

Dear Teaching Applicant,

How does one go about choosing a teaching or leadership post to apply for? While that question applies to any educator thinking of a move, the ability to ask the right questions is even more important if you are seeking an overseas move, or are relocating from a different international school. Many teachers have learned that standards and expectations in international education vary widely; for every outstanding UK curriculum school there will be dozens for whom a 'UK education' label is a cynical marketing ploy. Below are some of the questions you should be asking, with the responses that Sharjah English School can offer.

Who chooses to work at SES and why?

Apart from Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers our staff are all UK teachers or teachers with UK experience. There is a dynamic mix of younger and more mature staff, and of staff with recent UK experience alongside colleagues with a career in international education. We recruit from the UK, from top schools internationally and in the UAE.

SES teachers are energetic, ambitious and committed. They do go that extra mile because they believe in what they do. Collaboration and collegiality are taken for granted. Because the focus of the school is on teaching and learning, staff don't feel distracted from their core functions. Lesson observations reveal most lessons to be very good or outstanding; teaching is full of examples of teachers being imaginative, creative or innovative. Teaching at SES is as rewarding and enjoyable as it gets. Our staff's work is appreciated by our parents, students and the school board and management.

What are the students like?

The greatest attraction of working at SES are the eager, motivated and polite children you will deal with at all levels of the school. The SES students are simply a joy to teach – they are exceptionally well-behaved. They are supported by their families. They like coming to school and spend lots of time here outside of school hours. There is a palpable sense of pride in their work and in the school.

30% of children are UK passport holders. More than 45 other nationalities are represented. All the children are English speakers or bi-lingual students with strong English.

What is the school's history?

One of the UAE's longest established schools, SES provided only primary education up to the opening of the secondary school in 2005/6. We have been entering students for GCSEs since 2008 and our first A Level group graduated in 2010. Enrollment has grown from 550 in 2010 to near 900 now, an expansion that is gradual and controlled.

Does 'UK curriculum' mean what it says?

There is a recognition at SES that a broad and comprehensive UK education covers not only the normal core subjects and all the expected GCSE and A Level options, but also an appreciation of the values of all students taking activities such as music, art, swimming as compulsory elements. There is also a very strong emphasis on a pastoral programme which instills personal, civic and social responsibility and which promotes real student leadership. Finally, our provision also includes an extensive ECA programme, work experience, International Award (Duke of Edinburgh) and local and international trips.

How does the school rate academically?

SES has consistently produced outstanding results at both GCSE and at A Levels. In 2018 at A Level there was a 100% pass rate (for the ninth year in a row); 38% of grades achieved were A*/A, and 68% of grades achieved were A*/B. At GCSE 98% of grades were 9-4, with 38% of these at 9 or 8. Impressively 22% of all results at GCSE were at level 9.

How long do staff stay at SES?

Virtually no staff leave after their initial 2 year contract. A number of teaching staff have been with us in excess of 10 years. Average stay is around 6 to 7 years.

What is the package / salary?

The salaries for overseas staff are competitive and tax-free. They are based on years of experience, with an annual increment up to 14 years of experience at the top of scale. There are no deductions of any kind made by the school. Exact salary levels will be provided in writing at interview stage. On completion of contract staff receive a gratuity for each completed year.

Staff are accommodated in modern furnished apartments in Sharjah. There is an option of taking a housing allowance in the second year. Utilities are paid up to a reasonable limit.

There is an excellent Medical Insurance Policy in place, currently with Generali. This offers worldwide cover, except for North America.

Staff receive flights to the UK at beginning and end of contract, as well as annual flights home.

Are there opportunities for CPD and for developing my career?

The school aims to ensure that teaching staff see their SES experience as a career-enhancing time. There are numerous opportunities for CPD from UK visiting consultants and experts, and the aim is to keep abreast of all key initiatives and developments in the UK. The school also has a very active professional development programme run internally by staff.

Most middle management and many senior management positions at SES are filled internally.

