS curriculum, integrating the curiosity approach to foster cross-curricular connections and discovery. In the primary school, the curriculum is based on the NCFE, incorporating project-based learning to develop enquiry, self-management and risk-taking skills. Trips and themed days further enrich learning.

The secondary school prepares pupils for the demands of a broad range of IGCSE and BTEC subjects, including ASDAN provision to support diverse needs. 'Safa Strands' link subjects through common themes, encouraging pupils' deeper exploration of concepts in a range of contexts. These themes introduce pupils to moral challenges, such as the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in the knowledge economy.

In key stage 4, pupils can select from a rich and varied range of optional courses. In addition to core subjects, key stage 4 offers 24 subjects. In key stage 5, students can select from 20 options in three different pathways. Sixth-form students follow the 'Achieves' programme designed to build essential competencies and real-life skills for future success and progression to university. It allows students to reflect upon their learning, identifying their own strengths and areas of development.

The curriculum adapts to challenge all pupils, including those with SEND, gifted and talented pupils and English language learners. Teachers prepare detailed lesson plans to meet pupils' individual needs in lessons and use the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) framework effectively to plan and assess learning outcomes. Pupils understand SOLO at an age-appropriate level, using it to track and measure their progress.

Pupils' transition between phases is carefully managed, and begins long before the actual transition time, ensuring a seamless experience. Parents are involved in transition workshops to help support their children. Leadership capacity has recently expanded to support pupils' transition from primary to secondary, offering high-quality support to those who need it.

The careers programme spans all phases, providing age-appropriate high-quality guidance and highly relevant activities. This comprehensive programme ensures that pupils are prepared well to make informed and confident decisions about their subject choices, linking well with their personal interests and possible careers. . A dedicated careers counsellor works with sixth-form students to help them to choose university courses.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum, with daily options in sport, art, music and drama as well as strongly focused academic support, including IGCSE preparation.

All pupils benefit from the high-quality personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, including age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE). Parents can opt their child out from part or all of the programme, as explained in the RSE policy. The PE curriculum benefits from a long-term contract for the use of a nearby indoor facility to counter the lack of sufficient PE space in the school. The immediate environment of the school enables pupils to translate sustainability into action, including recycling and planting.

Pupils learn about the protected characteristics of age, disability, religion and belief, race, and pregnancy and maternity throughout the curriculum. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnerships, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation. SBS actively promotes diversity and tolerance.

British values are promoted and embedded throughout the curriculum. Pupils explore Britain's past and present, study British texts and engage with references to British life and society daily. For example, pupils in Year 3 learned about the palaeontologist, Mary Anning and her discoveries on a Dorset beach.

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

Outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment systems promote pupils' strong progress, leading to consistently high standards across all subjects. Teachers and pupils build strong, positive relationships that focus on learning behaviours and individual success, creating a highly productive learning environment.

Teachers' deep subject knowledge, high expectations, and understanding of each pupil's unique needs and aptitudes allow them to challenge and support pupils of all abilities. Teachers adapt the curriculum and modify tasks to support pupils with SEND, ensuring they progress as rapidly as their peers from their different starting points. By providing high levels of challenge, teachers inspire more able pupils to reach deeper levels of learning.

Early years' practitioners apply expert pedagogic knowledge to design imaginative activities that foster children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These activities engage children and help them explore the world around them. For example, when children play with outdoor water pumps and run out of water, teachers prompt them to explore different ways to save water. This activity builds their awareness of sustainability and enhances their problem-solving skills.

Teachers provide clear learning objectives, detailed explanations, and structured steps to success, keeping pupils focused and engaged. Lessons move at a brisk pace with high levels of challenge, and almost all pupils thrive in these conditions. Pupils report a good understanding of how each activity connects to their broader learning. For example, the ASDAN group's work on food and nutrition builds life skills and confidence while developing food preparation skills for the future.

Digital technology enhances learning in most lessons. From Year 1 onwards, pupils use personal devices to gain access to curriculum content, conducting research, recording learning, and completing problem-solving and investigative tasks, all of which significantly contribute to their progress.

