



# INVESTMENT IN SHARJAH

**A Report on Private Education**  
Second Edition  
2024- 2025



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## Introduction:

Sharjah's private education sector has seen significant growth, with the number of private schools increasing from **94** in **2013/2014** to **128** in **2023/2024**. The sector caters to a diverse population with **11** curricula and serves **185,000** students, **86%** of whom are expatriates. Tuition fees vary widely, with nearly half of the students enrolled in schools charging under AED **10,000** annually.

The utilization rate of private schools in Sharjah provides critical insights into the demand for educational services across different segments. For regular students, schools offering the MoE and Philippine curricula exhibit the highest utilization rates, indicating a robust demand and limited availability of seats, particularly in mid-range tuition schools. This suggests a market opportunity for investors to develop new schools or expand existing ones within these high-demand curricula.







# Key Investor Insights



## Curriculum-Specific Opportunities:

There is a high demand for expanding MoE and Philippine curriculum schools due to their high utilization rates. British and American curriculum schools also show strong potential, as they are highly sought after in the Sharjah private education market.



## Mid-Range Schools:

There is a clear demand for mid-range schools (tuition AED **30-39.9k**), presenting an investment opportunity in this segment.



## Geographical Expansion:

While Sharjah City is the primary hub, regions like Khor Fakkan, Kalba, and Al Dhaid present opportunities for expanding educational services.



## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

In Sharjah, **2,795** SEND students are enrolled in private schools, making up **1.5%** of the total student population. While the majority of private schools in Sharjah confirmed their readiness to support SEND students, there are a lot of opportunities for improvement of services to support SEND students, particularly in schools offering Pakistani, Filipino, and SABIS curricula.







# Key Investor Insights

## 02



### Underutilized Resources:

Schools with underutilized SEND resources present an opportunity for investors to enhance these institutions by expanding services and optimizing the use of available resources.



### Targeted Expansion:

Investment in specialized staff and facilities, especially in schools aiming to improve their services and schools outside Sharjah City, can help meet growing demand.



### Assistive Technology:

The assistive technology market offers potential for innovation and partnership with schools.



# Investment Opportunities in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Evidence consistently shows that ECE lays a strong foundation for future learning, enhances the effectiveness of education systems, and drives long-term economic growth. Sharjah's hosting of UNESCO's regional Early Childhood Care and Education Conference **2023** demonstrates a strong commitment to advancing the ECE agenda. SPEA is actively working to expand access to high-quality nurseries for children aged **0-4**.

As Sharjah continues to prioritize ECE, significant opportunities for investment are emerging within this growing sector. Now is the time to capitalize on this expanding market.







# Key Investor Insights

03



## Expanding Capacity:

There is substantial opportunity to expand nursery services, especially in underserved areas outside Sharjah City.



## High-Quality Early Learning:

Investors can gain a competitive edge by offering high-quality early learning programs that incorporate innovative teaching approaches, including bilingual instruction and student-centered learning.



## Supporting Technology

Developing specialized nurseries for children with special needs, or offering advanced early learning programs, can effectively address specific market demands.



# Strategic Development for Sharjah's Education Roadmap:



Sharjah's private education sector is poised for significant growth, with ample opportunities for investment in high-demand curricula, SEND services, and early childhood education. Strategic expansion into underserved areas and the development of specialized educational services present promising returns for investors. These investments are in line with Sharjah's broader vision of building a robust, inclusive, and diversified private education sector that supports the emirate's long-term social and economic objectives.



To achieve these goals, the Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) is actively working on key initiatives to enhance access and quality in private education. A major upcoming project is the development of an inclusive education framework, which will establish benchmarks and strategies to help private schools meet the standards for inclusivity.





Additionally, SPEA is set to launch a professional development program aimed at equipping educators with the necessary skills to effectively support SEND students. This initiative ensures that all teachers and practitioners in Sharjah's private schools are prepared to foster an inclusive learning environment.



Finally, SPEA is developing a framework to improve early childhood care and education (ECCE). This framework will focus on expanding access, enhancing quality, and building the capabilities of both private and public nurseries in Sharjah, ensuring that young children receive the best start in life.

# The Sharjah Private Education Authority's Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Direction

The Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) plays a pivotal role in regulating and advancing private education in the emirate. Established by the Amiri Decree No. (45) of 2018, issued by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah SPEA is responsible for regulating and supervising the affairs of private educational institutions (nurseries, schools, centres, and institutes), and attracting investment to the education sector. SPEA aims to create a dynamic and inclusive educational environment that meets the needs of all students, including the gifted and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

SPEA's strategy is focused on advancing the quality and sustainability of private education in Sharjah. The strategy aims to create an inclusive, innovative, and high-quality educational environment for all students.



## Our Vision

Excellence in Education



## Our Mission

Enabling our learning community to grow and achieve aspiring outcomes through supportive and effective services.

