





Thinking Global Acting Local



To Pour

New Day Of Discovery



Creating Balance



Food For Thought



Myth Busters

ON TRACK FOR OUR SEPTEMBER START

With less than a year to go, admissions and staff recruitment are both on track to meet our ambitious targets.

While the new campus has enough physical capacity for seven classes across each of the eight year groups, the decision was made to begin with five classes per year group. Class sizes are capped at 20 for FSI and at 23 for the other year groups.

Rather than follow the conventional model of trying to fill one year group at a time, DESS Primary Academic City opened admissions to all the year groups at once – and ran its teacher recruitment campaign alongside to keep both in perfect alignment.

"We want to give children, families and teachers the best possible start," explained DESS Principal Catherine Dando. "Opening the school slightly below its physical capacity allows us to create a close-knit community while ensuring that processes, infrastructure and routines settle in smoothly."

This strategy has clearly resonated with families, with applications for places pouring in from families eager to join the DESS community.



RECRUITING TOP TALENT

Our staff recruitment campaign has focused on assembling a team of exceptional educators. As well as carefully balancing the skills and expertise of the existing DESS staff across both DESS primaries, our reputation is such that we have been able to recruit new talent from the UK, international schools and from other leading schools in the UAE. This will help to ensure that we have a strong mix of experience, innovation and deep understanding of the DESS ethos.

The first round of recruitment has already exceeded expectations and round two offers are set to go out early in the new year. The level of interest has been so strong that the school anticipates wrapping up recruitment by spring 2025 – much earlier than planned and without a third round.

"As September approaches, it's not just about filling positions and meeting targets," Mrs Dando added. "It's about finding the right people who excel in teaching and also embody the values and energy that make DESS such a special place."





THINKING GLOBAL, ACTING LOCAL:

HELPING CHILDREN SEE THE WORLD BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

When the new school's doors swing open in September, internationalism will be much more than just an abstract concept – it will be part of daily life.

With over 80 nationalities already represented across the children, staff and leadership of DESS Primary Oud Metha and DESS College, we will again focus on reflecting the diverse cultural fabric of Dubai and providing an important cultural bridge for many families raising children outside their home country.

"Living in Dubai means nearly all non-Emirati children at DESS are part of expatriate families," explains DESS College Assistant Headteacher Hani El Taher, who is a member of the DESS Senior Leadership team responsible for Arabic and Islamic provision and National Agenda, "Our job as educators is to help them celebrate their own heritage while embracing the rich mix of cultures around them."

CELEBRATING CULTURE, BUILDING CONNECTIONS

From the classrooms to the playgrounds, internationalism at DESS is about connection. At both the existing primary school and the College, children and students are encouraged to learn from one another, celebrate their differences and find common ground. These values will also be a cornerstone of DESS Primary Academic City.

A key focus throughout DESS is helping children understand and appreciate Emirati culture. Through events like Union Day and Ramadan celebrations, children gain a deeper connection to the country they now call home. Lessons on traditional Emirati music, historical figures and customs provide a richer context for their day-to-day lives.

At the same time, Culture Day offers children the chance to share their own cultures with pride. Flags, food and festivities transform the campuses into global showcases where children can see the world through their classmates' eyes. It's a reminder that their heritage matters - and that they belong.

GUIDED BY THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The UAE's National Agenda sets out a clear goal: to prepare students for global success while fostering strong ties to Emirati culture and the Arabic language. Throughout DESS, this vision is guided by senior leaders, who work with teachers and children to embed cultural understanding into school life.

Through thoughtful lessons and activities, children don't just learn about the world - they learn how to live in it. Programmes encourage exploration of global cuisines, traditions and histories while connecting these experiences back to shared values of respect and understanding.



WHY INTERNATIONALISM MATTERS

For children growing up in a multicultural city like Dubai, developing a global perspective is essential. Being part of such a diverse community helps them build empathy, flexibility and respect for others' perspectives.

"Our approach mirrors the UAE's vision for harmony between cultures," added Ruth Gibson DESS Primary Deputy Headteacher. "It's not about choosing one culture over another but finding ways for them all to coexist. Throughout DESS, children learn to carry this with them wherever they go."