What extra-curricular options are there? And what are the expectations for staff?

There are a range of sporting and artistic clubs and activities on offer at lunchtimes and after school. Staff are expected to participate and support ECAs – this commitment typically involves one afternoon per week.

Where will I be living and how far from school?

New staff in September 2019 will most likely be placed in apartments in the Muweillah area of Sharjah. This is 10 mins from school and is 2 or 3 minutes from the main highway into Dubai. Single staff get individual apartments – you are not expected to share.

What's it like living in Sharjah?

The school is located on the border of Sharjah and Dubai. Sharjah offers a quieter more traditional lifestyle, and prides itself on its cultural and educational status. Staff find that Sharjah, being a smaller

emirate, can offer a stronger sense of community – it is a smaller ex-patriate society, and therefore in many ways it is easier to meet people. Living expenses in Sharjah are considerably lower than Dubai. For staff interested in musical and sporting events, or Dubai's vibrant lifestyle, the city is readily accessible by taxi from the school accommodation.

How easy is it to settle into the UAE?

New staff are supported throughout the period from appointment to arrival, and after. You will be in regular contact with school and will have all key contact details long before you travel, and you will be 'buddied' with an established member of staff who can answer the non-work questions.

There is an induction period which covers UAE and school expectations, assistance with visas, approvals etc. We recognize that this period can be a stressful one for new staff, especially those working abroad for the first time; school recognizes its responsibilities to support new teachers through their initial months.

When you arrive in Sharjah you will be accommodated in an area which has many other staff close-by, so facilitating you settling in to life outside of school.

I hope that this information is helpful to potential applicants; feel free to contact the school if you require further information before submitting an application. Candidates already working in the UAE might also wish to visit SES – that can be arranged at a mutually convenient time.

We look forward to receiving your application or enquiry.

John Nolan

Principal

Our Teachers: All our teachers are experienced UK trained specialists. At the heart of our school's success is our ability to recruit and retain hard-working, committed staff who can deliver imaginative and inspiring lessons. Teachers all undertake continuous professional development while at SES, and indeed lead other schools in raising standards and keeping abreast of educational developments.

Our Ethos: The distinction of being a not-for-profit school has a profound impact on the schooling experience of children, staff and parents. Our focus is on teaching and learning – not on bowing to any commercial pressures from owners or sponsors.

Our Sense of Community: One cannot think of SES without the word ‘community’ suggesting itself. Because of the size of the ex-patriate community in Sharjah, the school is more central to the local community than is possible in a larger more anonymous urban setting. Our families and students regard the school as having a pivotal place in community life. Parents are heavily involved in the school, an engagement that is supportive and enriching.

Our Size: With only three form intake in primary and two form intake in secondary, our school remains small by UAE standards. This permits staff to have an acute knowledge of every student, and permits the secure and supportive relationships needed to permit children to embrace challenges. Our commitment is to remain small enough to preserve our palpable community and family feel.

Our Success: Ultimately, however pleasant or supportive the learning experience, parents expect a school to deliver excellent results and to enable children to move on successfully to their next phase of

education, whether in the UK or internationally. Most importantly, senior students expect and deserve the opportunity to access the top universities and colleges in the world. SES has established an enviable record of examination success; nearly all our graduating students find places at their first choice university, including the most renowned institutions worldwide.

Our Site and Sports Facilities: at just under 100,000 square metres, our school site (generously donated by HH The Ruler of Sharjah) is amongst the largest of any UAE school. This permits us to maintain playing fields which few schools in the region can match, and which host numerous Sharjah and Dubai inter-school events. Plenty of space remains on our site for all future building and facility needs.

Our Music and Drama: For a comparatively small school, SES enjoys huge success and a magnificent reputation at national and Gulf level for the quality of its performing arts. Music and drama opportunities exist from Foundation level, through to examination classes in secondary. The majority of SES students will experience the rush and confidence that being on stage can bring. Students will remember their experiences in these areas long after they have left school.