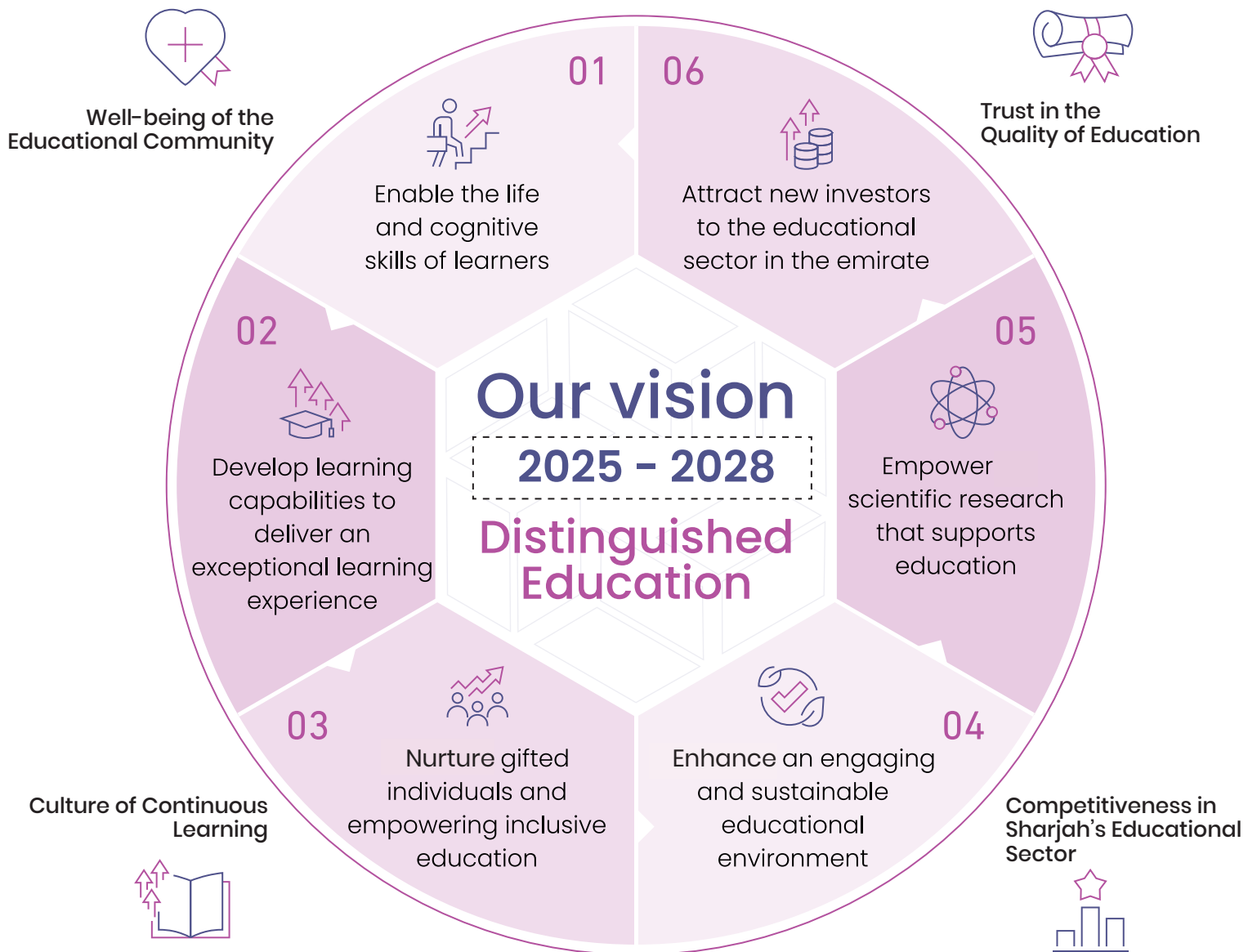


## Our values

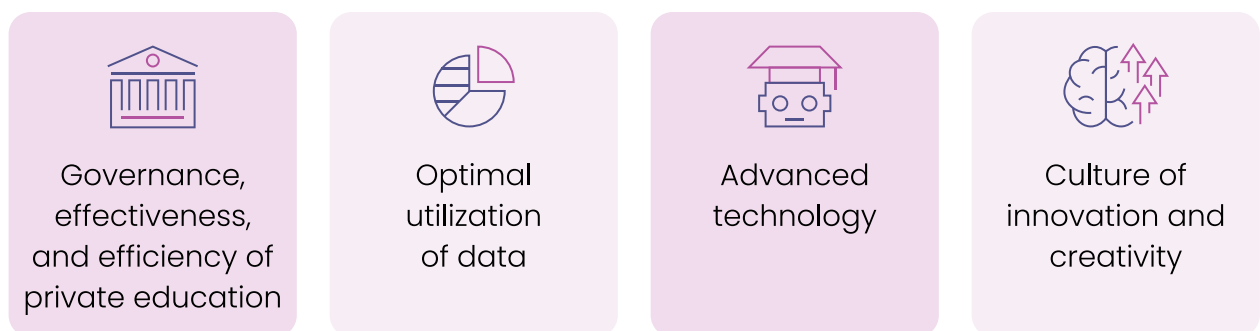
1. Innovation
2. Collaboration
3. Positivity
4. Integrity
5. Accountability
6. Transparency



# SPEA's Strategic Framework 2025 – 2028

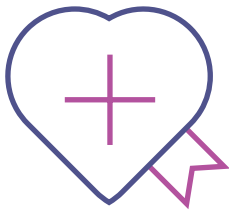


## Enablers



# Strategic Priorities

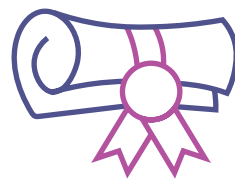
These priorities represent the key focus areas of the Sharjah Private Education Authority's Strategy (2025–2028).



## Well-being of the Educational Community

Establishing an inclusive educational environment that promotes psychological and physical well-being while providing an engaging learning experience for all members of the educational community.

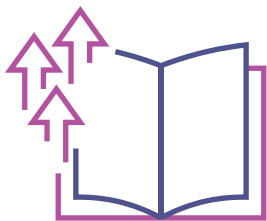
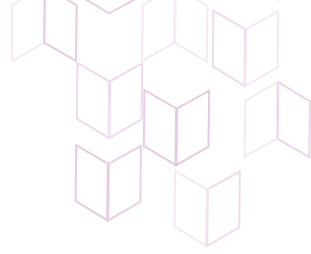
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## Trust in the Quality of Education

Reinforcing high standards of quality and transparency in education, thereby enhancing public trust in the performance and outcomes of educational institutions.

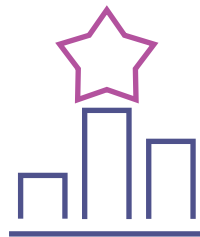
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### Culture of Continuous Learning

Promoting a lifelong learning approach by fostering skill development, encouraging innovation, and supporting both personal and professional growth within the educational community.

3



### Competitiveness in Sharjah's Educational Sector

Positioning Sharjah as a leading educational hub by improving education quality, attracting top talent, and driving innovation and investment in the education sector.

4



# Strategic Goals

These strategic goals serve as the foundational pillars for achieving the outlined priorities.

1



## Enable the life and cognitive skills of learners

Equipping students with the essential skills and knowledge needed to keep pace with global developments and the future job market, while upholding core values and cultural identity.

2



## Develop learning capabilities to deliver an exceptional learning experience

Enhancing educators' competencies and improving teaching methodologies to ensure a high-quality learning experience that boosts academic and creative performance.

3



## Nurture gifted individuals and empowering inclusive education

Creating an inclusive educational environment that supports gifted students and learners with special needs, ensuring equal opportunities for all.



4



#### Promote an engaging and sustainable educational environment

Providing a modern, sustainable, and inspiring educational setting that encourages innovation and offers students a comprehensive learning experience.

5



#### Empower scientific research that supports education

Encouraging scientific research in the education sector to drive evidence-based policy and practice improvements.

6



#### Attract new investors to the educational sector in the emirate

Attracting investments and fostering strategic partnerships to enhance the development and resources of the education sector, ensuring equitable and inclusive learning experiences.

The next section covers some of the initiatives SPEA led on to meet it's strategic goals.



# SHARJAH PRIVATE EDUCATION AUTHORITY (SPEA) INITIATIVES





SPEA has implemented a series of initiatives aligned with its strategic objectives to enhance educational quality, safety, inclusivity, and investment in the private schools in Sharjah. These initiatives are designed to address key areas such as educational development, professional growth, and creating a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment for all students.

# Key Initiatives

## Educational Safety and Quality



### “We Are All Partners” Initiative

This initiative focused on improving school safety, reducing complaints, and preventing school accidents, enhancing the overall safety of the educational environment.



### “Your Children Are Safe” Initiative

A **19** million AED project that enables parents to monitor their children’s school bus journeys via an app, ensuring real-time communication with transport supervisors.



### “My Beautiful School” Initiative

Supported by a **50** million AED budget, this initiative aims to upgrade school facilities and infrastructure, providing students with an improved learning environment.

## Remote Learning and Adapting to the Four-Day Workweek:



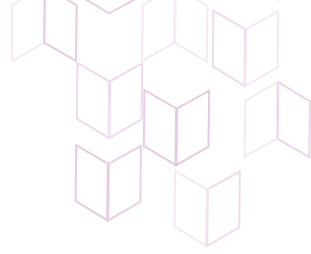
### Remote Learning Enhancements:

SPEA adapted its educational system to ensure minimal disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic by improving remote learning capabilities.



### Four-Day Workweek Transition:

After Sharjah transitioned to a **four**-day workweek, SPEA conducted surveys in early **2023**, gathering feedback from educators, students, and parents to assess productivity, learning, and overall well-being. The results highlighted the need for better time management skills among students and revealed improvements in family life and health due to the reduced workweek, the results are currently used by SPEA to improve schools' adaptation to **4**-day work week.



## Promotion of Arabic Language Education:



### With Arabic We Elevate “Bil Arabiya Nartaqi” initiative:

SPEA launched this initiative to enhance Arabic language education in private schools. The program includes events and activities to strengthen the language’s cultural significance. Achievements include a **100%** improvement in Arabic language education for native speakers, the formation of the “Lisan Al-Dhad” committee, and the successful participation of over **9,000** individuals in various educational activities.



## Professional Development and Teacher Empowerment:



### Sultan Al Qasimi Emiratization Project “Proud to Be a Teacher”:

This program aims to employ Emirati graduates in private schools, particularly in the fields of Arabic language, Islamic studies, National education, Early childhood education , and English language, in addition to scientific subjects such as science and mathematics. To date, **106** teachers have been employed through this initiative.



### Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

SPEA organizes annual CPD weeks, offering 106 sessions (**220** hours) in **2022-2023**, benefiting over **11,000** participants with diverse training on teaching skills and school improvement.



## Inclusion and Child Protection:



### Inclusive Education for Special Needs Students:

SPEA launched workshops addressing learning challenges and provided support to families of students with special needs, helping them find accommodating schools for their children.



### Child Protection Programs:

SPEA created a Child Protection Office that launched several workshops focusing on anti-bullying, child safety, and child rights, while also training **125** Child Protection Coordinators across private schools.

## Educational Partnerships:



SPEA collaborates with local and international institutions, including the University of Helsinki and the International Baccalaureate Organization, to promote educational innovation and excellence.



SPEA actively participates in educational events, such as the Sharjah Children's Reading Festival, the Asia Conference on Education, the BETT Exhibition, the Sharjah International Summit on Improvement in Education, and the Regional Early Childhood Care and Education Conference in the Arab States to promote the exchange of knowledge globally and to raise the educational standards

## Investment and Infrastructure Development:



### Guidebook to Investing in Sharjah's Private Education Sector:

SPEA launched a guide to attract local and international investors, providing detailed insights into investment opportunities in Sharjah's education sector.



### Innovative Models:

Initiatives like "Green Schools" and the four-day school week aim to create sustainable and modern educational environments, making Sharjah an attractive destination for educational investment.



