



## National SMSC Quality Mark Verification Report

**Name of School: Safa British School, Dubai**

**Principal: Zara Harrington**

**Assistant Head and SMSC Lead: Sarah Polley**

**Verification visit: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Dear Zara and Sarah,

I am delighted to inform you that as a result of the recent verification visit, Safa British School has been awarded **gold** level of the National SMSC Quality Mark, and this has been confirmed by the Quality Assurance Panel.

Thank you for the lovely warm welcome I received virtually and for the wealth of SMSC related evidence that you shared with me. The preparation and organisation that went into aligning the evidence for each of the criterion was incredible. It allowed me to totally immerse myself in all things Safa and get a wonderful picture of your SMSC provision - beyond the distance and the screen!

I really enjoyed spending time learning about your school and the journey of growth, development and expansion you have come on. Whilst the rest of the world was dealing with a global pandemic you were coping with that, and striving to support your pupils and families with the move from, as you put, 'your rented accommodation to your dream house!'. This building surpasses any other school I have ever seen with regards to facilities - from the rooftop netball court to a fully equipped car body shop, where the children are building an actual car, to a swimming pool and an outdoor space with children's sense of fun central to its creation. However, the care and warmth that I felt from the staff team and the children could allow your SMSC provision to flourish in a hut! Safa is a school where it appears everyone from the owner Sameer Merchant to each pupil, genuinely cares about each other and work together as a team to spread Safa's purple kindness.

I would like to give a special mention to the 3 different groups of pupils who met with me. They were all so eloquent, confident, honest and a delight to speak to. It is clear how much they value the opportunities given to them at Safa British School. So many of the children mentioned the diversity of the school, with over 77 different nationalities, yet how strong the family feel of the school is. They told me how fun the lessons are and how much they feel the teachers care. One child commented how the lessons 'are fun and require us to focus and use our creativity to learn'. They are proud of the positions of responsibility that they hold and respect the application procedure to gain these positions. When asked what they would change about the school, lots of the children replied saying they would add more animals to the school pets; one boy mentioned the hope of having a therapy dog. The year 10 girls who met with me were particularly captivating in their love for the school and the family feel that the school has. One girl explained how she has grown as a person thanks to Safa. She commented, 'Safa has validated my voice.' Another girl replied when asked, what would you change if you had a magic wand? 'I wouldn't change anything because what I would have changed has already been done, because we are listened to.'

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I would like to thank Sameer Merchant and Claire Drinkwater, both of whom have children at the school, for taking time out of their day to join me on the call. Sameer was full of praise for the journey the staff team have taken the pupils on during Covid to reach their new accommodation. He also spoke of the strong family feel within the school and although the school has expanded and continues to grow, he believes the tight-knit family feel is stronger. Claire also echoed the family aspect and delights in the celebration of diversity. When asked what she would change about the school, Claire suggested increasing the opportunities for parents to be present in the school, which due to Covid restrictions has been limited. Sameer agreed and is also keen to welcome parents back in as it was before Covid.

Thanks also to Emma Ives, Assistant Head of Secondary and Christopher Costello, year 4 Teacher and Lead on Moral, Social and Cultural Studies (MSCS) who not only supported the gathering of the folders of evidence, but also facilitated the dissection of the self-review tool and were able to guide the conversation to support the school, along with Sarah Polley, in highlighting so many areas of the self-review which could be elevated from silver to gold.

I congratulate Safa British School on the excellent standard of SMSC development that is afforded their pupils. Young Citizens will be discussing with the school which aspects of their provision can be shared with other schools. It would be wonderful to see other schools in Dubai learn from Safa's wonderful example and spread a little purple everywhere!

### **Strengths of the school's SMSC development:**

Through your school website, SRT and discussions it is evident that there are numerous SMSC related strengths at Safa British School; the following are a few key examples:

- Safa sets out to 'unlock potential and encourage pupils to 'Dream Big'! Pupils' confidence and belief in themselves shone through the screen.
- The embedding of Moral, Social and Cultural Studies (MSCS) has paved the way for Safa to embrace SMSC and not only link it to MSCS but also look for new opportunities to be leading the way. In your recent British Overseas Inspection report from February of this year, it states that the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The PULSE check-in system for the pupils and the use of this to also show staff appreciation and praise.
- The school is a micro-world of languages and nationalities and it was wonderful to hear and see how these are all embraced, celebrated and shared. And where possible, encourage parental participation.
- When asked to use only one word each, the words below capture the way your school is described by members of its key stakeholders:

*“Adaptive Comfortable Diverse Beautiful Awesome  
Fun Splendiferous Glamorous Colourful Special Cultural Appreciation  
Resilient Community Family Happy Calm Caring...Purple!”*

### **Areas for development:**

- Consider highlighting the SMSC opportunities on the curriculum planning by simply adding a purple heart in order to focus on those SMSC occasions.
- Re-focus the teaching and learning of the British values by considering the values as fundamental and human values rather than highlighting their Britishness.
- Investigate social action initiatives such as Young Citizens Make a Difference Challenge and Bring About Change. You might also like to consider using our Primary Resources.
- Consider contacting charities such as Primary Futures to support the development of resources of careers and aspirations in the primary phase.

Verifier: Victoria Quijada

Chair of Panel: Yvonne Richards

Please note that this award is recognised for 3 years, and that re-verification should be sought by October 2025.