The school embeds SOLO at the heart of its teaching, learning and assessment strategy. From the youngest classes, teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their understanding of key concepts and identify their next steps to make still further progress. By engaging with increasingly complex ideas within this model, pupils take ownership of their progress. Every lesson prioritises the development of pupils' thinking and learning skills and most pupils use the SOLO structure competently to recognise their achievements and set personal goals, demonstrating a strong determination to succeed. Teachers use high-quality questioning techniques to assess pupils' understanding. Lessons incorporate reflection time, allowing pupils to ask questions, clarify their misconceptions, and thereby achieve greater success.

Well-developed systems track pupils' progress. In lessons, verbal feedback helps pupils to immediately recognise and correct errors; while teachers' structured written feedback guides them in reflection, identifying their strengths, and areas for improvement.

In secondary and the sixth form, teachers deal with misunderstandings immediately and provide targeted feedback aligned with examination requirements. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils evaluated their own performance on examination questions using their teacher's feedback to refine their understanding of algebra. Teachers set ambitious targets and pupils monitor their progress both verbally to their teachers and in writing.

School leaders show a strong commitment to continuous improvement through rigorous quality-assurance processes. They use assessment data to track pupils' attainment and progress over time, compare results to international benchmarks and identify trends. This information enables teachers to plan targeted interventions and refine the curriculum, ensuring all pupils continue to achieve outstanding progress.

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

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5(b)(vi). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The **spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC)** development of pupils is outstanding. As a result of pupils' outstanding attendance, their attainment and progress are very high. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary, with pupils displaying outstanding attitudes to learning. Pupils are confident, eager to share their knowledge, and actively engaged in their education.

Respectful and caring relationships thrive within the school. Pupils value these connections and recently introduced 'gifts of gratitude' to recognise and reward staff and peers. A culture of 'random acts of kindness' is embedded, reinforcing the school's values. Strong peer relationships span all year groups, with older pupils mentoring younger ones to ease the transition between year groups.

SBS actively collects pupils' views through surveys and other formal mechanisms. Students' councils provide a structured platform for pupils to raise suggestions with

the senior team, making them feel heard and valued. For instance, the primary students' council proposed a solar powered small garden to promote sustainability, leading to the formation of the 'Eco committee,' which develops pupils' environmental consciousness throughout the school.

Pupils develop a strong appreciation for cultural diversity, demonstrating respect and tolerance for different traditions. In the primary school, parents are invited to read to children in school in both their home language and English as 'secret readers', fostering cross-cultural understanding. The school takes pride in celebrating cultural diversity, organising events such as International Day where pupils, staff and parents showcase their heritage through food and national dress. Parents are routinely invited to lessons to support learning about other cultures. SBS maintains an inclusive ethos that values every individual and reinforces self-esteem.

British values are deeply embedded in school life. The school integrates and displays its own values alongside British and Islamic values, collectively referred to as 'human values'. Democracy is understood and practised, as seen in the election of the head boy and head girl through a democratic process. In lessons, pupils show respect by listening attentively, with Year 6 pupils highlighting the importance of valuing others' perspectives. Pupils build strong friendships and support one another.

Pupils understand and respect school rules, recognising how these rules prepare them for society by reinforcing the rule of law. Year 10 pupils, for example, discussed the societal importance of following laws.

The school fosters an awareness of British institutions and history. Pupils recognise landmarks such as Buckingham Palace and celebrated the King's coronation, deepening their understanding of the British monarchy. Primary pupils researched and compared innovations in the UK to those of the UAE, presenting their findings to their peers to enhance their understanding of global and British commerce.

Displays throughout the school highlight career pathways, such as the application of physics in electrical engineering, helping pupils to connect their learning to real-world professions.

The school has been awarded the National SMSC Gold Level quality mark, affirming its commitment to pupils' SMSC development.

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

The welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff is outstanding. The school is fully compliant with all safeguarding and welfare regulations of the host country. It has clear policies on health and safety, risk assessment and safeguarding, which are actively implemented and regularly reviewed.

