



DESS Direction 2021-2025





“I love going to school at DESS. I have amazing teachers who always make learning exciting and fun.”

Poppy Lawrence, DESS Student



As the Principal/CEO of DESS and DESC it is with great pride that I introduce the 2021-2025 'DESS Direction', a 4-year roadmap for the primary school that encompasses a range of values and aspirations it shares with that of its secondary school partner, DESC.

While the emphases may differ in places given the idiosyncrasies of nurturing primary and secondary-age young people, our core beliefs - what truly matters to us - are applicable to both DESS and DESC.

At DESS this plan will strive relentlessly:

- **For achievement, wellbeing and success in all, for all**
- **To develop young people of good character who derive as much enjoyment as possible from being at DESS**
- **To provide, and make the most of, all our opportunities**
- **To be active and responsible participants in our school, local and global communities**
- **To deliver an all-round education that prepares our young people for the challenges of their time.**

In making these pledges we all at DESS - trustees, myself, Mrs Dando and her leadership team, the teaching and support staff, commit ourselves to ensuring this great school continues to enhance further our hard and well-earned reputation as a widely respected, authentic, and popular institution, both within and beyond the UAE.



Andrew Gibbs
Principal/CEO



“The experiences our children have had and what DESS has given us as a family is nothing short of remarkable. DESS holds such a special place in our hearts and without doubt is the best school in the UAE.”

Melissa Lindley, DESS Parent

At DESS, we believe that wellbeing is fundamental to a child's success.

If a child feels well inside themselves, they achieve more. Developing character strengths, grit and resilience will enable our children to bounce back from adversity. Self-regulated learners are aware of their strengths and weaknesses; they can motivate themselves to engage in, and improve, their learning. Children who are best prepared for the future are change agents. They can have a positive impact on their surroundings, influence the future, understand others' intentions, actions and feelings, and anticipate the short and long-term consequences of what they do. We want DESS children to make wise choices to be resilient, resourceful, respectful and responsible.

We know that to be truly successful children will need to value diversity and equity, sustainability and well-being. They will need to be responsible and empowered, placing collaboration above division, and sustainability above short-term gain. In the face of an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, education can make the difference as to whether people embrace the challenges they are confronted with or whether they are defeated by them. Now more than ever before children will need a broad set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

DESS is a people focused organisation. We are known for caring for and investing in our people, for being a family. As such, this plan has been informed by listening to the views and visions, hopes and ambitions of all the stakeholders within it. Our vision is to create a school community built on respect and trust, where everyone within it not only grows but flourishes academically, physically and emotionally; for all this to happen the right growing conditions need to exist and this we will strive relentlessly to do.



C. Dando

Catherine Dando
Headteacher



“The school is a calm and relaxed place where pupils flourish personally and academically and are concerned for each other.”

‘Outstanding’ British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection report

Flourishing Children

‘Creating good people for the planet’

Character – Healthy Individuals

With an increasing array of challenges, DESS is committed to creating healthy individuals – inside and out. Our aim is to be the healthiest school in the UAE! For children to truly flourish, they must be healthy and happy so wellbeing will be at the core of all school developments.

Character – Responsible Global Citizens

As a key component of developing Social Responsibility as part of the curriculum, children at DESS will have sustainability role-modelled and will be guided in how/why to value this over short-term gain.

Character – Compassionate, Collaborative, Creative, Curious, Critical Thinkers

We want to support our children to be prepared for the ‘unknown future;’ to be able to have a good grasp of the current world they live in, together with the necessary qualities to deal with problems and challenges as they arise.

Character – Self-Regulated, Motivated Learners with a Growth Mindset

We are ambitious for all children at DESS to make exceptional progress, be securely knowledgeable, master learning and gain the ability to apply this in concrete ways. For DESS children to achieve their potential we must focus on developing pupils’ metacognition.

Curriculum – Leaders of Learning

DESS takes personalised learning to the next level for a primary school and genuinely enables all children to follow their interests and have true ownership of their learning.

Curriculum – Effective Communicators and Avid Readers

Presentation and oracy skills are key to success in the workplace. The curriculum will have a key focus on literacy, the use of language and encouraging a love of reading through our outstanding library. Our Performing Arts provision will be expanded, and the use of the Arabic language will be part of the culture of the school.

