Sunmarke School

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 26 to 29 January 2026

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Age Group: 3 to 18

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. Education Development Trust (EDT) 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 staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

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

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

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

The BSO standards are as follows:

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching, learning 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**

Information about the school

Sunmarke School is a co-educational day school located in Jumeirah Village Triangle, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The school opened in 2016 and is owned by Fortes Education which also owns another school and nurseries in the Emirates. There are currently 2,235 pupils on roll aged three years to 18 years.

With the exception of the sixth form, the school is non-selective and prides itself on being highly inclusive. The school's commitment to diversity and inclusion is high, helping pupils to learn in a safe and caring environment.

Sunmarke is a very diverse school with pupils representing over 100 nationalities. There are 132 pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Almost half of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), most of whom are bilingual or multilingual.

Sunmarke is organised in a way that aligns with the British education system. There is an early years foundation stage (EYFS) for pupils from three to five years, a primary phase for pupils from five to 11 years, a secondary phase for pupils aged 11 to 16 and a sixth form for students aged 16 to 18.

Children in early years follow the EYFS curriculum. Pupils in primary and secondary follow the national curriculum for England (NCfE). In the senior school, pupils study a wide range of GCSE, IGCSE and level 2 BTEC qualifications. In the sixth form, students take A levels, level 3 BTEC and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma qualifications. Almost all students continue to higher education worldwide, with most attending universities in the UK, of which 68% attended Russell Group universities in 2025.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by four EDT inspectors who spent four days at the school. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed in advance and the inspection dates were confirmed with 10 weeks' notice. Inspectors reviewed key information about the school prior to the inspection.

During the inspection the team visited 90 part-lessons and carried out learning walks, including extra-curricular and enrichment activities. A total of five lessons were jointly observed with leaders. The team held 27 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and reviewed a broad selection of documentation, including assessment records, policies and strategic plans. Safeguarding arrangements were evaluated to

check their compliance and effectiveness. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and staff gathered through the BSO survey, which was distributed shortly before 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 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.

This includes pupils with EAL and SEND, who benefit from highly inclusive, well-targeted provision.

In the EYFS, children make rapid and sustained progress, developing secure foundations in early reading, writing, speaking and listening. Systematic phonics teaching enables swift acquisition of decoding and word-recognition skills, supported by targeted interventions, visual prompts and language-rich environments for EAL learners and those with additional needs. Exceptionally well-planned indoor and outdoor provision offers rich opportunities for talk, storytelling and mark-making, enabling all children to learn through exploration, play and first-hand experiences. During multisensory storytelling sessions, children confidently use new language, linking meaning to experience. Teachers skilfully target ambitious vocabulary such as 'whimpering' and 'shivering', assisting understanding through modelling and repetition.

In the primary phase, pupils make consistently strong progress in English. The curriculum is highly coherent and carefully sequenced, with clear progression in writing through agreed non-negotiable skills and a wide range of high-quality texts reflecting pupils' interests and cultural diversity. Reading is a clear priority, and outcomes have improved significantly, as evidenced by rising Granada Learning (GL) and New Group Reading Test (NGRT) scores. Pupils with EAL and SEND are well supported through adaptive teaching, the pre-teaching of vocabulary and targeted scaffolding support, enabling them to infer meaning accurately, articulate definitions and independently apply ambitious vocabulary in their extended writing. Pupils are confident, articulate and enthusiastic communicators.

In key stage 3, pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and spoken language. Teaching builds consistently on prior learning through effective modelling, purposeful questioning and structured discussion, supporting pupils to develop increasing levels of confidence and accuracy in their responses. In a Year 7 guided reading of 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo,

that contained a 'Big Question' discussion, pupils demonstrated strong comprehension, empathy and justification using precise textual evidence.