Pupils are welcomed into the safe and supportive SBS community. Pupils and their families receive clear information about the school's expectations and the extensive support available. New pupils settle into the school quickly. Parents can gain access to all school policies on the school's website and receive updates when needed. A very well-established relationship between home and school contributes to the outstanding attendance of 97% which exceeds the average for England. Pupils are punctual to school and lessons and engage fully in their studies.

The school reviews behaviour and attendance policies annually. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and bullying is very rare. Pupils respect their teachers and hold them in extremely high regard.

The safeguarding team, including the board and designated safeguarding leads (DSL), strictly enforce safeguarding policies. These policies align with UK legislation and outline clear procedures to protect pupils. All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and receive regular training. The DSL ensures clarity in reporting procedures. Posters around the school make the safeguarding team's identity highly visible. Pupils know they can report concerns to a trusted adult, creating a strong safeguarding culture. Parents and pupils share their views of safeguarding through surveys and meetings. High-quality workshops on e-safety for parents of all ages are regular.

The school actively manages pupils' safety in all areas of the school. Robust risk assessments help protect pupils and staff. Practical classrooms have restricted access to tools with guarded machinery. Electrical equipment undergoes regular testing to ensure compliance and safety. External organisations that receive pupils for work experience are subject to detailed risk assessments that ensure pupils' safety.

The school has a well-equipped clinic and a team of trained first aiders across all buildings and floors. Pupils know where to go for medical assistance. First aid kits are well stocked and maintained by the medical centre.

Pupils understand the clear and well communicated fire safety procedures. Evacuation plans are displayed throughout the school, and staff and pupils participate in regular evacuation drills. Fire-fighting equipment is regularly tested and compliant with safety regulations.

Overall, the school provides a safe and secure learning environment. Its safeguarding arrangements mirror UK practices and meet UAE requirements. During the inspection, a compliance visit by KHDA confirmed the school's adherence to their standards.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school conducts thorough checks to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. Its rigorous recruitment practices align with best practice and standards in the UK. Thirteen leaders involved in recruitment have completed safer recruitment training through The National College.

The turnover of staff is low and the senior leadership team (SLT) has remained stable for many years. The school recruits highly qualified teachers with a long-term vision for succession planning. Many teachers are promoted internally to leadership positions.

The HR team meticulously maintains a single central register (SCR) of all required employee checks. This register includes governors, outsourced companies, parent helpers, contracted workers, visiting specialists, transport and ancillary staff. Bridge staff, although not directly contracted, undergo thorough checks. References are verified, and confirmed qualifications, birth certificates, safeguarding qualifications and other certificates are linked in the SCR. Mandatory criminal record checks cover UK nationals through the Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) and International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC). All staff also require a UAE police check. Medical fitness certificates are necessary for KHDA approval and visa processing. The school conducts social media checks. The SCR also records annual safeguarding training at appropriate levels for each role. A weekly report alerts the school to expiring documentation, ensuring that the register is up to date. The safeguarding governor regularly scrutinises the SCR and conducts random staff checks to reinforce the strong safeguarding culture in the school.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Pupils benefit from a large, spacious, and well-resourced campus, which provides an inspiring environment that promotes learning and nurtures pupils' individual interests and ambitions. Teachers make full use of the facilities to deliver a broad curriculum that deepens pupils' subject knowledge and skills' development.

Specialist facilities enhance various aspects of education including information and communication technology (ICT) suites that strengthen pupils' digital literacy, well-equipped design and technology spaces that encourage pupils' creativity, and food technology rooms that develop their practical skills. Creative arts and performance areas, extensive sports facilities, and large modern performance spaces with appropriate acoustics provide pupils with opportunities to refine their talents and showcase their performance abilities. Science laboratories contain high-quality resources and safety equipment, such as goggles, emergency showers and fume cupboards. Three main libraries house a diverse collection of books and resources that captivate pupils and foster their love of reading. Year 1 pupils describe the library as their favourite place, where they can "get lost in another world".

Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced several enhancements, including a dedicated sixth-form area that supports an extensive key stage 5 curriculum, an outdoor water classroom that provides a tranquil reading space for children and additional spaces for the school's growing number of pets, enriching pupils' experiences.