In **2023**, SPEA issued licenses for new schools, nurseries, and training centers, reflecting growing interest in Sharjah's educational sector.





Through these diverse and impactful initiatives, SPEA continues to promote safety, inclusivity, and educational excellence, while fostering a collaborative ecosystem that attracts investment and innovation in Sharjah's private education sector.





# OVERVIEW OF SHARJAH'S POPULATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH









## Overview of Sharjah's Population and Economic Growth:

As of **2024**, Sharjah's population is estimated at 1.8 million, a significant increase from just **2,000** residents in 1950<sup>1</sup>. Over the past year, the population grew by **41,341**, demonstrating a **2.26%** annual change. This growth reflects the broader expansion of Sharjah's urban centers, which includes the city and surrounding suburban areas. According to a census conducted by the Department of Statistics and Community Development, the population is composed of over **208,000** Emiratis, with more than **1.6** million expatriates residing in the emirate<sup>2</sup>.



Sharjah has witnessed remarkable growth over the past decade, particularly in its private education sector. The number of private schools increased from **94** in the **2013/14** academic year to **128** in **2023/24**. This expansion parallels the emirate's economic growth, with Sharjah's GDP rising from AED **78.8 billion** in **2010** to AED **130.5 billion** in **2021**. Sharjah's economy is highly diversified, with minimal reliance on oil revenues. The emirate is a key industrial hub, hosting **35%** of the UAE's manufacturing facilities, and has focused on developing its private sector and promoting entrepreneurship. Key industries such as retail, real estate, and construction continue to contribute significantly to Sharjah's GDP.

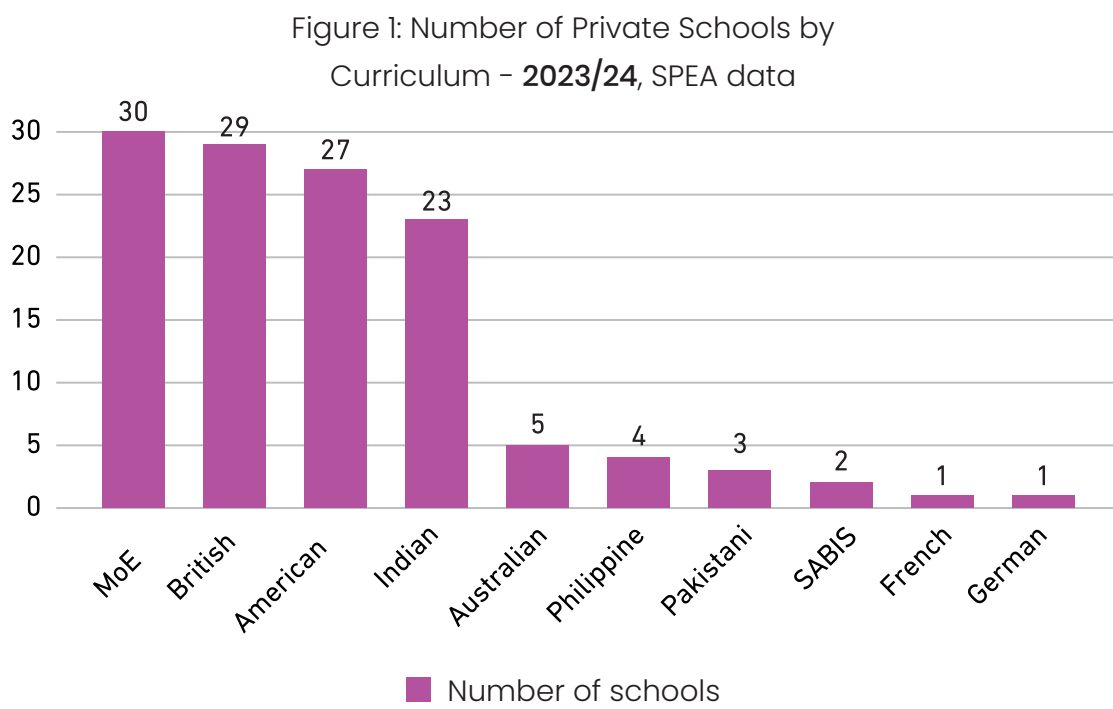


United Arab Emirates  
Sharjah



# Education Landscape in Sharjah:

Sharjah’s private education sector is characterized by diversity, with schools offering **11** different curricula to meet the needs of its multicultural population. The most popular curricula include the Ministry of Education (MOE), British/IB, American, and Indian curricula. Between **2017** and **2022**, the number of American and British/IB curriculum schools increased at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of **4.5%**.



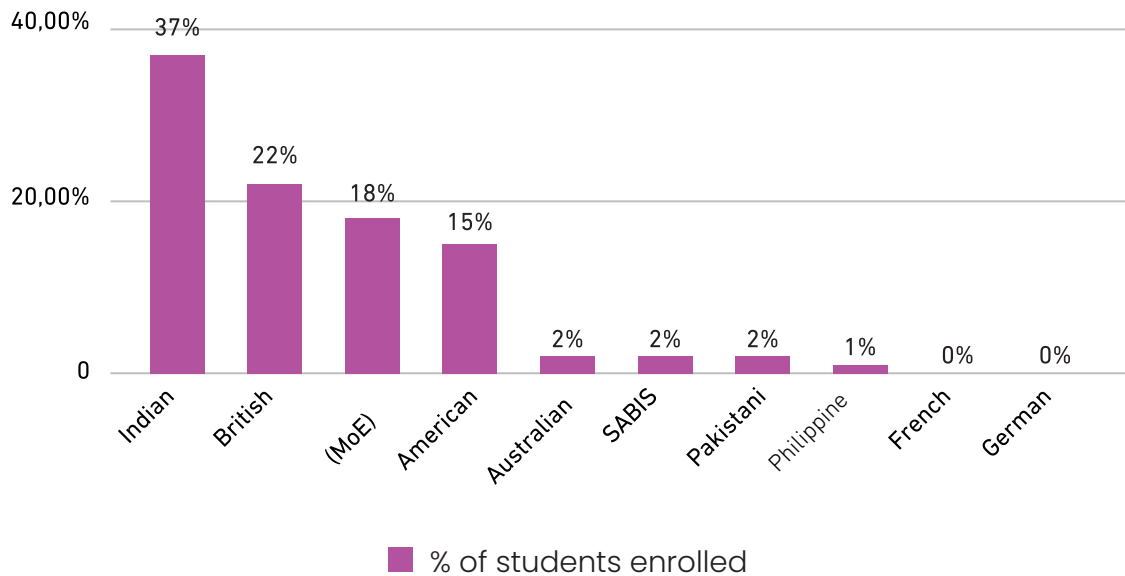
For the **2023/24** academic year, there are **128** private schools in operation, serving **185,000** students. Approximately **86%** of students in Sharjah’s private schools are expatriates, reflecting the emirate’s large international community. Gender parity is nearly balanced, with girls making up **49%** and boys **51%** of the student population.

In terms of enrollment distribution, more than one-third of private-schools students are enrolled in Indian curriculum schools, followed by British curriculum schools with **21%** of total enrollments. MoE and American curriculum schools account for **17%** and **14%**, respectively. Enrollment is also geographically concentrated, with **63%** of students attending schools in Sharjah City, followed by **23%** in Khor Fakkan, **10%** in Kalbaa, and **2%** in Al Dhaid.