At key stage 4, pupils make rapid progress, with GCSE English language and literature attainment well above England averages. In 2025, 94% achieved at grades 9 to 4. In the sixth form, students' analytical discussion of 'The Outsider' that used allegory and a narrative voice, led to coherent, evaluative arguments, demonstrating autonomy, deep levels of inference, and academic fluency. A-level English outcomes are exceptional, with all students achieving to grades A* to C, supporting worldwide progression to higher education.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding.

Pupils with SEND and EAL make significant gains in relation to their different starting points as a result of the high-quality targeted support and interventions that they receive from their teachers and support staff as well as the adapted curriculum.

Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills below that expected for their age. Across the early years, they make rapid rates of progress. In the Reception Year, they can name numbers in order and count reliably beyond 20. They can add sets of objects correctly and relate them to their corresponding numerals. By the end of early years, 84% of children successfully secure a Good Level of Development and are very well prepared for their transition to Year 1.

As pupils progress through the primary phase, pupils of different abilities continue to make rapid and sustained rates of progress. For example, in key stage 1, pupils quickly develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills, resulting in excellent progress overall. By the end of Year 2, they use their strong skills of addition and multiplication facts to solve mental arithmetic operations. In Year 6, pupils confidently explain how to use a scale factor to enlarge a shape, explaining their findings clearly. By the end of key stage 2, in external tests, pupils attain levels above those typical for their age.

Secondary pupils continue to acquire excellent knowledge, skills and mathematical understanding. In Year 9, pupils become increasingly confident to identify the hypotenuse in an angle and to apply Pythagoras' theorem. In Year 10, pupils demonstrate excellent skills to factorise and to solve quadratic equations independently. At IGCSE level, pupils achieve examination results that are well above the England average.

At A level and IB, students consistently make excellent rates of progress. In Year 13 A level mathematics, students expertly tackle a range of demanding tasks. For example, they work hard to solve the continuous uniform distribution and to apply it to real life, developing excellent critical thinking skills. In Year 13, IB students are very confident in using definite integrals to find exact values and to interpret results in context, developing excellent higher-order thinking skills.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding.

The standards reached by pupils exceed both England and international averages. A commitment to thinking scientifically is evident throughout the school.

In the early years, teachers encourage children to predict and test. For example, when observing how different condiments affect the melting of ice, children used age-appropriate scientific vocabulary to describe these changes. In Year 3, pupils were challenged to determine the most important part of a plant. They defined and described different functions before discussing their importance. Teachers encouraged them to 'be scientists' by asking deep questions, which resulted in pupils developing more profound scientific thought.

Primary pupils benefit from specific scientific targets relevant to their developmental stage. Across the school, 'Big Questions' frame the learning, providing real-life relevance to the curriculum. Teachers use their subject knowledge and questioning skills to ensure pupils extend their thinking and develop a deeper understanding.

The explicit use of scientific vocabulary across the school is exemplary and contributes significantly to their progress. Key words are introduced, explained, and used constantly to ensure pupils' understanding. In the primary phase, this is supported by specific keyword lists in each lesson, tailored to the pupils and available in up to 12 languages. Secondary school teachers routinely discuss key words during lesson introductions, which effectively supports pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The high-quality support and intervention means that all pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress. In the primary phase, 94% of pupils met expected standards, with 99% making expected progress and 83% exceeding it in 2025. This high performance continues into key stage 3, where 95% of pupils met and 87% exceeded expectations. At key stage 4, results in both separate and double award sciences are well above international averages. All pupils achieved at grades 4 or above in biology, chemistry, and physics. Sixth-form attainment is equally high across A-level and IB pathways, with almost all students meeting or exceeding their Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) 4 targets, demonstrating consistently high rates of progress across all phases.

Pupils' attainment and progress in a range of **other subjects** are outstanding.