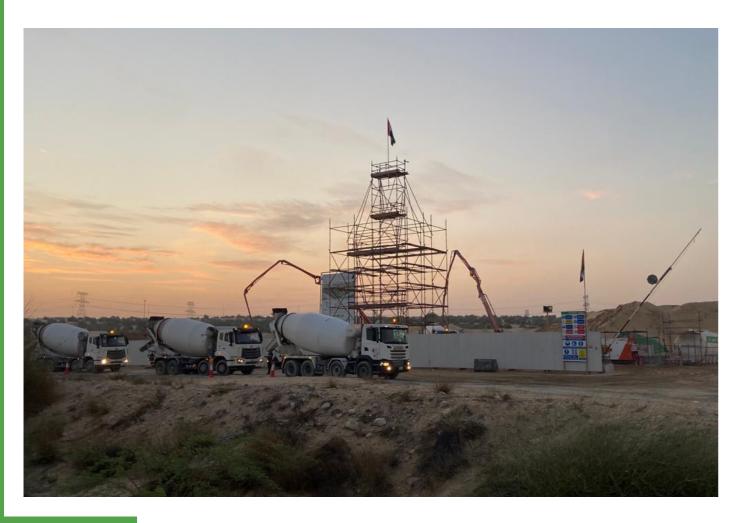
By nurturing a sense of internationalism, DESS Primary Academic City will help children to feel rooted, confident and ready to engage with the world around them. It's not about transforming the way they'll see the world - it's about giving them the tools to understand and embrace it.

IT MAY HARDLY EVER RAIN, BUT IT'S STARTING TO POUR!

Our site team has made more solid progress and recently reached another major milestone with the site's first concrete pour.

Traditionally, the first pour is a celebrated technical step along the substructure works route. For us, the process also forms the literal and figurative bedrock of the school's future and was another reminder that foundations are key to turning our vision into reality next year.

Overseen by main contractor Chicago Maintenance & Construction, the pour marks the start of the substructure works, creating a strong, enduring base that will support every beam, wall and roof of the school that's to come. Using the advanced precast concrete methodology, Chicago is delivering a project that's not only structurally sound but also efficient and environmentally conscious.



The foundations that have been laid will support not just a building, but a legacy of excellence in education.



Precast concrete, with components prepared off-site and delivered ready to install, ensures precision, quality and speed. It's an approach that also resonates with the progressive spirit of DESS - modern methods meeting timeless values, as DESS Principal Christopher Vizzard explained.

"With the first pour complete, the vision of DESS Primary Academic City is becoming tangible. This isn't just about building a school; it's about creating a space where children will learn, grow and thrive. From dynamic classrooms to inspiring play areas, every square metre of the site will soon reflect the values and ambitions of the DESS community.

This milestone is also a testament to the hard work, expertise and collaboration driving the project forward. As we move through the construction phases, it's clear that the foundations that have been laid will support not just a building, but a legacy of excellence in education."

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DESS | PRIMARY PULSE

THE FIRST AND LAST STOP IN EACH NEW DAY OF DISCOVERY

For many children, each new day of learning, discovery and connection begins and ends on the school bus.

Because we know that a safe and enjoyable journey to and from school is key to setting the right tone for learning, we will continue a decade of tradition by once again partnering with Maverick to deliver a bus service for the new school that's as reliable as it is reassuring.

Having trusted Maverick since 2009 for our DESS Primary Oud Metha children and more recently this year for DESS College students, parents can rest assured that their children's journey to and from DESS Primary Academic City will be in expert hands.

Operating across the UAE, Maverick's team knows the roads, the rules and most importantly, the responsibility of getting children safely to school and back home again.

With individual three-point seat belts, a GPS tracking system that notifies you when the bus is five minutes from your home, CCTV cameras and a 'no child left behind' patrol system, the service is as thorough as it is dependable.

Maverick ensures that safety isn't just a feature; it's the foundation of everything they do. Each bus has a dedicated female attendant and driver who holds a valid First Aid and Dubai Municipality approved fire warden certificate. And with a strict policy of Parent to Attendant and Attendant to Teacher, children are never left unsupervised.





But safety is only part of the picture. Parents will also appreciate the practical planning behind the service. Routes and schedules will be designed to optimise the school run for families from areas as far afield as Jebel Ali and as close as Dubai Silicon Oasis. With a door-to-door service, where available from Foundation Stage 1 upwards, even the youngest members of the DESS community can enjoy a safe, seamless ride.

And the care doesn't stop there. Maverick ensures its buses are meticulously maintained, clean inside and out and equipped with features like voice reminder systems and digital displays to help staff keep track of every child. "It's about more than transport - it's about trust," says Tracey Wilding, our dedicated DESS Primary Oud Metha Bus Coordinator.

