



Inspection report

Dubai Foundation School

United Arab Emirates

Date
Inspection #

3rd – 5th January 2020
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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report covers the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and their achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

Teachers were observed in lessons and many learning walks took place during the visit. School documentation and policies were analysed and attainment data reviewed. Pupils' work was scrutinised, and discussions were held with the head, the senior staff, teachers and representatives from the parents and pupils. The inspection team worked with school staff over three days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans. The team member was Sue Croft.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Dubai Foundation meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas that the law of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) allow.¹

¹ The law of the United Arab Emirates and respect for local customs preclude support for certain aspects of BSO standard 2 on the 'protected characteristics'.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Dubai British Foundation (DBF) is an outstanding school with many excellent features. The school provides excellent care and education. Teaching is of a very high standard, meaning that pupils of all abilities are challenged and encouraged appropriately. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Parents and staff are very positive about the school: pupils often run into the building at the start of the day, because they are so excited to be there.

3.1 What the school does well

DBF has many notable strengths.

- The ethos of the school is very clear: supportive, caring and rigorous.
- Pupils make excellent progress throughout their time at Dubai Foundation, both academically in terms of their personal development.
- Behaviour is outstanding: there are very positive relationships between adults and pupils, and between the pupils themselves.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding: they quickly learn to respect and celebrate each other's differences.
- The best teaching in English and Arabic is creative and challenges pupils, at an appropriate level. It engages pupils in the fun and excitement of learning.
- Classroom and outdoor resources are plentiful and of a high quality: the learning environment is outstanding.
- The school is very well focussed on individual learning needs and strengths, including for children of determination and pupils who have special educational needs.
- The management of transitions from class to class, on entry to DBF and from DBF to the feeder school Dubai British School Jumeirah Park (DBSJP) is outstanding.
- Welfare, health and safety in school is of a very high standard.
- Communication with parents is excellent. Parents are very positive about the school, and about the regularity and quality of information provided.

- Governance, leadership and management of the school are excellent: the focus on meeting individual needs in an inspiring manner, starts with the chair and the principal.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure the quality of teaching is consistently as good as that of the best, for example supporting better understanding of how to teach critical thinking and increasing opportunities for peer/self-assessment;
- Explore ways to extend pupil voice even further, in an age-appropriate manner;
- Consider seeking greater parental involvement in school learning sessions on wellbeing and mindfulness.

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	Dubai British Foundation		
Address	1st Road, Jumeriah Islands, Dubai, UAE		
Telephone Number/s	+971 4 558 7308		
Fax Number	n/a		
Website Address	https://www.dubaibritishfs.ae/		
Key Email Address/s	principal@dubaibritishfs.ae		
Principal	Ms Carrie Hoza		
Chair of Board of Governors	Ms Luned Walters		
Age Range	2½ - 5 years		
Number of Pupils	<i>Total</i> 244	<i>Boys</i> 136	<i>Girls</i> 106
Pupil Numbers by Age	<i>3-5 Years</i> 244	<i>6-11 Years</i> -	<i>11-14 Years</i> -
	<i>14-16 Years</i> -	<i>16-18 Years</i> -	<i>18+ Years</i> -
Total Part-Time Pupils	0		

DBF is located in the Jumeirah Islands area of Dubai and was opened in 2014. It is owned and managed by Taleem, one of the largest education providers in the Middle East. It is co-educational and provided for about 250 pupils aged between 3 and 5 years. There are 13 class teachers and three specialist teachers, for PE, Arabic and music.

It is the first and only school in the UAE to be BSME (British School Middle East) accredited. It seeks to immerse pupils in a language-rich, play-based learning environment. There is a special focus on singing to promote effective language acquisition. All pupils are guaranteed a place at Dubai British School Jumeriah Park after leaving DBF at the end of Foundation Stage 2 (FS2).

The vision at DBF is to demonstrate excellent Early Years education. There is a strong belief in the importance of play and in celebrating the uniqueness of every child. The school prioritises creating and maintaining an ethos of respect. Teachers make sure to foster rich musical and linguistic experiences. The school was last inspected in 2017, under the same framework for British Schools Overseas.

4.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of DBF is clear and goes much deeper than its name.