Pupils make excellent progress in other subjects, benefiting from an EYFS curriculum that is rich in knowledge and understanding of the world, and strong in visual, musical and performing arts and children's physical development. Throughout primary and secondary, pupils make outstanding progress in science and humanities through exciting science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) lessons, through languages such as Mandarin, French and Spanish, and through arts and computing where they benefit from specialist resources and excellent facilities. In a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils enthusiastically analysed the potential negative impact of mass tourism in Kenya, sub-dividing these into

economic, environmental and social effects, confident in their use of this challenging vocabulary.

The attainment of pupils in other subjects at GCSE outperforms England averages and this trend is maintained in Years 12 and 13. This is particularly the case in French, Spanish, psychology, computer science, art, sociology and drama where results are exceptionally high. The school offers 'Signature Programmes' in media and performing arts, a Global Language Academy and a Pro Sports Academy and these provide pupils with a wealth of expertise to deepen and enrich their knowledge and skills.

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, learning and assessment is outstanding (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 meets 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 26 to 29 January 2026, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the independent school system in England. This judgement is endorsed by the British government, quality assured by Ofsted and is valid for a period of three years.

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school

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

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

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, with clear policies ensuring appropriate time is allocated to all subjects. Meticulous planning and collaboration between staff across phases ensures a seamless progression of knowledge and skills as pupils move through the school. This continuity is further strengthened by carefully managed transitions that respond well to pupils' academic and emotional needs. For example, nursery children participate in 'Trips to Big School' events, while Year 2 pupils visit the Year 3 floor. In upper key stage 2, the introduction of specialist teachers and rooms prepares pupils for the secondary phase. Careers counsellors and pastoral leaders deliver taster sessions and workshops, ensuring pupils are well informed about their chosen pathways and equipped for increased levels of independence.

At key stage 4, pupils select from over 20 optional GCSE subjects alongside a core compulsory curriculum. This breadth continues into the sixth form, where students choose between A level, IB, and BTEC qualifications. This variety ensures that all students follow a pathway tailored to their academic potential and future aspirations.

Teachers and leaders plan effectively for pupils with SEND, those who are gifted and talented, and those for pupils with EAL. Additional adults are deployed skilfully to support specific groups. Consequently, all pupils gain access to the curriculum and make strong rates of progress in inclusive classroom environments.

The school delivers a discrete moral, social, and cultural curriculum. This integrates statutory UAE requirements with themes of social responsibility, democracy, and respect. These values are reinforced through assemblies and form times. For instance, Year 1 pupils demonstrated their understanding of democracy by using a ballot box to vote for a class story. A school-wide commitment to sustainability is driven by 'Eco Warriors', resulting in the active recycling of materials, including pens and paper. The school's provision promotes respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.

The curriculum is enhanced by an innovative approach to STEAM. High-quality facilities and technology for learning ensure pupils develop the skills necessary to thrive in a modern

society. The extra-curricular activities (ECA) programme is substantial and inclusive. In the primary phase, all pupils benefit from four ECAs weekly, with the school ensuring every pupil receives their first choice. Secondary pupils enjoy a diverse range of opportunities across six themes, including community enterprise and media. These activities are led by staff, external experts, and older pupils, ensuring high levels of participation and the development of pupils' leadership skills.

British elements are woven throughout the curriculum, from the selection of books to school assemblies. An assembly celebrating the 'Spirit of Sunmarke' used the examples of British Olympians to illustrate the importance of personal development over awards.

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

Teaching and assessment are outstanding and make a decisive contribution to pupils' consistently high levels of achievement across all phases. Teaching is underpinned by teachers' secure subject expertise, highly effective pedagogy and ambitious expectations for all pupils. A shared and well-embedded understanding of high-quality practice ensures learning is purposeful, challenging and inclusive, while promoting pupils' independence and deep levels of engagement.

Teachers know pupils exceptionally well and use ongoing assessment to plan learning that is carefully structured, well-paced and precisely adapted to pupils' starting points. In the EYFS, systematic phonics teaching, combined with immediate verbal feedback and guided self-correction, enables children to apply sounds accurately and develop early independence. As pupils move into key stages 1 and 2, targeted questioning and live assessment during writing tasks are used effectively to pace learning and move pupils confidently into independent application.