References:

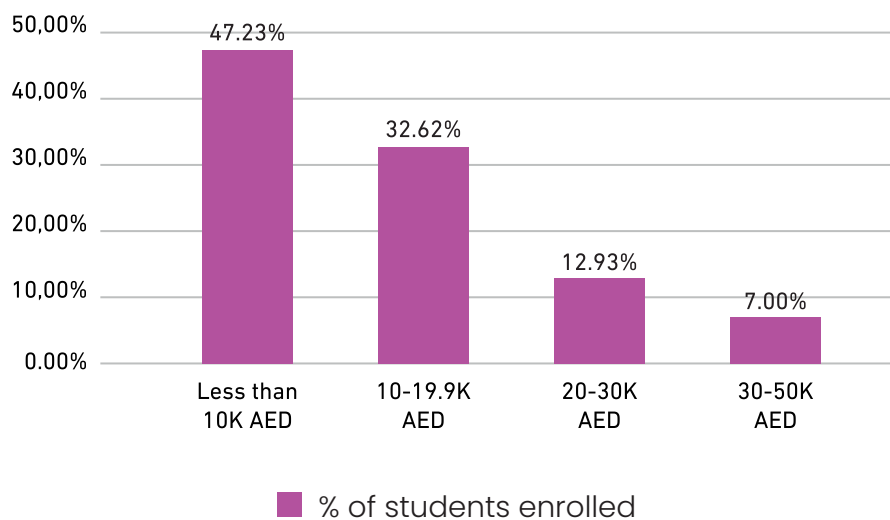
1. World Health Organization. “United Arab Emirates: Country Profile.” WHO Data. Accessed August 31, 2024. [Link](#)
2. UAE Government. “Sharjah.” The Official Portal of the UAE Government. Accessed September 6, 2024. [Link](#)

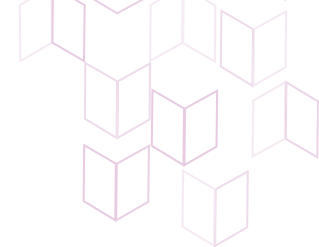
Figure 2: Percentage of Student Enrollments  
by Curriculum – **2023/24**, SPEA data



Tuition fees vary significantly across Sharjah’s private schools. Nearly half (**47%**) of students are enrolled in schools with tuition under AED **10,000** per year, while another **32%** attend schools with fees between AED **10,000** and AED **19,900**. Only **7%** of students are enrolled in schools with tuition above AED **30,000**. The highest tuition fees are found in SABIS, German, and Australian curriculum schools, averaging AED **31,000** to AED **38,000**, followed by American, British/IB, and French schools, averaging AED **16,000** to AED **18,000**. In contrast, Indian, Pakistani, and MoE curriculum schools have some of the lowest tuition fees, averaging AED **7,400** to AED **8,500**.

Figure 3: Percentage of Student Enrollments  
by Tuition Fees – **2023/24**, SPEA data





## Current Educational Offerings and Parent Preferences:

In the **2023/24** academic year, the student-to-teacher ratio in Sharjah private schools is less than **18:1**, which is linked to greater academic achievement. A total of **11,139** teachers are employed across **128** private schools, with **97%** of the teaching staff being expatriates and **81%** employed full-time. The student-teacher ratio varies depending on tuition fees, ranging from **17:1** in budget schools to **6:1** in most premium-priced schools. Schools offering the Philippine curriculum have the highest student-teacher ratios, followed by SABIS, Indian, and MoE curriculum schools.

Figure 4: Student-teacher ratio by Tuition Fees, **2023/24**, SPEA data

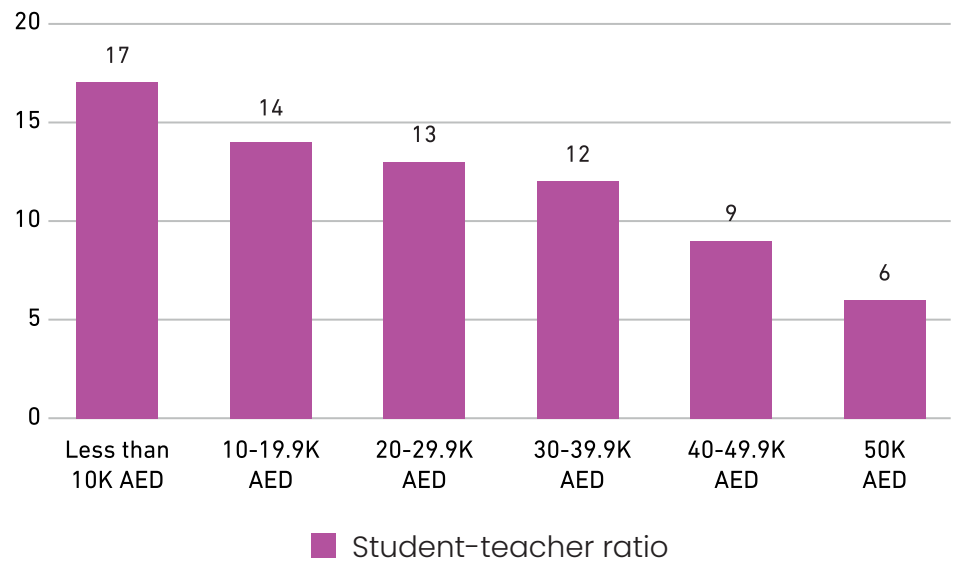
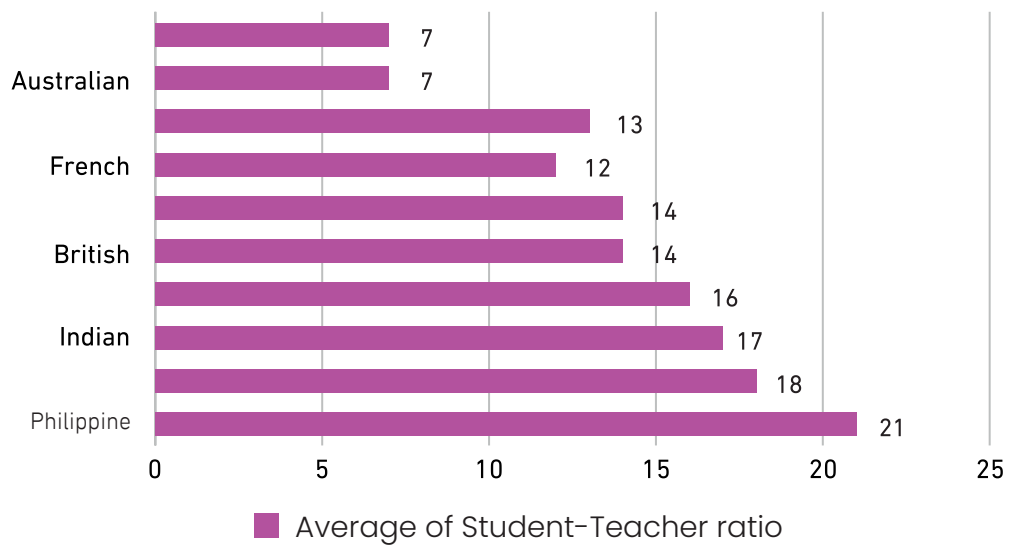


Figure 5: Student-Teacher ratio by Curriculum, **2023/24**, SPEA data

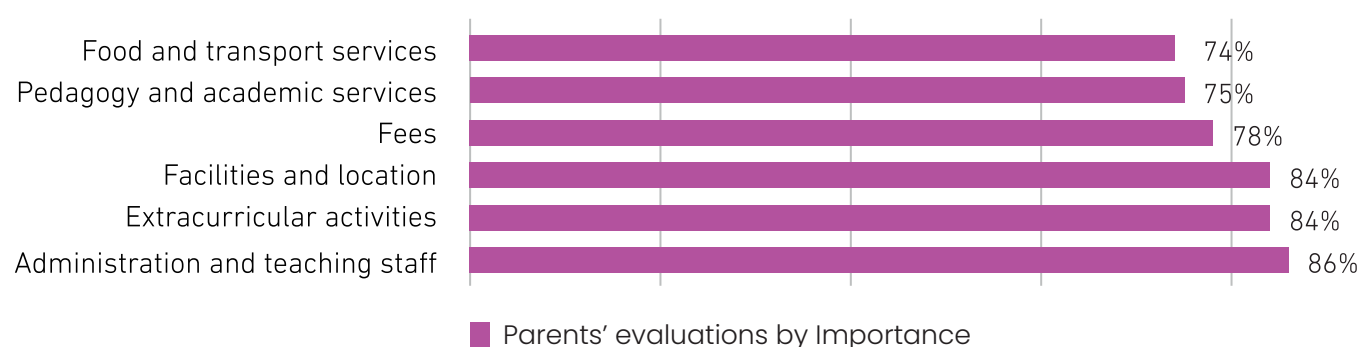




## Factors impacting Parents' selection of schools:

Parents in Sharjah prioritize several factors when selecting schools for their children, children. In the context of the report, a parent survey was conducted, and parents were asked to rate **38** school selection criteria under six categories using a six-point scale from extremely important to not important at all. The following graph illustrates the percent of parents who rated the elements of the six categories on average as extremely important and very important.

