



International Baccalaureate®  
Baccalauréat International  
Bachillerato Internacional

Dar Al Marefa, United Arab Emirates

## EMBRACING THE IB: COLLABORATION AND INDEPENDENCE

**2008**

IB programmes offered since

**1,000**

Total number of students

**Naira Hamdy**

Head of School



## Heritage, knowledge and respect

Dar Al Marefa is more than an International Baccalaureate (IB) continuum school – it is a collective idea, expression of culture, character and above all, community. The school accurately represents the powerful embodiment of the IB not only through its commitment to learning, but through its shared pursuit of knowledge and respect for each and every student, and the world around them.

Founded in 2008, Dar Al Marefa, Dubai received its initial candidacy as an IB World School that same year; with official authorization of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) in 2013, followed by the Diploma Programme (DP) in 2014, and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) in 2016.

An established IB World School in the UAE, Dar Al Marefa offers the IB as its sole curriculum choice – a move that School Principal, Naira Hamdy, attributes to: “Continuing with the same vision and philosophy of the school.” She notes: “We have contemplated introducing additional programmes, but after each consideration, we realise that the IB provides the appropriate path for what we want to offer to our students. School decision makers wanted to find the best education model for our students – I truly believe they found it with the IB.”

Dar Al Marefa is the only Arabic and English, bilingual IB World School in Dubai, and is planning to undergo authorization for the most recently developed IB programme, the Career-related Programme (CP), as the next stage of its IB journey. Commenting on how the school’s steadfast reputation attracts prospective parents and students, Inas Al Derbashi, Head of Secondary, explains: “Parents are initially drawn to our school through the want of two things: A truly international education, stemming from a solid international reputation, and for their children to gain this while retaining the attributes of Arabic and Islam.”

The flexibility of IB programmes means that the school can provide a highly-regarded international education, while also fully aligning with the Ministry of Education’s requirements. Sheugnet Carter, the school’s DP coordinator, explains: “The DP meets students’ individual learning needs while following the required assessment criteria in UAE. This, however, doesn’t take away the IB heart and soul which makes each programme special.”



## **Igniting a passion for learning**

Teaching students from the age of 4 to 18, each IB programme ensures that students are fully prepared to move from one stage of their education to the next. Inas Al Derbashi explains: “By their very nature, the programmes are interconnected. If you look at the PYP, the exhibition is preparing students for MYP, giving them the skills to articulate and present on a topic.

“Following this, the modules included within the MYP lead to students taking more ownership over their learning and discovering what interests and excites them. This then forms the foundations for DP success – students learn independently to make changes for a better world, and not to just remember facts from a book.”

The school’s educators would recommend the IB to any school. Naira Hamdy explains how the programmes encapsulate every part of a 21st century education: “The PYP helps prepare students to be internationally-minded through its celebration of diversity, while also igniting a strong desire within young learners to ask burning questions. The MYP is then rooted as a skills-based curriculum, ensuring students can thrive. Here in Dubai, we are located at the heart of the modern world - forward thinking

surrounds us on a daily basis, and I can’t think of a better environment for our students to learn in.

“The DP ensures students focus on evolving their newly acquired skills to not only better themselves as human beings, but to educate and inspire others too. Upon completing the DP they are set up for university and life beyond; they can go anywhere in the world and interact with and respect everyone they encounter. Our returning students always comment on how the IB helped both prepare them transition to university and taught them valuable life skills.”

## **Establishing change through action**

Each programme’s structure is unique to the IB – however, it is not only the students at Dar Al Marefa that benefit from tailored learning, but the teaching cohort too. Naira Hamdy describes this is a result of: “Looking at the children as individuals. Our teachers uncover students’ learning needs and adapt accordingly to them thanks to the flexibility of each programme. This allows our teachers to explore each students’ passions in a digestible way that helps build their enthusiasm to learn more. This in turn is empowering for our teachers - it allows them to specifically craft programmes and keep remodelling how they themselves learn.”

While the IB’s approaches to learning and teaching help uncover academic excellence within each student, it also inspires them to make a change and have a positive impact on the world. “When we go out into the community, to fundraise or create awareness on a specific topic, our students are able to articulate complex concepts extremely well. They are confident in their own knowledge and they want to share it with the world. Our local communities are always blown away by their presenting skills” mentions the school’s PYP coordinator, Habiba Jaballah.

Expanding on this, Inas explains how the IB has inspired her students to go the extra mile: “One of my proudest teaching moments arrived just as we relaunched our community, activity, and service (CAS) programme a couple of years ago. A young student of ours had been working in a food bank over the weekend, and was only scheduled to go for an hour as part of the programme, but ended up staying for a full eight hours! She explained to me how the IB had not only given her the confidence to initially sign up and do it, but also to fully understand the extent of the positive impact her work was making. The following week she went back and took 10 of her friends with her!”



## Building a life-long education

In addition to student agency, educators at Dar Al Marefa strongly value how the IB instils a love for lifelong learning in its students. "The IB learner profile attributes stay with our students for life, and are reflected within each member of our school, regardless of their age or which programme they study."

For Dar Al Marefa students, graduating with the bilingual diploma upon leaving the school marks an important transition from one step to the next in their lives. It does not however finalise their learning journey, whichever evolves as they progress throughout their future and careers. Naira encapsulates this as: "We are continually drinking from the IB knowledge source – both as a valued family here at our school, and as we move through our lives."

The school looks forward to embarking on its journey to becoming a four-programme continuum school to further enhance the learning of its students so that they can thrive and truly make a difference in the world.





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Head of School

Find out more about the benefits of the IB:  
[www.ibo.org/benefits](https://www.ibo.org/benefits)