Across key stage 3, probing questioning and retrieval activities are used to assess pupils' prior knowledge, enabling them to analyse subject content with increasing precision, confidence and accuracy. In key stages 4 and 5, discussion-based teaching and structured comparison support pupils to evaluate ideas, concepts and sources securely, informing their next steps through explicit modelling and deeper analytical development across the curriculum. As pupils progress through the school, expectations for independence, challenge and pupils' ownership of learning increase systematically, preparing them effectively for external examinations and future pathways while sustaining their curiosity and enquiry.

Assessment is coherent, systematic and used incisively to inform teaching and curriculum refinement. Teachers routinely check pupils' understanding during lessons and adapt learning responsively, ensuring misconceptions are identified and dealt with promptly. Assessment information, including internally moderated and externally benchmarked data, is used strategically to monitor progress, evaluate impact and refine curriculum sequencing. Pupils are

challenged to deepen their learning rather than complete tasks, and teachers accurately identify when pupils are ready to extend or apply knowledge at greater depth.

Teachers' feedback is purposeful and sharply focused on improvement. Approaches evolve from immediate, verbal feedback in the early years to increasingly analytical and self-directed feedback in the secondary phase, enabling pupils to understand success criteria and take responsibility for their next steps. As a result, pupils demonstrate strong ownership of learning, sustained effort and pride in the quality and presentation of their work.

Teaching assistants and specialist staff are deployed with precision to enhance learning. Pupils with SEND benefit from personalised strategies and timely interventions that maintain pupils' ambition and enable strong rates of progress from different starting points. Pupils with EAL are supported through language-rich teaching and adaptive approaches, allowing them to gain access to the full curriculum and participate confidently alongside their peers.

The culture of reflection, feedback and collaboration across most subjects ensures that teaching and assessment remain consistently strong and continue to improve. However, in a small number of lessons, this practice is not yet fully established and consequently teachers do not include reflection and feedback consistently in their lesson planning.

As a result of outstanding teaching, pupils achieve excellent outcomes and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their education.

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

Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school where they feel welcome, valued and remarkably well known as individuals. All members of the school's community support each other relentlessly, creating a nurturing and cohesive learning environment, where pupils and staff work together, celebrate the cultural diversity and respect the views and the values of others. The rich Islamic studies, special assemblies, and the opportunity for Duaa (supplication) help pupils to reflect on their own learning and to appreciate how moral values fully contribute to the rule of order.

Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent self-esteem, belonging, resilience and confidence. Pupils develop strong understanding of the UAE and UK rules of law. They fully appreciate the system of restorative justice and the 'Positive Education' activities that provide them with

excellent tools to reflect on their actions, to excel in their individual strengths and to strengthen their holistic well-being.

Pupils agree that behaviour is excellent and orderly in all parts of the school and know how to keep themselves very safe from cyber-bullying and the negative impact related to social media. They speak highly of their responsibilities in contributing to a welcoming and respectful ethos where they can learn and flourish.

Pupils establish excellent relationships with their teachers and peers. In early years, children make friends, offer a helping hand to each other and use words such as 'please' and 'thank you'. The highly structured personal, social, health education (PSHE) programme and the excellent support from teachers and school's counsellor fully nurtures pupils' personal, social development, mental health and well-being. This is further enriched by the positive relationship policy and practice, rooted in the mission and values of the school.

Pupils develop a strong understanding of key British values. They speak about how their voices are heard and listened to, for example, in the way that the school has increased the range of sporting activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils actively participate in the democratic process through the election of the student councillors, house captains, and ambassadors; they believe in the democratic process, fairness, equality and justice. They learn very well about British institutions such as British authors, poets, conservationists and the Houses of Parliament. Pupils are very confident to articulate how UAE institutions help them to understand about Emirati laws, cultures and traditions.

Pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding of life beyond the school and make consistent links with the wider world. They speak highly of their multicultural school and the wealth of knowledge that they gain from special events such as National and World Cultural Days. This empowers them to respect all faiths and beliefs and to promote respect and tolerance.

Pupils develop excellent leadership skills in the way that they engage highly in projects that promote sustainability and conservation in their local community and beyond such as the 'Beach Clean Up', 'Trash to Treasure', 'Uniform Cause', and the 'Flea Market' car boot sale. They are proud of their roles to represent the school across the UAE on stage and on the radio, sharing their work and innovative ideas with a wider audience. They contribute fully to a range of charities, for example, to give food to local workers during Ramadan for Iftar, and to donate to the Red Crescent that supports different charitable causes in the UAE and across the world.

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

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

Senior leaders and all staff pay excellent attention to safeguarding across the school to keep pupils very safe and secure. There are robust safeguarding policies and procedures, including

arrangements for child protection, behaviour management and anti-bullying that meet both UK requirements and are in line with the laws of the UAE. All staff, including the designated safeguarding leads (DSL) receive regular training on safeguarding and understand their roles to protect children in their care. Parents are knowledgeable about e-safety and agree that staff are caring and keep their children safe. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school and know about the dangers that they may face online. They report that bullying is rare, and explain how staff, including the school's counsellor deal with any concerns promptly and with sensitivity.

Rigorous health and safety policies and processes ensure the safety of all in and around the school. Health and safety teams undertake stringent checks on the premises, resources, fire safety evacuations and excursions. They ensure that electrical appliances are checked by safety professionals. The close partnerships with the UAE Civil Defence provide beneficial opportunities for staff and pupils to learn about fire safety. The supervision of pupils is thorough in school and on the school's transport. Records of health and safety, accidents and incidents are detailed and kept in secure files, including subsequent actions. Hazardous materials are stored in safety cabinets. Staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. The two nurses and the doctor maintain meticulous records of pupils and ensure that medical files and medicines are locked in safety cabinets. The use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, security guards patrolling of the site and the strict arrangements for the arrival and departure of school buses and parents' cars ensure that pupils, staff and visitors remain very safe and secure.

Staff provide excellent opportunities for pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils enthusiastically participate in a wide range of physical activities that support their health and well-being, and they speak highly of how regular exercise, including swimming and sport competitions enables them to improve their physical skills and to feel good about themselves. They make an excellent contribution to health-related events such as Heart Day and Breast Cancer Awareness. The school's canteen provides a range of freshly cooked, healthy meals.

The promotion of positive behaviour for learning ensures that pupils' behaviour is excellent. Admission and attendance registers are very well maintained. Pupils' attendance is at 95%, which is above the UK average and is managed by attendance officers who are proactive and contact parents when their children are absent or slightly late. They also help parents understand the strong links between attendance and achievement. Senior leaders maintain an excellent focus on the well-being of the school's community. As a result, pupils of all ages respond with enjoyment to learning.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school maintains comprehensive and detailed records to ensure the safe recruitment of staff, overseen by a dedicated team of human resource specialists at Fortes Education. Its

procedures are fully in line with UK expectations. All senior leaders have received recent and relevant training in the safer recruitment of staff. A single central record (SCR) is held digitally, and this records the key checks made before recruitment and during the appointment procedure. Individual files and records are stored securely with access limited to key leaders.

Leaders also ensure that owners, governors, security personnel, caterers and contractors undergo appropriate checks to enable their suitability within their own particular role. These checks are also recorded on the school's SCR. A colour-coded set of lanyards helpfully distinguishes the different roles for staff, visitors and pupils on site.

Before beginning their employment, staff undergo a rigorous series of checks on medical fitness, identity, qualifications and the right to work in the host country including police checks. This is then followed by a comprehensive induction programme that includes thorough safeguarding training.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The site is clean, modern, and exceptionally well maintained, providing a safe and stimulating environment that supports the school's ambitious curriculum aims.