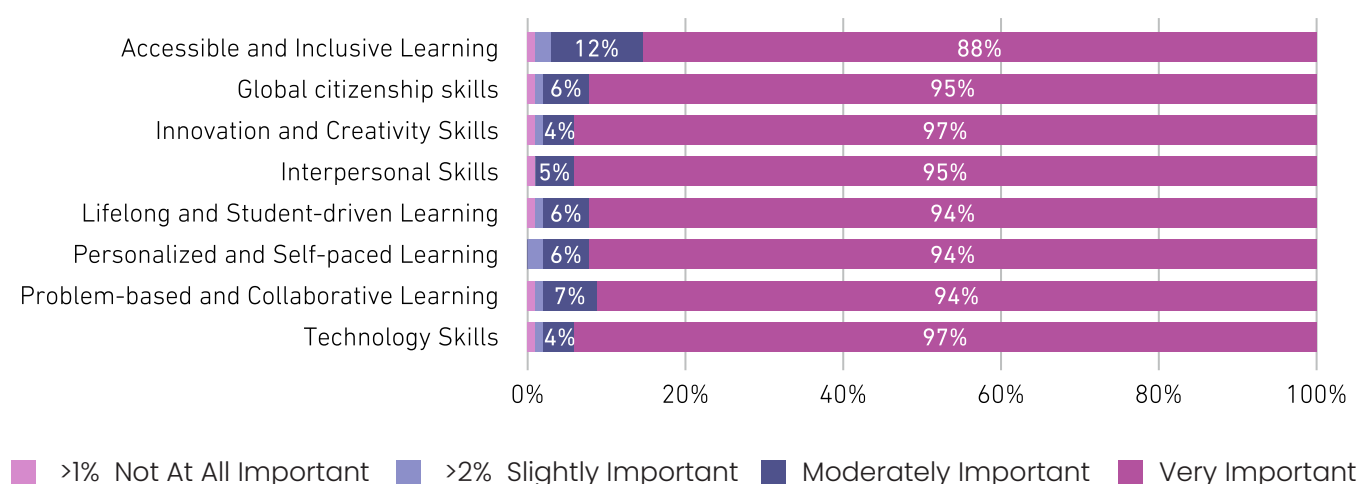
Figure 6: Parent's School Selection Criteria by Importance



As the graph shows, school administration, teaching staff, and extracurricular activities were rated as slightly more important than the rest of the criteria.

Additionally, the survey found that nearly all parents consider skills such as accessible and inclusive learning, global citizenship, innovation, creativity, and technology as very important or moderately important for their children's education.

Figure 7: What Skills Matter to Parents,  
2023/24, SPEA data



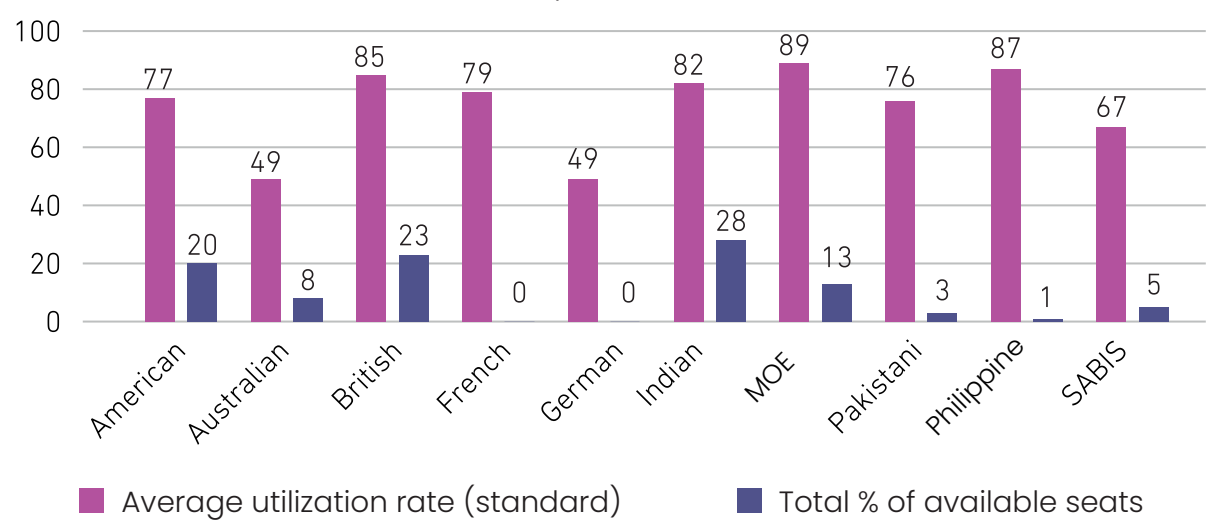


## Demand Forecast and Key Growth Drivers:

Sharjah's private schools currently have around **30,000** available seats, equating to a capacity utilization rate of **85%**. This rate aligns with the optimal range for K-12 education, indicating strong demand alongside operational flexibility. High utilization rates in MoE, British, and Philippine curriculum schools reflect robust demand, while Australian and German curriculum schools show lower utilization, suggesting areas for growth.

Even though Indian schools have a high utilization rate, they have close to a third (**28%**) of the free seats. **22%** of the free seats are in British curriculum private schools and **21%** are in American Schools, whereas the MoE Curriculum private schools have approximately **13%** of the free seats. The data suggests that there is strong demand and significant opportunity for the expansion of MoE curriculum private schools and Philippine curriculum private schools, both of which have high utilization rates and a limited proportion of free seats compared to other curricula.

Figure 8: Utilization rates vs Total Percentage of Sharjah's private schools' available seats by Curriculum – **2023/24**, SPEA data



There also seem to be opportunities for the expansion of Indian, British, and American curriculum private schools, due to their high utilization rates and the general interest in schools offering these curricula.

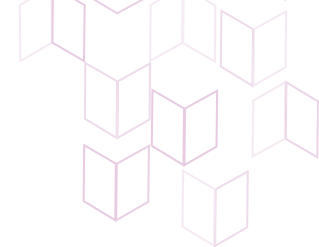
While budget-priced schools have a high utilization rate, they account for the largest proportion of free seats (69%). Mid-priced schools in the AED 30–39k tuition range have limited free capacity (3%), compared to those in the AED 20–29.9k range (19%). Although premium-priced schools have lower utilization rates, they only account for 8% of free seats. The data suggest a clear demand for high-quality, mid-range schools in the AED 30–39.9k bracket.

## Key growth drivers for the K-12 private education sector:

Key growth drivers for the K-12 private education sector in Sharjah include ongoing population growth, strong government support for quality education, and high parental spending on education. The school-going population in the UAE is projected to grow from **1.3 million** in **2021** to **1.5 million** by **2028**, driven by the large expatriate base in Sharjah, which accounts for **88%** of the population. SPEA's **2022–2024** strategy focuses on improving education quality, which continues to attract more students to Sharjah's schools. Parents in the UAE are among the highest spenders on education globally, with an average expenditure of **\$99,378** per child from primary to undergraduate level.

Sharjah's diversified economy, growing population, and ongoing strategic focus on improving education quality position its private schools for continued expansion, creating significant opportunities for both SPEA initiatives and private sector investment.





# Recommendations for Investors

## Invest in High-Demand Curricula:



**Expand Existing Facilities:** Expansion of existing facilities for MoE, British, and Philippine curriculum schools is recommended to accommodate growing student numbers, especially in underserved areas.



**Capitalize on the Filipino Community's Needs:** Although Filipinos make up 7% of the UAE's population, only a small fraction of schools in Sharjah offer the Philippine curriculum, most of which are operating at full capacity. This underrepresentation presents an opportunity to establish or expand Philippine curriculum schools.



**Optimize MoE Curriculum Private Schools:** With 68% of MoE curriculum private schools at full capacity and others operating at around 88% utilization rate, targeted investments to increase capacity and enhance facilities could meet future demand driven by government educational reforms.



**Enhance Underutilized Curricula:** New Australian curriculum schools show promise, with a 64% Emirati enrollment rate, indicating both strong interest and perceived quality.



**Invest in the German International Abitur (DIA):** The DIA is widely recognized for its rigorous, bilingual curriculum, providing students with direct access to prestigious universities worldwide. This curriculum fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, making graduates highly competitive in global academic and job markets. With only one German curriculum school currently operating in Sharjah, the high demand for internationally recognized education offers a prime opportunity for investors. Sharjah's growing interest in attracting expatriate families and top-tier students further enhances the potential for investment in this distinguished educational model.



## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Sharjah’s Private Schools:

One of SPEA’s strategic goals is to “construct learning paths for all categories including, the gifted and people of determination”.