Bright, airy classrooms create an inviting learning environment. Glass interior walls allow pupils and teachers to observe one another. Large communal areas and corridors are well used for small group and specialist teaching. The campus layout, lifts and bridges ensure good levels of accessibility for all pupils throughout the school.

Support staff actively monitor and safeguard the site at all times, enforcing strict access control that reassures parents and carers of their children's safety. Clear signage identifies fire safety equipment and evacuation routes. Staff take great care to protect pupils outdoors by providing ample shade and by ensuring access to filtered drinking water. The school's medical facility operates efficiently, with three qualified nurses and a doctor providing high-quality care. It has several beds and a toilet in the

room for pupils' emergency needs. School leaders routinely review fire-evacuation procedures and implement personal evacuation plans for pupils who require them. The school maintains extensive washing facilities which are clean and well-stocked. There are changing rooms near the swimming pool and sports facilities. Separate toilets are clearly marked for pupils' and adults' use. The facilities team conducts daily checks of buildings, washrooms, grounds, and classrooms to uphold high standards of hygiene and safety, ensuring a secure and well-maintained environment for all pupils.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Parents play an active role in the school. The school listens to their concerns and suggestions and responds appropriately. Parents are invited to be part of any decisions relating to their children's education. Parental feedback received is acted upon promptly.

Parents report being well informed about their children's personal and academic progress. Primary parents receive daily updates through a learning platform which keeps them engaged in their children's learning. The parent portal and iParent application provide parents with quick access to the school's information allowing them to stay updated about their children's progress and personal development. They can also read the latest news, view the school's calendar and gain access to other helpful information on the website. Parents can also log into learning ladders, where teachers track and assess each child's learning objectives, especially tasks on which they are currently working in lessons.

The school's website provides detailed contact information for school leaders and the proprietors. Parents benefit from access to previous inspection reports, the school's vision and mission statements, and a range of policies. These include admissions, child protection and safeguarding, inclusion, health and safety and complaints.

All parents receive six reports each year, at mid-term and at the end of each term, summarising their child's academic and personal progress. Scheduled meetings with

teachers every term allow parents to discuss their child's report. Class teachers, form tutors and leaders are available at any time to discuss pupils' progress with parents.

Parents agree that the principal and senior leadership team have a clear vision that enhances pupils' achievement and personal development. They trust the school's leaders and staff to act in the best interests of their children. Many parents describe the staff as approachable and believe that teachers and leaders know their children well and care about them.

Both parents and pupils see the school as an inclusive community. They value the strong relationships between school and home and appreciate the diversity of cultures, traditions and beliefs within the school.

The school offers regular morning and afternoon workshops to parents. In response to a request from parents, the school is also focusing this term's workshops on parenting and relationships.

The school now maintains a database of parents who are willing to contribute their expertise to the school. The school plans to use this expertise to introduce professional talks so that pupils can learn about work, and sixth-form students can learn more about specific careers.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school has a clear and comprehensive complaints policy available on its website, outlining each step with clarity. Parents can submit complaints directly through a form on the website. The policy fully complies with requirements. It follows a staged procedure where most parental concerns are resolved informally through direct contact with teachers and leaders who are on duty every day. The school offers 'Meet Us' sessions with leaders and, as a result, most complaints are not escalated. The school learns from these informally resolved complaints and makes improvements, where possible.

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, it is referred to the principal or head of school who asks for it to be put in writing. After investigation, a solution is reached and all communication is recorded. At stage three, the complaint is escalated to a

governing board committee of at least three members, including one who is not directly involved with the school and of whom none have been previously directly involved in the complaint. Complainants may bring support, but not legal representation. The committee's findings are final and are sent in writing to the principal and complainant. If parents go directly to KHDA, it contacts the principal and concerns are usually quickly resolved. The school contacts KHDA where necessary. There have been no cases involving KHDA in the previous year.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding.

School leaders implement meaningful improvements and fulfil their responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are consistently met.