Curriculum – Reflective and Ambitious

To enable every child to flourish and reach their potential, we need to develop an assessment approach and mindset that is adaptable and effective for all involved: children, parents and staff. By enabling children to become reflective assessors of their own learning, attitudes and wellbeing, our children will be equipped with an inherent life skill.

Curriculum – Active Learners

Children are spending less time outside. Outdoor education, if done correctly, can have a positive effect on risk taking, creativity, teamwork and Speech & Language; all areas which research shows are not as strong in children since the increased advent of technology.

The DESS extra-curricular activity provision continues to be world class and relevant, providing the very best enrichment opportunities for all children.

Curriculum – Digitally Literate

We expect DESS children to experience outstanding learning opportunities, using the very best resources. Without stifling practical experiences but instead to enhance the learning journey, technology will drive innovative practice and support vital roles such as metacognition processes.





“Outstanding leadership that has developed an inclusive culture in which creativity flourishes.”

‘Outstanding’ KHDA inspection report

Flourishing Colleagues

‘Developing Teachers with Superpowers’

Careers – Recruitment and Retention

We want to attract the best staff to ensure that we have the best possible outcomes for children and continue to build the DESS legacy.

The key to continue building on success and developing new initiatives is the retention of the best staff and finding opportunities to enhance and strengthen their careers.

Careers – Training and Development

We want DESS to be known as the school that invests in and develops their teachers and Learning Support Assistants. We want DESS to be a learning hub and seen as a centre of excellence in terms of training and development. The best staff will lead to the best outcomes for our children.

Care – Wellbeing

Wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do at DESS. Our dedicated Wellbeing team will support our staff, children and parents. Our inhouse coaches will ensure our staff are in the best place to facilitate learning.

Careers – Passion

To identify and ensure our staff are able to follow their passions and be inspired every day. Inspired staff, will inspire children!

Children at DESS benefit from specialist and expert teachers. To support our flourishing curriculum a wider range of specialists will enable new subjects and approaches.

Care – Emotional intelligence and strong relationships

Positive relationships across the community are key. They underpin everything and set the culture within an organisation. They make people feel safe and impact positively on wellbeing. Staff will enjoy the role they play if they know they can trust those around them.

Careers – True Distributive Leadership

We have, and will seek leaders who develop leaders; DESS only stands to gain when this takes place.

Care – Positive Attitudes

Having staff with the right attitude will keep them positive, being brave and trying new things, responding positively to change and ensure they face challenges with resilience and determination.





“As DESS approaches 60 years at the forefront of education in Dubai, it continues to strive for excellence and build on its solid foundations. This new development plan paves the way for everyone connected to DESS; its children, staff, families, and the whole community to continue to flourish.”

Maggie Thorne, Community Trustee

Flourishing Community

‘Building a Thriving and Resilient School Community’

Partnership – Respectful Partnership

DESS is widely known for its happy, family-feel community. We acknowledge the key role parents play as educators and seek to build highly effective and authentic partnerships with parents.

Partnership – Effective Communication

Transparent, timely, easy and honest communication with all stakeholders is key to developing effective partnership with parents.

Development – Health and Safety

We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our children and staff. We will ensure full and regular reviews of all policies and procedures alongside enhanced health and safety training.

Development – Responsible development of our existing site

Our children deserve the best possible facilities, and to this end we commit ourselves to ensuring that we make the optimal use of our school buildings and spaces.

Ethos – Truly Inclusive

We are committed to the belief that we are all of the primacy of equal worth, with inclusion a core DESS value. We aim to embrace the culture and language of our host country and support the vision and ambitions of the UAE.

Ethos – Sustainability

We want all stakeholders to understand and invest in the genuine need to change habits and fulfil the DESS Sustainable Promise. As role-models and with a priority on maintaining a world with possibilities and beauty for our children, prudent use of our resources is of paramount importance.

Ethos – Philanthropy

Philanthropy is widely considered a major contributor to ‘happiness’ and life fulfilment. As role models, the DESS community will create a whole school ethos where all members value philanthropy and play their part in having a positive impact on the world. At DESS, it is an expectation that children, staff and parents are charitable, whether it be with time, encouragement or, where possible, finance.

Resilience – Reputational Management


DESS recognises that it very much matters how stakeholders perceive, and feel about our provision.





 DESSDubai

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