- The language of instruction in the school is English.
- The curriculum used is based on the UK's Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance.
- This ensures that pupils can join or re-join the British education system without disadvantage, at any stage.
- Assessment and tracking are based on common practices from the UK.
- The environment and the physical appearance of DBF, including uniform, classrooms and outdoor learning spaces mirror that found in schools in the UK.
- About 30% of the pupils are UK passport holders, with an additional 10% being from Canada or the USA: in total, there are 48 different nationalities at DBF.
- The vast majority of pupils go on to British curriculum schools, either in the UAE or internationally.
- Communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website.
- DBF is an accredited member of the British Schools of the Middle East, the first EYFS school to be accepted into the association
- DBF teachers are recruited from and trained in the UK, or have UK teaching experience.
- Performance management processes, staff target setting and annual review meetings are based on best British practice and on DfE model policies.
- Enrichment provision including extra-curricular clubs and educational trips are important in the life of the school, and are in line with British best practice.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at DFS is outstanding.

5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum at DBF is excellent.

It is broad, balanced, wide ranging, inclusive and meets the needs of all pupils effectively. It is strongly based on the EYFS guidance from the UK, adapted to be more suitable for the Dubai context. An appropriate curriculum policy is supported by excellent planning. These are very respectful of local laws and customs, but do not in any way undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. They promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The curriculum offering pupils the opportunity to develop across a range of academic, physical, creative, moral and social domains. It provides very effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society, at an age-appropriate level. It ensures that everyone in the school, regardless of background or starting point can achieve the highest academic standards.

Through the school vision and ethos, social studies, and the wider curriculum, DBF promotes and supports high standards of British and Emirati values. The shared culture of mutual respect and tolerance is evidenced through the pupils' attitudes and behaviour towards each other.

English as an additional language (EAL) support is available across the school for pupils who require specific, individualised intervention.

Curriculum enrichment takes place in a variety of manners, and is a particular strength of the school. Pupils take part in trips and excursions related to topics.

The school works in partnership with others to enhance the curriculum, for example with local authors. This serves to engage, inspire and motivate the pupils. An extensive range of clubs and extra-curricular activities (ECAs), provide opportunities for pupils to experience specific subjects, such as ballet, football, tennis, languages and yoga.

Pupils' ideas on the curriculum are sought regularly and this impacts on the future planning of topics and in curriculum design. Last academic year, WOW walls were introduced, which celebrate pupils' work. All pupils have a progress board which they and their parents can contribute to. The impact of this has been to increase opportunities for outdoors and free flow in Foundation Stage 1 (FS1).

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is excellent. Almost all lessons observed were good with a significant proportion being outstanding. Assessment is of a high quality and very effective.

In the best lessons and learning opportunities, teachers support, challenge and enthuse the pupils. Behaviour management is barely needed, because the pupils are so engrossed in their learning. Teaching strategies are varied and chosen to maximise learning opportunities.

Regular teacher monitoring, including observations, pupil performance review (PPR) meetings and appraisals ensure that all teachers have a clear understanding of the high expectations in place at DBF. These include most pupils working at or above age related expectations and making better than typical progress. FS2 data is benchmarked against UK and local British curriculum schools to raise standards and ensure moderated judgements. Moderation takes place at stage level, between stages, with the other schools in the group and with other schools in the region. The FS2 leader has a moderation folder which staff use to validate their judgements. This ensures that internally judgements are in-line including with other schools across Dubai.

All teachers and learning assistants attend 2 hours a week training. Staff learn about the latest pedagogies or school initiatives. It provides time to discuss and implement new strategies and leads to adults in the class feeling empowered. The quality of support and teaching provided by the learning assistants is excellent.

Classrooms are exciting and attractive learning environments, as are the outdoor spaces. Pupils' work is celebrated, often very attractively, and they are proud when their writing or painting is displayed. For example in one FS1 class, the pupils were all outside on scooters, in the sun with their sunhats on. As there are enough for one scooter each, students scoot around very happily but are also happy to get off and leave them for a minute, as they are not immediately taken by another child. There are parking spaces to park, a road to drive on and staff had setup a petrol station area with a bucket car wash. Others were sitting on a hand drawn picnic mat pretending to eat pizza out a box. The teacher had created a rich language environment and worked with pupils on whole sentences, questions and thoughts.

In another example, of excellent practice, the pupils were also mainly in the outside learning space. The learning in terms of independence and manipulative skills was notable. Pupils queue up to hang off monkey bars, in a very orderly line. They are quick and kind in giving their suggestions if a peer gets a bit stuck. They also discuss how to make the climb harder.

Assessment using the Early Excellence Assessment Tracker (EExAT), is the core tool. But it is added to teacher knowledge and parental input on a daily basis, and used to inform planning for groups and individuals. Thus teaching is targeted to close specific gaps and to challenge individuals wherever appropriate.