The school has robust systems in place to ensure the safety and readiness of its facilities. Staff complete a daily 'five questions' check on classrooms and areas to identify any potential hazards. Any concerns are logged through an online system, which automatically alerts the maintenance team. Response times are prioritised based on the severity of the concern. The site is maintained by a large, well-trained onsite cleaning team during the day, with external agencies providing deeper cleans outside school hours.

The school is well equipped to meet the medical and physical needs of its pupils. There is a centrally located, well-resourced main clinic which includes an isolation room as required by the Ministry of Education. A satellite triage room in the secondary phase ensures rapid access to medical support across the site. The premises are accessible to those with restricted mobility, with lifts serving all floors. For pupils with complex needs, the school makes specific modifications to ensure that they can gain access to the full curriculum safely.

Sanitary and water facilities are of a high standard. Toilets are plentiful, segregated for the sole use of pupils and adults, age-appropriate, and accessible throughout the school. Appropriate changing facilities are available. Drinking water is readily available in all areas and clearly signposted. Hot water temperatures are controlled centrally to ensure pupils' safety.

The school's accommodation significantly enhances the quality of education. Specialist facilities are tailored to the curriculum, including a forest school and an 'Imagineers' space for EYFS, and a 'Space-Exploration' room for upper key stages 2 and 3. A robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) laboratory is in construction and will be available to students later in the current year. Ongoing improvements are driven by curriculum needs and the pupils' voice. Recent developments include a new student leadership laboratory and a multi-gym. Existing facilities are continually renewed, such as new flooring in EYFS and updated outdoor play areas. New shading in the EYFS outdoor area ensures that pupils can play safely during hotter months. Learning areas have high

standards of lighting and acoustics; for example, a sixth-form rock band is able to rehearse in a sound-proof music studio.

Physical education is provided in accordance with the curriculum, supported by high-quality facilities including two sports halls and a main pitch. Specialist teaching spaces for the arts are also of high quality. Music facilities include large teaching spaces, small practice rooms, and high levels of information technology (IT) provision. Art rooms are vibrant and engaging, showcasing high-quality pupils' work. The libraries are well resourced with clear systems in place to ensure the suitability of content. In a Year 5 library session, pupils were observed reading a wide variety of texts with focus and enjoyment.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Discussions with parents during the inspection and analysis of survey results confirm that parents are highly satisfied with the leadership of the school, its efforts to support the welfare of pupils and the extent to which it keeps pupils safe and secure.

There is a very strong culture of parental partnership at the school. Leaders are highly proactive is seeking the views of parents and their opinions are valued highly. For example, the school organised a 'Listening Lounge' to discuss the use of screen time in Year 2, leading to the postponement in the use of tablets until Year 3. Senior leaders also support the thriving Friends of Sunmarke School (FOSS) group, working in partnership ahead of key events, presentations or community celebrations. Parents state that they feel very welcomed at the school.

The school's website and virtual learning environment (VLE) contain a range of key policies and reports, including those that relate to inclusion, complaints, anti-bullying, behaviour and safeguarding.

The VLE is available for all parents and contains a wide range of information. Parents report it being very useful and that is updated regularly. They state that it is clear who is the correct person to talk to about specific areas of school life and how the VLE has a quick messaging system that avoids the need for e-mails. Parents expressed much confidence in this system.

Parents appreciate the information provided to support learning and to help them find out about the curriculum. They benefit from a variety of workshops and information sessions throughout the year. Leaders take great care to make these events accessible to all parents, translating materials into different languages, if necessary.

Staff prepare four reports to parents throughout the year together with regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress. There are many more informal opportunities for parents to find out about their child's progress and development, particularly in the primary section of the school. The reports provide clear academic guidance, and those related to pupils with SEND reflect progress towards the specific targets that each pupil has been set.