Leaders demonstrate a unified vision which influences every decision and action. Their sincere belief in the potential of every child ensures that all pupils achieve and flourish. Recruitment decisions prioritise candidates who share the same values.

The principal has led the school with a strong culture of excellence and care for over seven years. Leaders have created a community where the needs of pupils always come first, in every situation. All leaders are highly visible and accessible. Leaders embrace and manage change effectively, ensuring that the school continues to be innovative. They listen actively, value opinions and involve staff in shaping decisions. They are excellent role models. Leadership capacity continues to expand to support the school's growth and priorities. The school's capacity for improvement is excellent.

A highly effective distributed leadership model empowers middle leaders to make decisions in pupils' best interests. Many middle leaders hold their roles because they exemplify excellence and a strong commitment to the school.

Staff take immense pride in being part of SBS. The BSO survey reflected an overwhelmingly positive picture with an unprecedented number of positive comments, highlighting staff happiness and value. Teachers described the school's leadership as operating with 'a high trust, high accountability mantra'. SBS fosters a harmonious community and was recognised with an Emirates Labour Award in 2024 for excellence in well-being, professional development, staff qualifications and suitability, and innovation.

Self-review and improvement planning involve the whole school. Leaders steer the four key priorities of promoting well-being for all, ensuring students' progress,

developing meaningful connections and sustaining change. A culture of review, reflection and shared best practice prevails. Improvement plans are aspirational rather than safe and achievement is monitored regularly for measurable impact. Leadership actions align seamlessly with the objectives outlined in the improvement plan.

An open-door culture allows staff to observe one another across all subjects and phases. 'Open Classroom' week, teaching and learning breakfasts and bulletins encourage discussions about professional development. Excellent collaboration flourishes, particularly across primary and early years. Formal appraisal includes documented observations and face-to-face feedback. The professional development menu aligns with whole school, faculty and individual priorities, offering internal and external training, based on best practice identified through quality assurance. Self-directed professional growth empowers teachers to take ownership of their continuous development. Each initiative is research-driven, reflecting the school's commitment to evidence-based practice that enhances students' achievement.

The board of governors includes the owners, and a diverse group that represents the school's community. Members hold formal meetings each term, but in practice, the owners remain highly visible on a daily basis. A parent serves as a full board member to represent parental views alongside a parent executive committee. Leaders report formally to the board, but in addition, frequent meetings ensure rigorous performance monitoring and effective challenge. The owners appraise the principal based on annual targets. Governors actively engage with parents through surveys, open forums and direct interactions in the school. Pupils also participate in board meetings, where their articulate insights receive genuine consideration.

Governors ensure that the school operates legally and follows clear financial policies, always prioritising what is right for the school. Leaders report the impact of every financial decision while governors oversee strategic and operational plans. They empower the principal to run the school with the same high trust and accountability that defines leadership at every level. Committed to the same values, they invest fully in every aspect of the school, prioritising pupils' well-being and potential. As a result, the school benefits strongly from the positive impact of its governors.

SBS dedicates itself to providing equal and inclusive education. Leaders embrace individuality through highly successful inclusion mechanisms and the careful consideration of individual pupils' needs in every classroom. The curriculum reflects

diversity while aligning with British and local values. Every aspect of the school's work undergoes continuous review to measure its full impact and effectiveness.

EYFS provision

The early years' provision is outstanding, ensuring excellent attainment and progress for almost all children. Most children arrive with little communication and few learning skills. Teachers implement a well-planned curriculum and design engaging learning activities that accelerate progress. As a result, most children achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD), well above expected levels in England.

The curriculum integrates both the EYFS and the UAE frameworks and is rooted in play-based learning with open-exploration opportunities to spark children's curiosity. High-quality resources help children to explore the world around them and to become increasingly more independent. Carefully planned activities in classrooms and in outdoor play areas strengthen the development of their gross and fine motor skills.

Teachers place a strong emphasis on phonics' awareness, using well-structured tasks to develop early reading and writing skills. Daily focused writing sessions rapidly improve children's emergent writing abilities. By the end of the foundation stage, most children write short sentences, with correct capitalisation and full stops.