Pupil self-assessment is evident across the school; examples can be seen through dialogue, lesson observations and on the progress walls. It demonstrates the pupils' ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

6. Standard 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

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

DBF is an inclusive school which celebrates the diverse school community and its varied cultures. Pupils are invited to share their experiences from their cultural backgrounds, including on enrolment and during the year with *Marvellous Me* boxes and songs during *Singing4Learning*.

There are numerous events which celebrate diversity and different traditions and cultures. Celebrations that are important to the school population are given focus and celebrated appropriately. The wide range of resources reflect the multi-cultural population within the community. The school emphasises allowing the pupils to have greater empathy for others, to understand their uniqueness and to develop a greater understanding of the world. This contributes to outstanding attainment in personal development.

There are also many opportunities for the pupils to learn about the environment they live in. They learn about nature and the fragility of the environment by planting vegetables to grow. They learn that all that time and energy actually provides a relatively small amount of 'product', and how one should be careful with food. Pupils are reminded of the importance of water conservation for example turning off taps in the bathrooms and bringing to school reusable water bottles. One parent commented on how he was admonished by his child for not reusing a water bottle, one time.

The school recently stopped using stickers for good behaviour which has meant that pupils focus on self-respect and self-belief: the result is excellent. Staff work hard to make sure that behaviour is good and point out patiently when behaviour might hurt or make someone sad. 'Kind hands' are a key focus. Teaching the difference between right and wrong, is a key focus.

There is an appropriate and effective anti-bullying policy. On the very rare occasions that an incident occurs, careful notes are kept. Parents are invited to sessions on mindfulness, neurological development and fine motor skills, thus helping the culture of understanding and acceptance. A teddy bears' picnic for parents on a Saturday meant that working parents also have the opportunity to attend and meet other families.

The school celebrates British values of law, for example by reminding parents about the importance of a zebra crossing outside school in the parking area, and by emphasising the use of seatbelts for students. How to give respect to others is important thread in the school, including helping other to achieve on activities both in and out of the formal classroom.

Pupils are happy to look after and help new students and those who may need help at specific times. They move happily between the Arabic, PE and other classes, and are very keen on singing Arabic and English songs.

² The law of the United Arab Emirates and respect for local customs preclude support for certain aspects of BSO standards on the 'protected characteristics'.

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

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding: DBF is a safe, friendly, caring and secure environment.

Robust policies and procedures are in place to ensure pupils are safe and happy. These are reviewed on a regular basis in the light of pupils' needs, their security and due consideration of UK best practice.

The new health and safety officer at the school works across 3 schools in the Taaleem group. His extensive knowledge and experience have further enhanced health and safety at DBF. He walks the school weekly with the principal and facilities manager. Once a year, a full risk assessment is carried out in the school, this compliments on going assessment. The health and safety committee meets every 2 month.

There is an appropriate and effective system for keeping the pupils safe, including a designated safeguarding lead: indeed, many of the staff have health and safety qualifications. The child protection officer (the principal) and the school nurse have completed level 3 safeguarding; other relevant school staff have completed Level 2 safeguarding training which has allowed the school to have a greater safeguarding knowledge. The impact of these procedures and level of training means that safeguarding issues are dealt with in a timely manner. The principal has also attended safer recruitment training as part of the Level 3 course and leads the child protection officer group for Taaleem. All staff within the school and parent representatives have completed safeguarding training. Parents who help at the school for trips or swimming, are required to attend a session at the school on the day before, so they are updated with requirements before they are allowed to look after their charges.

The school has a health and safety policy with which all staff are familiar. There are detailed evacuation and lockdown procedures: the school is waiting for government permission to go ahead with practice drills for the latter. Fire/evacuation drills take place regularly.

A head count of pupils along with registers being taken at the start of the day, ensure the school as good data on attendance. Parents are expected to call first thing if their child is absent: the school texts and then calls the parents if they have not heard from them about an absence. Late attenders to school are appropriately marked as such. If there is persistent lateness, the school works with the family to rectify matters.

There is a designated school nurse and all staff have basic first aid training. There are first aid bags in all classrooms. Any medical incidents are recorded. Information slips are then sent to parents about event, detailing any intervention needed.

The security at the school is excellent. Guards patrol both entrances. All visitors sign in and out, and are given coloured lanyards to wear during their visit. There are no buses to pick up and take the children home each day, but if buses are needed for a school trips, detailed checks are done on each bus, including the seat belts.