Despite the size of the school, parents feel that staff know their children very well and take great care to support families. For example, the induction process when pupils begin the

school is comprehensive. Typical responses comment that it was 'so calm, happy and smooth.' Parents value the visible presence of staff and their willingness to listen.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Leaders are proactive in dealing with concerns as soon as they are raised. There is a thorough system of recording such informal concerns, enabling leaders to track actions and responses. Such is the effectiveness of this system that the vast majority of complaints are dealt with at this stage, all of which leaders analyse to identify trends, sharing this information with governors termly.

The complaints policy is available to parents through both the website and the parents' VLE and is fully compliant with BSO standards in that it is a three-stage process. There are clear procedures in place to manage complaints that escalate to the second and third stages, including a panel hearing that contains at least one member not associated with the management of the school or the original complaint, allowing the complainant to attend accompanied by a third party.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding.

Leaders at all levels maintain an exceptionally strong focus on improving the provision for pupils at this popular and family-orientated school. They ensure that high standards are at the heart of all that they do, as demonstrated by the year-on-year improvement in academic outcomes since the last inspection.

Leaders have been very effective in communicating a vision that is rooted in the 'Positive Education' philosophy so treasured by the owners and governors. This translates into the daily routines for pupils that helps them to be self-regulated, aspirational and confident young people, keen to participate and contribute to their school's community. Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that pupils' well-being is very well prioritised, and that they are safe and secure.

Leaders have created a strong culture of collaboration that encourages high levels of morale and loyalty which has led to very high rates of staff retention. Staff are encouraged to take on additional responsibility which they keenly welcome. Such stability affords leaders the chance to fully develop improvement plans and activities, which are rooted in rigorous and honest self-evaluation, ensuring that all BSO standards are met. A strong commitment to succession planning helps to build capacity and expertise, meaning that overall the school has excellent capacity to improve further.

Leadership at all levels is highly effective. Senior and middle leaders have overseen innovations and improvements in teaching and learning, and leaders in charge of pupils with SEND and EAL

have implemented clear, well-resourced interventions that have led to outstanding rates of progress for these groups of pupils.

Middle leaders confirm that their voice is listened to and that their work is valued. All staff benefit from an appraisal process that allows them to develop their own research and interests as well as being linked to the school's improvement priorities.

Leadership of the early years is outstanding. In this phase, children benefit from the development of firm foundations that enable them to flourish, all within an outstanding, learning environment.

The school's owners, Fortes Education Group, are highly invested in the school's character, and its financial and educational performance. They are part of the board of governors that oversees the strategic direction of the school. Three sub-committees then monitor the work of the school's leadership through regular visits, scrutiny of data and termly meetings. The division of responsibilities of these groups allows a clear separation of duties between governance and executive leadership. A significant parental presence on the committees helps to nurture a culture of honesty and transparency that allows governors to form a very accurate view of the school's development.

Leadership's transparency is mirrored when the school gathers the views of pupils, parents and staff, with regular surveys used to seek feedback about the school's work. Parents confirm that there is a clear feedback process and that leaders are quick to respond to their views. Where possible and appropriate, changes are made as a result of these surveys. Parents speak very highly of the school, stating that 'What sets this school apart is the well-being of its pupils.'

Pupils agree. They speak of the core characteristics of mutual respect, kindness, love of learning, curiosity, highlighting the Islamic value of respect that the school celebrates and cherishes. Leaders work hard to maintain a distinctive British nature that is appreciated by parents and pupils.

Leaders oversee a diverse but very inclusive community. They ensure that there is due regard to equality. They strive to ensure equity of provision, such as ECA choices. Pupils confirm that everyone is respected for who they are.

Safeguarding is highly effective, with leaders proactive in nurturing a strong culture of vigilance. In surveys sent out at the time of the inspection, parents were unanimous in agreeing that their child is kept safe.