For parents considering DESS Primary Academic City, the school bus service offers more than convenience - it's a guarantee that your child's day starts and finishes on the right track. Keep an eye out for route and schedule updates, coming soon, as we continue to shape a service that works for every family.

Whether your child is singing along with friends, flipping through their favourite book or simply enjoying the ride, the journey to DESS Primary Academic City will be as safe as it is smooth.



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CREATING BALANCE

WITH A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY CHILD THRIVES

All children deserve the chance of a high-quality education. At DESS, inclusion is fundamental for all children to thrive.

We believe it is the role of equality to make sure everyone gets the same things, while it's up to equity to make sure everyone gets whatever they need.

Making this distinction between the two helps us to go beyond surface-level fairness, ensuring that every child - no matter their background or abilities - receive the tailored support they need to excel.



WHY EQUITY MATTERS IN SCHOOLS

Research consistently shows that diverse, inclusive environments enrich learning for all students. When children from different cultures, abilities and life experiences come together, they develop not only academically but also in empathy, cultural awareness and collaboration skills. For these benefits to flourish, schools must ensure that each student feels valued and supported.

The teacher is central to delivering equity in classrooms. From planning exceptional lessons that engage and motivate children to ensuring the classroom and learning environments meet the wide range of needs and cultures within our international community.

At DESS Primary Academic City, our commitment is clear: every child will be seen, understood and given the required tools for life. Whether an exceptionally able learner in need of extra challenges or a student requiring more focused support, we are preparing to meet each child's unique needs. For some, this means access to specialised learning resources; for others, it's about creating a sense of belonging that transcends background and experience.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

'Living' inclusion isn't so much a goal at DESS, as a starting point. It's a fundamental part of our culture. From a curriculum that embraces diversity of thought to a school design that ensures accessibility for all, we're removing barriers to ensure every child can fully participate in school life.

Recognising that learning happens in many forms, we've built a model that provides personalised support and learning strategies tailored to the varied abilities, experiences and needs of our students. We believe that children learn best when they feel safe, respected and understood.



PREPARING CHILDREN FOR THE WORLD AHEAD

Education, in many ways, mirrors society. By prioritising inclusion and diversity, we're preparing students to become compassionate, open-minded adults who understand that fairness isn't about giving everyone the same but making sure everyone can access opportunities. In today's interconnected world, this understanding will be essential as they navigate their way through differences.

At DESS Primary Academic City, Headteacher Neil Brinicombe is adamant that we have no right to measure or put a ceiling on the potential of a child. Children flourish at different rates and in response to the ingredients they are given to thrive. By embracing inclusion and diversity, we will create a community where differences are celebrated and every child is empowered to face life with confidence, empathy and respect for others. Through this lens, education becomes a pathway not only to personal achievement but also to contributing to a more inclusive and equitable world.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

HARNESS PREPARES TO NOURISH MORE BRIGHT YOUNG MINDS

When it comes to fueling young minds and bodies, the Harness Foods team knows there's no room for half-baked ideas.

As the trusted catering partner for DESS Primary Oud Metha and DESS College, they've mastered the recipe for nutritious, delicious meals that children love and parents appreciate.

Now, as the countdown to the new DESS Primary Academic City gathers pace, Harness is turning its expertise into fresh ideas for the brand-new school.

"We've learned a lot about what works," says Harness Foods Commercial Director, Chris Riding. "Primary children need meals that are as appealing as they are nutritious. Bright colours, fresh ingredients and a little creative flair go a long way in helping them develop healthy eating habits."



From themed lunches that spark curiosity to everyday favourites made with a healthy twist, the Harness Foods approach is all about creating meals that feel like a treat while packing in the nourishment children need to learn and grow. "It's about striking that balance between what they want and what they need," Chris added. "And making sure every plate ends up empty!"

With the opening of DESS Primary Academic City, the challenge shifts to bringing success that's been proven elsewhere in the group to an entirely new campus - while also making the most of a blank slate.

"We're not starting from scratch, but we do have the chance to try some exciting new ideas," says Chris Riding. "From offering locally sourced ingredients to reimagining classic favourites, every aspect of the catering plan is being carefully tailored for the new school. It's like creating a menu for the future - one that reflects the unique identity of Academic City, while staying true to DESS values."

Behind every great school meal is a Harness team dedicated to making it work for everyone. That means understanding the needs of children and parents alike. "For the kids, we know we need to make lunch the highlight of their day," says Chris. "For parents, it's about trust - knowing that we're providing meals that are healthy, safe and prepared with care."