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

DBF and Taaleem carry out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each person employed at the school their identity, medical fitness, their right to work in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They also check qualifications and the person's suitability to work with children.

In fact, UAE visa checks include police checks and where appropriate, checks in any overseas countries where the person has lived. Rigorous steps are taken to ensure that staff to be appointed to DBF are barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with the UK's section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and does not carry out work in contravention of a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order.

Taaleem, in consultation with the school advisory board, oversee the school's strategic direction and financial well-being, ensuring all local requirements are met. The principal has responsibility for setting the school's development targets, developing appropriate action plans and identifying resourcing needs. She has full responsibility for the day-to-day organisation and running of the school.

There is a complete list of all staff who currently work in the school. Safeguarding and safer recruitment practices are monitored on a regular basis. Prior to the confirmation of the appointment, all staff, including volunteers, undergo appropriate checks to confirm their identity, qualifications medical fitness, right to work in in Dubai and previous employment history. Professional references are sought and confirmed.

Thorough recruitment procedures ensure that teachers are qualified, experienced and equipped to teach the age group for which they are employed. Subsequent monitoring and support for staff, together with less formal procedures such as learning walks, provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on and develop their practice. Professional development, targeted towards DBF improvement initiatives alongside teachers' own development needs, ensure staff, including the learning support assistants, have the opportunity to grow professionally.

Staff attend internal or external training on current best practice in early years, share good practice through 'open doors' week and visit other schools. Every teacher undertook an action research project in 2018-19 and provided feedback to all staff on how to implement it in other classes. This has impacted positively on year-end progress and attainment data and on staff retention (79%). In annual 1:1 meetings with the principal, access to quality CPD was identified as one of the school's top 3 strengths in 2019.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are outstanding.

The school is housed in a purpose built building, opened about 5 years ago. The site is of excellent quality, and resources and facilities are of an equally high standard. Building design reflects the key areas of the school and ensures all pupils have excellent access to the outdoor learning spaces.

The outside areas are used as a 'free flow' areas and are used almost all day, when the weather is appropriate. There are excellent equipment outside, including climbing frames and areas for wet, sandy and messy play – these are very popular!

There is a designated nurse's room. It is appropriately staffed and equipped.

There is a generous amount of space available inside and out, which means the pupils are really express themselves in their play. Teachers and learning support staff have made rooms into exciting places to, by theming different spaces. The classrooms are well light and air conditioning is effective. There is a separate PE area, a swimming pool and ample outside play space. There is room for plants to be grown, a bicycling area and a smaller outside area between classroom where tents are erected and other play/learning can happen.

There is no specific dining area, so pupils are able to sit in their classroom and eat packed lunches and snacks. An outside agency brings in food for those who have paid for this provision. Pupils have access to bathrooms in their classrooms.

Corridors are bright and airy. They are big enough to be used for group singing lessons.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and the wider community at DBF is outstanding.

Communication is cited as a strength of the school by the parents. They feel they are kept very well informed about school events.

Parents are happy with the amount of contact they can have with the school. They are supportive of individual policies, too, such as *Singing4learning*. Parents reported that the recent change of leadership had been handled very well: they appreciate the general stability and consistency of the school staffing. They commented positively on the displayed work in the classrooms and the ECAs. They are very supportive of the community feel: many suggested that the school went above and beyond what is required to support pupils and families at times of particular need.

They are particularly appreciative of the focus on children as individuals. Parents are overtly recognised as the main educator of their child. As such their input is highly valued in the teaching process. Information is exchanged through initial entry information form, 'All About Me' form, informal conversations at drop off and pick up, formal parent consultations, comments on learning for assessment books, celebration of home learning through 'show and tell', parent workshops, coffee mornings, daily class Twitter feed, classroom and corridor display boards, online learning journals, amongst other sources.

For the last two years in the term 2 FS2 PPR meetings, pupils who were already at or close to the 'expected' level against each early learning goal have been identified. This early identification was done to ensure that appropriate provisions and challenge was put in place, to enable these pupils to reach an 'exceeding expectations' level.

Taaleem survey parents each year. The last one showed that 97% of DBF parents feel their child is making good progress at school. Actions taken are communicated through the Principal's monthly newsletter which has a *Parents as Partners* section.