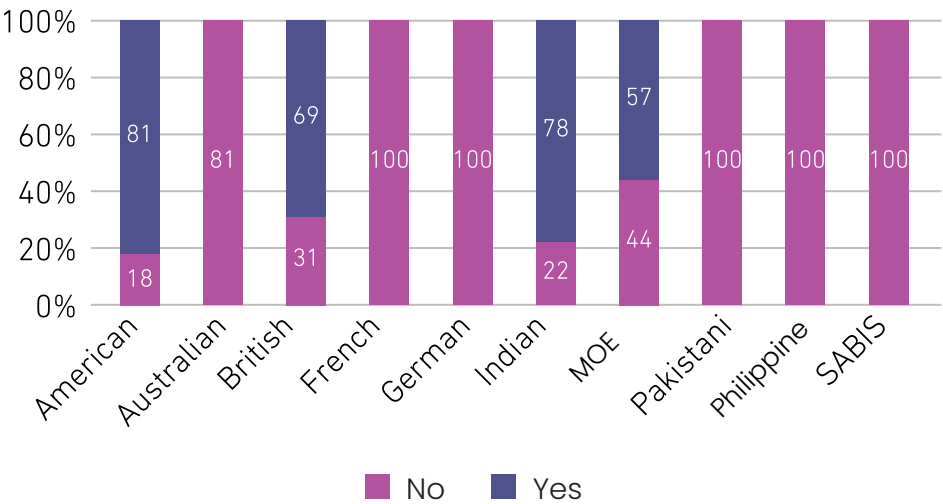
This involves identifying the physical and cognitive needs of people of determination, formulating integration policies, and developing tools for primary and early education.

Currently, SPEA is actively developing a comprehensive framework for inclusive education in private schools across the emirate. As inclusive education becomes a key priority, this framework will guide schools in creating more supportive environments for students with special needs and learning disabilities. As these efforts progress, the potential for partnerships with the private sector will expand, offering new opportunities for investment and collaboration in fostering an inclusive educational landscape.

### Landscape of SEND support in Sharjah’s Private Schools:

In Sharjah, **2,795** SEND students are enrolled in private schools, comprising approximately **1.5%** of the total student population. Of these, **36%** are Emirati and **33%** are female. While the majority of private schools in Sharjah reported being equipped to support SEND students, there are variations in readiness across different curricula. Australian schools report full readiness, followed by American (**81%**) and Indian (**78%**) schools. However, British/IB curriculum private schools report **69%** readiness, while MoE curriculum schools show less readiness at **57%**. Schools offering Pakistani, Philippine, and SABIS curricula may need more support to improve their readiness to support SEND students.

Figure 10: Schools Equipped for SEND  
by Curriculum **2023/24**, SPEA data





Geographically, most SEND students are concentrated in Sharjah City (**76%**), with fewer in Khor Fakkan (**13%**), Kalbaa (**7%**), and Al Dhaid (**4%**). This suggests a potential shortage of SEND support outside Sharjah City.

Figure 11: Percentage of SEND students by Municipality,  
**2023/24, SPEA Data**

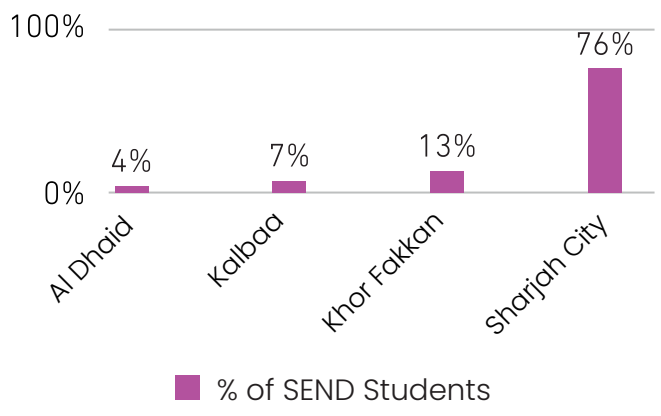
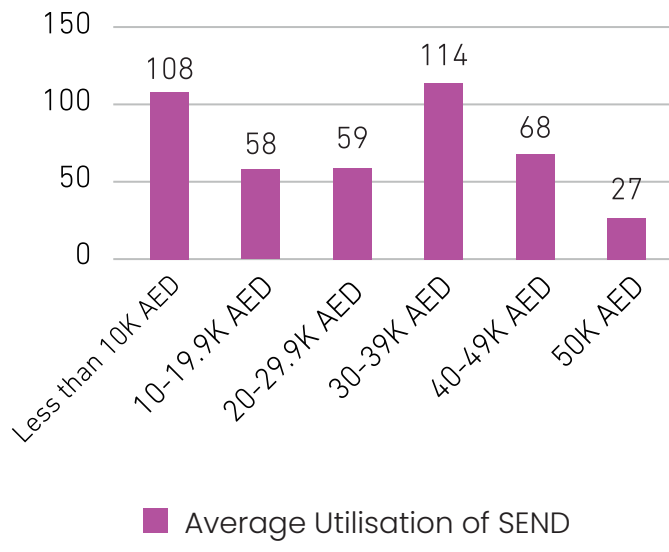
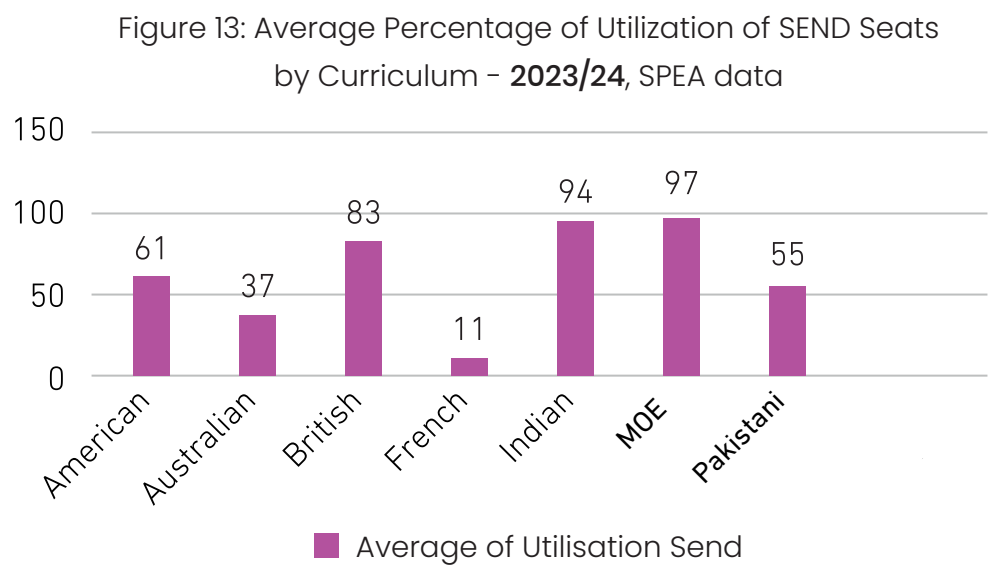


Figure 12: Average Utilisation of SEND Seats by Tuition Fees,  
**2023/24, SPEA Data**



Utilization of SEND Provisions:

On average, schools equipped for SEND students have a high utilization rate of 79%. Indian and MoE curriculum schools show the highest utilization rates (**94%** and **97%**, respectively), followed by British curriculum schools at **83%**. Indian curriculum schools also have the largest percentage of available SEND seats, **29%**, followed closely by American schools at **28%**. Some schools exhibit utilization rates exceeding **100%**, indicating over-enrollment and the need for expansion. Conversely, several schools report low utilization rates, suggesting opportunities to attract additional SEND students through enhanced marketing of available support and targeted outreach efforts.



SEND-Specific School Provisions:

The majority of employed staff are special education teachers, assistants, and specialists (**64%**), with psychologists making up **14%** of staff. Other specialized staff, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and visual impairment specialists, make up less than **9%** of the total SEND support staff.

Equipment, Facilities, and Assistive Technology for SEND:

According to the **2023** Global Education Monitoring Report, a mix of accessible technology and assistive devices in a classroom founded on the principles of Universal Design for Learning enhances all students’ potential.