Teachers reinforce early learning skills through closely and varied activities, fostering independence and confidence, while allowing children to progress at their own pace. The Safa Superheroes initiative further develops learning skills by encouraging children to ask questions, take risks, communicate effectively, show consideration for others and regulate their own behaviour. Most children can confidently explain how they develop these skills through the curriculum and their daily activities.

Teachers and support staff demonstrate expert knowledge of early childhood learning. Their strong focus on building confidence helps children engage meaningfully with the world around them. Leadership in this phase drives excellence, with leaders possessing deep curriculum knowledge and expertise in innovative teaching methods.

Teachers conduct focused observations, hold progress meetings, and track every child's development. Robust planning and tracking systems ensure all children make excellent progress and are well prepared to make a seamless transition into Year 1. Parents receive regular reports on their child's progress and are offered high quality guidance on supporting learning at home.

Post-16 provision

Sixth-form provision is new. The first cohort of 30 students either progressed from Year 11 or joined the school in Year 12 in the current year. Retention is high and leaders expect all students to continue to Year 13. Despite the small cohort, students have access to a full range of 13 A-level and seven BTEC courses. Subject choices match students' feedback and needs, leading to the planned addition of BTEC courses in hospitality, art and design and creative media in the following year. Students perform equally well in vocational and academic courses at key stage 4. Students can retake English and mathematics to strengthen their skills, along with modular examination retakes based on their teachers' recommendations.

Students have not progressed to university yet, but some have plans to apply to Oxbridge to study law. Most plan to make applications to UK universities. Students praise the quality of careers guidance and find the counsellor very accessible. The careers counsellor contributes to planning and delivering careers lessons and the 'Achieves' programme, while also providing individual guidance. Students use online resources to research universities and job entry requirements and attend university fairs, featuring both local and international institutions. Students independently arrange work experience placements.

To prepare for university life, students participate in life skills' lessons covering topics such as cooking, tax calculations, and the driving theory test. Parents contribute to these sessions, with professionals, such as a nutritionist and a lawyer, recently giving talks. The school maintains strong community ties with parents eager to support their child's learning. The next step as the sixth form grows is to strengthen these connections to further enrich students' experiences.

Student leaders, elected democratically, assist with whole school events, such as options evening. They also serve as student representatives to the senior leadership team and governing body, presenting their highly valued opinions. The 'Achieves' programme helps students to track their extra-curricular experiences that support their personal development, including specialist lectures, well-being initiatives, and debating teams, such as the Model United Nations (MUN).

Strong relationships exist between teachers and students. Students appreciate the small groups which encourage discussion and allow for individual support. They feel comfortable asking questions and find their teachers approachable. Students know they can speak to a trusted adult or the counsellor about their well-being. The school uses a computer-based system to monitor students' well-being weekly.

The new head of sixth form and his deputy bring extensive experience and a clear vision for the sixth form's development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

Safa British School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards that relate to 2(2)(d)(ii) or 5(b)(vi). Safa British School encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; pregnancy and maternity; race and religion or belief, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

What the school could do to improve further

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

The school has entered its final stage of development with the introduction of Year 13 in the coming year. Leaders should continue to develop a former pupil programme and build strong mutually beneficial connections with parents and the wider community so that parents, former pupils and members of the community can share more comprehensively their skills and experience. This will enrich all pupils' life skills, broaden their opportunities and provide valuable experiences to prepare them better for adult life.

Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	X			
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Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	X			
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School Details

Name of school	Safa British School
Type of school	Private. For profit
Date school opened	2004
Age range of pupils	3 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	1,654
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	n/a
Annual fees (day pupils)	AED 43,125 to AED 66,821
Annual fees (boarders)	n/a
Address of school	PO Box 71091 Dubai UAE
Telephone number	+971 04 388 4300
Email address	reception@safabritishschool.com
Headteacher	Mrs Zara Harrington
Proprietor	Mr Sameer Merchant and Mr Louay Katib

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Combined or Joint Visit – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with

reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standards –

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

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

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

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train.

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

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

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