Harness Foods prides itself on transparency and communication, working closely with families to ensure their expectations are met. From allergy-friendly options to clear nutritional information, every detail is designed to give parents peace of mind while giving children a taste for adventure.

"As the new school moves a step closer week by week, we're gearing up to make sure every meal inspires and energises - from the first bite to the final bell" added Chris Riding.



MYTH BUSTERS

As excitement builds for the opening of DESS Primary Academic City, it's natural for parents to have plenty of questions about what to expect. Our **Myth Busters** section will tackle some of the most frequently asked questions, giving prospective families a clear picture of what life on the new campus will look like.

We're not simply opening a new school - we're expanding the DESS family to welcome more children while maintaining the same standards and ethos that families have trusted for over 60 years. While many answers draw from the practices at DESS Primary Oud Metha, our new school will also offer different opportunities to adapt, grow and innovate as we settle into the space.

At this stage, what do we know about the school timetable?

The school timetable is being carefully designed to provide a balanced and enriching experience. It will combine the British National Curriculum with the UAE-mandated subjects, ensuring that every child receives a well-rounded education.

Our Innovate, Explore, Inspire (IEI) curriculum will take this a step further by interweaving subjects and topics based on children's interests. This efficient approach to teaching will ensure we continue to make the best use of time and align with the latest research on how children learn and retain knowledge. Lessons will be designed to spark curiosity, deepen understanding and cover multiple key objectives in a single session.

TYPICAL FOUNDATION/KS1 - TIMETABLE

FS	Daily	Specialist (weekly)	KS1	Daily	Specialist (weekly)
	Phonics	Music		Phonics/Literacy	Computing
	Guided Reading x3	Dance/Drama		Maths	Music
	Maths	Singing		Science x1	Dance/Drama
	Writing	Swimming/PE		IEI x2/3 per week	PE and Swimming
	Child initiated learning and planning	Library		Arabic x3 per week	Moral Education Social Studies
	Morning break and snack (40mins)	Arabic (1x30min per week)		Morning break and snack (40mins)	Library
	Lunch and break (40mins)	Desert School		Lunch and break (40mins)	Islamic/Quran*
	Includes daily mindfulness session and story time			Handwriting Mindfulness	

TYPICAL KS2 - TIMETABLE

Yr 3/4	Daily	Special (weekly)	Yr 5/6	Daily	Specialist (weekly)
	Literacy	Computing		Literacy	Computing
	Maths	Music		Maths	Music
	Science x2	Dance/Drama		Science x2	Dance/Drama
	IEI x2/3	French/Spanish		IEI x2/3	French/Spanish
	Arabic x3	PE and Swimming		Arabic x3	PE and Swimming
	Morning break and snack (40mins)	Moral Education and Social Studies		Morning break and snack (40mins)	Moral Education and Social Studies
	Lunch break and snack (40mins)	Quran/Islamic*		Lunch break and snack (40mins)	Quran/Islamic*
	Mindfulness	Library		Mindfulness	Art
		Desert School			Library
		Art			Desert School

^{*}Muslim Students Only

As an FS1 parent, how do I manage the earlier finish of 12:30pm?

It is important to note that in the best interests of children, the earlier finish protects them from becoming exhausted. However, we know this can be a logistical challenge for parents, many of whom are working.

For families with younger children in Foundation Stage 1 (FS1), the 'Super Club' will provide a convenient and thoughtful solution to the school day's differing schedules. Designed for FS1 children who would like to stay in school for the entire day, the club will operate from 12:30pm to 2:30pm, bridging the gap between their earlier finish and the end of school for their older siblings or a more convenient time for parents finishing work.

With its focus on offering convenience to both children and parents, the Super Club has become a popular option for busy families managing multiple school drop-offs and pick-ups.

We will aim to ensure that the Club doesn't overlap with ECA time so that children can enjoy a calm, structured environment. The service will be available for an annual fee of approximately AED 10,000 payable in three instalments.

Will Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) be available?

Yes. Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) are a cornerstone of the DESS experience. They give every child the chance to explore their passions and find something they truly love. They are free of charge and will be available to children from Year 1 upwards, offering an exciting range of activities to suit every interest. From sports and performing arts to languages, cooking, science and technology, there's something for everyone. The full schedule will be published in due course.

At DESS Primary Oud Metha 94 ECAs are being offered this term alone, with 74% of the children currently participating. These sessions not only enrich the school day but also help children discover new talents, build confidence and form lasting friendships.