The highly effective transition procedures at DBF that ensure pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in learning, are recognised as being excellent by parents. For example, EYFS information workshop for Year 1 teachers, individual class visits, joint stage visits, sharing facilities, workshops for parents, personalised school tours, stay and play groups, meet the teacher visits and printed materials, visits to nurseries, extra time in school with the new class for specific students, videos sent to new and existing families of their new class teacher. The process was reviewed with parents in 2019 and data demonstrated parents were "happy" or "extremely happy" with the information provided.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints is excellent.

The policy in place is appropriate. DBF recognises and acknowledges the parental entitlement to complain or air a grievance. The school states openly that it will endeavour to work with parents in the best interests of the pupils. The culture of the school is open and the very occasional complaints made are received in a positive manner. The school encourages parental views and ideas.

Parents who have any concerns are asked to raise these in the first instance with their child's class teacher by letter, telephone or by verbally requesting a meeting. If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the class teacher or feels that the matter is sensitive or serious, they contact the stage leader or the senior leadership team. Parents can also contact the principal directly if the matter is of serious concern.

If a parent raises an issue face to face, by telephone or via email, the school hopes it will be resolved immediately and to their satisfaction. If the complaint was made in writing, the parent receives a response within two working days, acknowledging their letter and explaining how they/the school propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the school suggests that the person contacted may need to discuss the issue with one or more colleagues and consider further before a response can be made. The parent will be given a date by which they will receive a further response. If a detailed explanation of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to the parent as quickly as possible informing them of the outcome of their complaint and will explain any action taken or proposed. Alternatively, the parent may be invited to a meeting at the school.

Parental complaints and concerns are treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of the issue is limited to the principal and those directly involved. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children in any way.

DBF endeavours to ensure that all parents feel satisfied with the outcome and feel that their concerns have been fully addressed. If a parent is not satisfied, refer the matter to the principal directly or to the CEO of Taaleem.

The principal's PA will keep a written record of all significant parental complaints and their outcome.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management are outstanding: the vision, drive and ethos provided by the principal and the school advisory board are excellent.

The DBF School Advisory Board (SAB) was established in Academic year 2018/19 as a separate body from Dubai British School Jumeriah Park. Before this the SAB was joint across both schools, but in order to have further focus for DBF this was split. This group meets at least once a term and is made up of leadership, admin, teaching staff, current parents and previous parents & members of the community / industry.

Numerous initiatives have been introduced to improve achievement further. This has seen the % of pupils achieving the 'good level of development' increase from 60% in 2017 to 81% in 2019. The attainment of most pupils (75%), in all areas is at or above age-related expectations in FS1 and above UK expectations in FS2.

Commitment to continual improvement through school improvement partnerships (e.g. Early Excellence, regional clusters, organising Taaleem EY weekend training). DBF regularly advise other settings on assessment and learning environments, especially the new charter schools which have recently joined Taaleem. The DBF leadership team lead on writing moderation against the ELGs and have collated a bank of 'exceeding' samples for all cluster schools' reference in making judgements. The previous principal chairs the Taaleem heads of EY group and has organised shared training. The current principal chairs Taaleem child protection meetings. The principal and deputy principal spoke at the KHDA 'What Works' event on building relationships with parents in 2019.

The senior leaders have facilitated SEND training for staff, to ensure high quality provision, enabling them to meet the needs of all pupils. The recent parental survey shows that 97% of DBF parents feel their child is making good progress at school.

Rigorous implementation of monitoring and appraisal procedures, including PPR meetings ensures that any gaps in provision are identified and addressed. For example, it has resulted in the implementation of targeted support for aspects such as a gross motor group, differentiated learning, free flow, in-class interventions, objective-led planning and invite only ECAs. The impact of this has been that 81% of pupils at DBF achieve the GLD.

Self-reflection monitoring procedures have been implemented in Term 3 of 2019. This trial was reviewed at year end by both DBF Leadership and Taaleem Leadership. This indicated strong staff support for this and a significant improvement in the consistent quality of teaching and learning. This model is now being shared across the Dubai School's group and the 2 other schools are implementing this from Term 3 2020.

New middle leaders have been mentored by more experienced middle leaders to build distributed leadership capacity. Three middle leaders are undertaking or have completed their NPQML qualification.

DBF is strongly committed to partnership working. The school involves parents and external SEND agencies in the pupils' learning, in order to best support individual strengths and needs. The school works with other British schools in the region as part of a cluster group. This ensures that practices, assessment procedures and judgements are moderated and in-line with other local high-achieving schools. DBF hosts a monthly community talk on relevant issues.