Technology provides personalized options to diversify the means of engagement, representation, and expression<sup>3</sup>. As UNESCO recommends, when adopting digital technology,



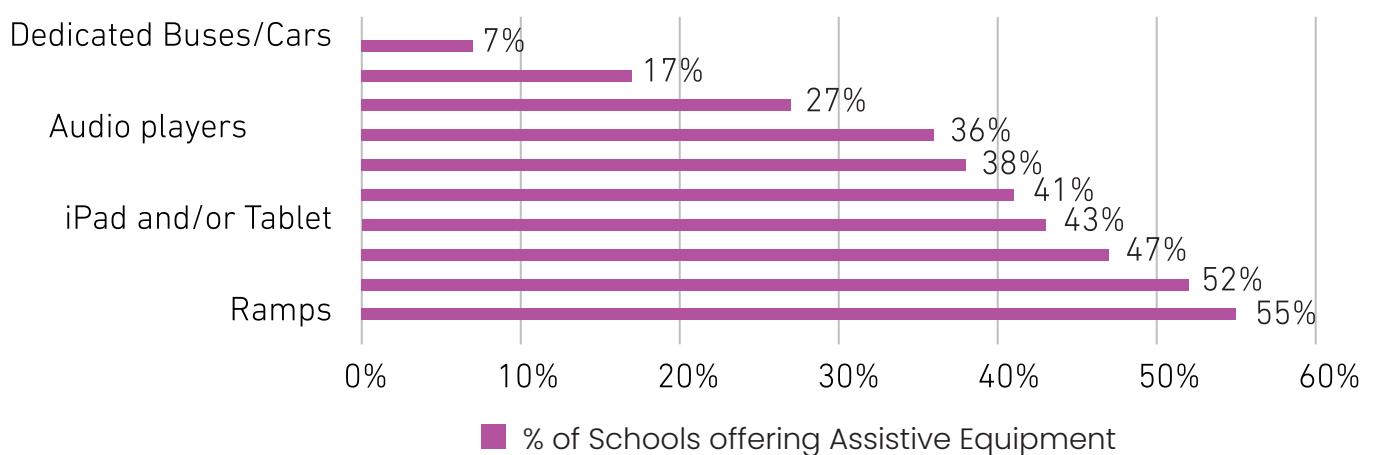
education systems must prioritize the best interests of learners within a rights-based framework. The emphasis should be on achieving learning outcomes rather than merely increasing digital inputs. Digital technology should enhance, not replace, the in-person interaction between teachers and students to support better learning experiences<sup>4</sup>.

The majority of private schools in Sharjah reported having at least some form of assistive support, with ramps and dedicated toilets available in over **50%** of schools. Additionally, **47%** of schools report having wheelchairs, while **43%** have iPads or tablets, and **36%** have audio players or recorders. Only eight private schools in Sharjah reported having no form of equipment, facilities, or assistive technology for SEND students. However, there is still room for improvement for Sharjah private schools to be completely accessible to all students which opens the room for investors to support schools reach their inclusivity requirements.

### Sharjah's Roadmap for Enhancing Inclusive Education:

SPEA is actively promoting inclusion in private schools by implementing professional development programs for educators and developing a framework for inclusive education in private schools. This framework will assist in evaluating existing inclusive education practices in private schools and help these schools meet both international and MoE inclusion standards.

Figure 14: Percentage of Schools offering Assistive Equipment & Technology – **2023/24**, SPEA data



#### References:

3. UNESCO. "Promoting Access to Education for Students with Disabilities through Inclusive Technologies." Global Education Monitoring Report. Accessed August 31, 2024. [Link](#)
4. Global Education Monitoring Report Team. Learners with Disabilities and Technology: Advocacy Brief. ED/GEM/MRT/2024/FS/G/2 Rev. Paris: UNESCO, 2024. [Link](#)



# Proposal for Investors :

There is significant potential for investment in schools currently in need of developing resources to support SEND students. Data also shows that most SEND-equipped schools have high utilisation rates. Investors could form partnerships to bring in specialized staff and develop SEND programs, thereby enhancing the capabilities of these schools. Additionally, investors might consider establishing new schools or specialized centres dedicated to the SEND population, especially considering the low market penetration of SEND services.

Opportunities also exist to expand services in underserved regions such as Khor Fakkan, Kalbaa, and Al Dhaid. Building new facilities in these areas could address service shortages and capitalize on an underutilized market.

Investors can target different market segments by offering affordable SEND services for low-fee schools and premium services for high-fee schools, customized to meet the specific needs of each segment. Partnering with the government to provide subsidized services for lower-income families could also secure stable government contracts, ensuring consistent returns on investment.





### Training and Staffing Agencies:

Investors could establish training institutes or staffing agencies that specialize in SEND roles, offering outsourced services to schools without full-time staff.



### High-Demand Professions:

Investing in higher education or vocational training programs for high-demand professions, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and counsellors, could help fill market gaps and create a steady revenue stream through partnerships with schools.



### Opportunity for Expansion:

Schools that are currently overutilized in their SEND provisions present significant investment opportunities. By funding expansions or improvements, investors can help these schools provide better services to the growing number of students in need of support.



### Assistive Technology Market:

The growing direction of using assistive technology to support SEND students presents a prime market opportunity. Companies providing assistive devices or developing new technologies for SEND students could partner with schools to modernize their offerings.



### Outsourcing Specialized Services:

Investors could establish businesses that offer outsourced services, such as mobile speech therapy units or visiting occupational therapists, allowing schools to contract these services as needed.



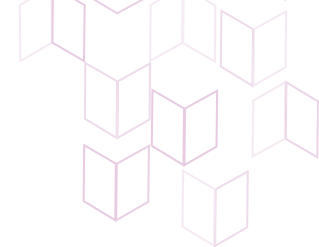
## Early Childhood Education in Sharjah: Current Landscape and Potential Opportunities for Expansion:

“Inclusive and high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) are essential for fostering school readiness, foundational learning, and lifelong well-being. Today, there are increasing international efforts to improve access to and quality of ECCE worldwide. Yet, globally, only about 4 in 10 children aged 3 to 5 are enrolled in early childhood education programmes.”<sup>6</sup>

Evidence consistently shows that early childhood education ECE lays a strong foundation for future learning, enhances the effectiveness of education systems, and drives long-term economic growth. Building a prosperous future starts with children, who are at the heart of Sharjah’s priorities, as reflected in the vision of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Alqasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah.

The emirate provides child-focused services and initiatives such as the “Children First” program, based on the principle that children are the leaders of the future and their well-being must be a top priority in the plans of any society striving for progress. Sharjah has also won the prestigious UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Inspire Award for two consecutive years.

As Sharjah continues to prioritize ECE, significant opportunities for investment are emerging within this growing sector. Now is the time to capitalize on this expanding market.



## Sharjah's ECE initiatives and SPEA's role :

The Sharjah Nurseries Initiative<sup>7</sup>, launched in **2003** under the guidance of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Alqasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah,, has made significant contributions to ECCE by providing safe, nurturing environments for children aged three months to kindergarten. Sharjah's nurseries not only prioritize safety and care but also focus on enriching educational experiences to prepare children for the future. By adhering to international best practices, including those outlined in the OECD's International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS)<sup>8</sup>, Sharjah's nurseries emphasize emergent literacy, numeracy, self-regulation, and socio-emotional skills.

Sharjah's nurseries initiative includes only the governmental nurseries which make up around **23%** of the total number of nurseries in Sharjah (**42** nurseries), giving room for the private sector to extend the ECE offerings in the emirate to meet growing demand, with SPEA being the authority for quality assurance of both private and governmental nurseries.

More recently SPEA organized the UNESCO's Regional Early Childhood Care and Education Conference for Arab states **2023**, during which Sharjah showcased its effort in advancing ECCE demonstrating a strong commitment to advancing the ECE agenda.

Today, Sharjah has more than **282** nurseries providing early childhood care and education across the emirate.



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### References:

5. UNESCO and United Nations Children's Fund. Global Report on Early Childhood Care and Education: The Right to a Strong Foundation. 2024. [Link](#)
6. UNICEF. Early Childhood Education Database, June 2023. Accessed August 31, 2024. [Link](#)
7. Sharjah Nurseries [Link](#)
8. OECD. International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study. Accessed August 31, 2024. [Link](#)





# SHARJAH'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

In addition to the 42 governmental nurseries, there are more than 140 private nurseries currently operating in Sharjah, together accommodating 11,700 students. Of these students, 73% are registered in governmental nurseries, while 23% are registered in private nurseries. Almost all students enrolled in governmental nurseries are Emirati, whereas private nurseries have a majority of expat students 86%, and only 14% are Emirati. Gender-wise, there is parity between girls and boys registered in nurseries. Recent data indicate that nursery establishment in Sharjah has accelerated, with 49 new nurseries opening between 2015 and 2020, and 43 more between 2020 and 2024.

The majority of nurseries are concentrated in Sharjah City, which hosts 123 nurseries (84% of the total). The remaining nurseries are distributed across other locations: Khor Fakkan (9 nurseries, 6%), Kalbaa (4 nurseries, 4%), Al Dhaid (8 nurseries, 5%), and Dibba Al-Hisn (1 nursery, 1%).