Early Years Provision

The quality of **early years'** provision is outstanding.

The EYFS curriculum is broad, ambitious and fully aligned with the statutory EYFS framework, securing strong foundations for future learning and school readiness. Outcomes are strong with 84% of children achieving a Good Level of Development, significantly above England national figures. The learning environment, influenced by a child-centred philosophy, is spacious, purposeful and exceptionally well resourced. Carefully planned indoor and outdoor learning zones promote children's exploration, sustained shared thinking and independence.

Early reading, writing and oracy are embedded across all areas through highly effective phonics teaching, where outcomes from screening checks are high. Children's fine and gross motor skills develop to a very high standard as a result of purposeful continuous provision. For example, in the construction area where children plan their designs using flip chart paper and pens before constructing their buildings, they demonstrate excellent collaborative and problem-solving skills. Teaching, assessment and timely interventions ensure that almost all children exceed age-related expectations and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Teachers set high expectations in all areas of learning. They question expertly, drawing out advanced vocabulary from children with words such as 'whimpering' and 'shivering'. Routines are used well to practise prior learning, for example, singing French songs when moving from area to area. Children demonstrate confidence and resilience within a well-organised and attractive learning environment.

Leaders ensure that plans and procedures are robust and consistent. They make regular checks on provision, helping to maintain the quality of lessons, offering regular feedback to staff in an effort to maintain these high standards. These checks extend to the identification of children who require further support, particularly those who have EAL needs, or more able children where more challenge is needed.

Sixth-Form Provision

The quality of **sixth-form** provision is outstanding.

There are 209 students enrolled, studying a diverse range of qualifications. Across all pathways, students achieved a 97% pass rate, which is significantly above global averages.

Students benefit from a culture of trust and autonomy, which they describe as a successful transition from traditional teaching to professional mentorship. The curriculum is inclusive and highly flexible. By offering A levels, the IB, and BTEC qualifications, the school ensures that all students, regardless of their preferred learning style or academic background, can follow a pathway that helps them reach their potential.

Leadership of the sixth form is highly effective. Leaders communicate a clear, ambitious vision that empowers students to take ownership of their learning and personal growth. Consequently, students' personal development is exemplary. Students take on significant responsibilities, including managing the leadership committee and mentoring younger pupils through the house and 'Eco Committee' systems. Such opportunities ensure students develop the independence and organisational skills essential for higher education.

Careers guidance is highly effective. Support for students' next steps is comprehensive, starting with the systematic use of an online careers platform and mandatory one-to-one planning meetings in Year 12, which helps to keep the vast majority of students on track throughout the year and into Year 13. Dedicated workshops on personal statements, curriculum vitae writing, and mock interviews ensure students are well prepared for university applications. Furthermore, life-skills lessons in practical tasks, such as cooking, effectively prepare students for the transition to independent living. While the majority of students progress to universities in the UK, an increasing proportion now choose to remain in the UAE or attend other European destinations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

Sunmarke 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). Sunmarke 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:

1. The culture of reflection and feedback across most subjects ensures that teaching and assessment remain consistently strong and continue to improve. In a small number of lessons, this practice is not yet fully established and consequently teachers do not include reflection and feedback consistently in their lesson planning, slowing pupils' progress on these occasions. Leaders should continue to embed this culture so that all pupils make high rates of progress across all aspects of the curriculum.

Summary of inspection judgements

The quality of education

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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			

Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			

School Details

Name of school	Sunmarke School
Type of school	Private
Date school opened	August 2016
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	2,235
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	AED 53,040 – 88,538
Annual fees (boarders)	N/A
Address of school	District 5, Jumeirah Village Triangle, Dubai, UAE.
Telephone number	+971 4 423 8900
Email address	Info.sms@forteseducation.com
Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Rickford
Proprietor	Fortes Education

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 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.

Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) – Private schools in Dubai are required by the to be inspected. A joint KHDA/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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