This distribution highlights significant potential for expansion outside Sharjah City. Expanding nursery facilities in these underserved areas presents a critical opportunity to improve access to early childhood education, particularly for families in more remote parts of the emirate.



**For investors**, this represents a clear opportunity to develop nurseries catering to the diverse needs of Sharjah's population. By focusing on high-quality education, innovative early learning approaches, and specialized programs such as bilingual education or Montessori- and Reggio Emilia-inspired models, investors can differentiate themselves in the market. There is also potential to target niche markets, including nurseries that cater to children with special needs or those providing advanced early learning programs. With SPEA's support in creating a conducive regulatory environment and fostering public-private partnerships, investors can contribute to expanding access to quality early education across Sharjah, particularly in areas beyond Sharjah City.

## Conclusion

The landscape of early childhood education in Sharjah is ripe for development. With strong government backing, a growing population of young children, and a clear demand for more private nurseries. Private investors have the opportunity to make a significant impact.

### References:

1. UNICEF: [Early Childhood Development](#)
2. OECD: [International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study](#)
3. Sharjah Nurseries Initiative: [Official Website](#)
4. Sharjah Private Education Authority: [Nurseries Information](#)
5. UAE Ministry of Education: [Early Childhood Development](#)
6. UNESCO: [Early Childhood Care and Education](#)



An aerial photograph of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, showing a dense urban skyline with numerous high-rise buildings. The city is situated along a waterfront, with a large body of water in the foreground. A small, green, tree-covered island is visible in the water. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene is a mix of urban development and natural elements.

## APPENDIX:

# RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SHARJAH PRIVATE EDUCATION AUTHORITY AS A ROADMAP FOR IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM







# Recommendations for promoting a diverse private educational system

To meet the growing demand and to ensure the delivery of balanced, high-quality private education, SPEA recommends that investors direct their efforts toward four key areas:

1

## Expand Capacity in High-Demand Curricula:

Schools offering MoE, Philippine, British, and American curricula exhibit high utilization rates encouraging investment in expanding these schools to meet increasing demand, particularly in underserved areas like Khor Fakkan and Kalbaa.

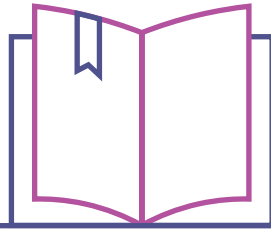
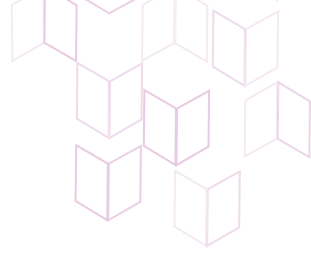


2

## Support the Growth of Mid-Range Tuition Schools:

There is a clear market need for mid-range fee schools (AED **30–39.9k**), where capacity is limited. SPEA can facilitate targeted investments to address this gap, ensuring families have access to affordable yet high-quality education.





3

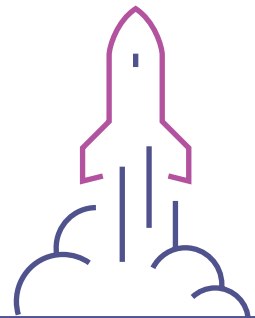
### Encourage Curriculum Diversity:

To remain competitive and respond to the diverse needs of Sharjah's international community, SPEA could foster curriculum innovation by supporting schools that provide less represented yet in-demand curricula, such as the German or Australian curricula, thereby enriching diversity in educational offerings.

4

### Help Under-Utilized Schools Reach Capacity:

SPEA should support under-utilized schools in reaching their full capacity by helping them identify and address areas for improvement, particularly those that shape parental choice — such as teaching quality, extracurricular activities, and facilities. By strengthening these aspects and aligning them with families' expectations, such schools will be better positioned to attract more students and achieve sustainable, optimal enrollment levels.



# Enhancing the Quality of SEND Services:

SPEA is currently developing a framework for inclusive education to support the improvement of access, facilities, equipment, and support services for students with disabilities. Although further assessment of needs is required to help schools identify specific areas for improvement, current data indicate a need for:

2

## Infrastructure Audits:

Regular audits should be conducted to assess schools' physical infrastructure and ensure that essential equipment and assistive technology are present.

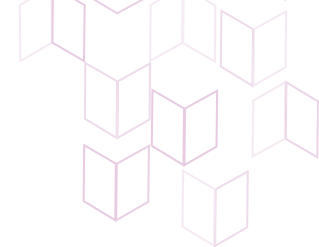


1

## Standardizing Services:

SPEA should ensure that all schools meet minimum service requirements in accordance with UAE regulatory standards. This may involve establishing benchmarks to guarantee the provision of essential equipment and services.





5

### Strengthening Teacher Training and Specialist Provision for Students with Disabilities in Sharjah:

SPEA is set to implement mandatory professional development programs for existing teachers to ensure they are adequately trained to support (SEND) students in the absence of specialized staff. The next step should be to enforce stricter guidelines on the hiring of specialized staff across all schools, potentially establishing minimum staffing requirements based on student enrollment. Additionally, exploring partnerships with the private sector can provide potential solutions to address current capacity gaps.

3

### Professional Development:

Programmes for educators ensure every educator is equipped to support or refer SEND students to relevant support services.



4

### Quality Assurance in Schools Operating Beyond Capacity:

The data indicates that several schools are operating beyond their intended capacity. It is essential to ensure that these schools continue to meet high-quality standards. Potential interventions may include expanding facilities or redistributing students to alleviate overcrowding.





## Early Childhood Education Recommendations:

The Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) plays a leading role in advancing ECCE. A key challenge for SPEA is to ensure that private nurseries not only expand access but also enhance the quality of early childhood education.

SPEA can achieve this by streamlining regulatory processes, offering incentives for establishing nurseries in underserved areas, and supporting continuous professional development for nursery staff. It can also introduce rigorous quality assurance measures to ensure that both new and existing nurseries meet international standards.

Access to comprehensive data is crucial for informed decision-making in expanding and improving early childhood education in Sharjah, and developing programmes for ECCE. Detailed insights into the age distribution of children in schools, the number of students with disabilities and learning difficulties<sup>9</sup>, and an understanding of parents' motivations for enrolling their children in nurseries can significantly enhance strategic planning.





The lack of sufficient data on early childhood development and early childhood education is not unique to Sharjah or the UAE; it is, in fact, a widespread challenge. In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Scales for Early Development (GSED), an open-access package specifically designed to provide a standardized method for measuring the development of children up to 36 months of age at both population and programmatic levels worldwide. The GSED was created to address the lack of reliable data on early childhood development and to support the measurement of early childhood education interventions. This could be of use for the UAE and for Sharjah when building a database to support early childhood care and development interventions<sup>10</sup>, including pre-school or nursery education.

Moreover, information on the breadth of curricula and pedagogical approaches, as well as the care provisions and methodologies offered by nurseries, is essential to ensure the continuous improvement of both the quality and accessibility of early childhood education across the emirate.

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#### References:

9. According to UNESCO, Global report on early childhood care and education: the right to a strong foundation (2024), an estimated 4% among children aged 0–4 have difficulties in one or more functional domains. Children with disabilities are 25% less likely to attend early childhood education. And when access to pre-school education has significant impact on children.
10. World Health Organization. Global Scales for Early Development (GSED) Package v1.0. 2023. Accessed August 31, 2024. [Link](#)

Considering the critical role of (ECCE) in laying the foundation for thriving individuals and communities, ECCE curricula and pedagogy should integrate local knowledge to establish child-centered, play-based, inclusive, and environmentally and gender-responsive learning approaches. These approaches should support multilingual education and promote instruction in the mother tongue. Additionally, curricula and pedagogy should be guided by the latest scientific and cultural insights on children’s development and learning 11.

Governmental nurseries in Sharjah are setting a promising benchmark by providing high-quality services that emphasize holistic child development, incorporate innovative teaching methodologies, and provide comprehensive services for children with diverse needs. To remain competitive and relevant, private nurseries must strive to meet these standards, ensuring that they provide equivalent levels of care, education, and comprehensiveness. This presents an opportunity for private nurseries to innovate and adopt best practices to enhance their services.

Ultimately, gathering and analysing such data will not only inform decisions on expanding access to nurseries in underserved regions but also help maintain high standards across all nurseries, supporting the continuous improvement of early childhood education in Sharjah.



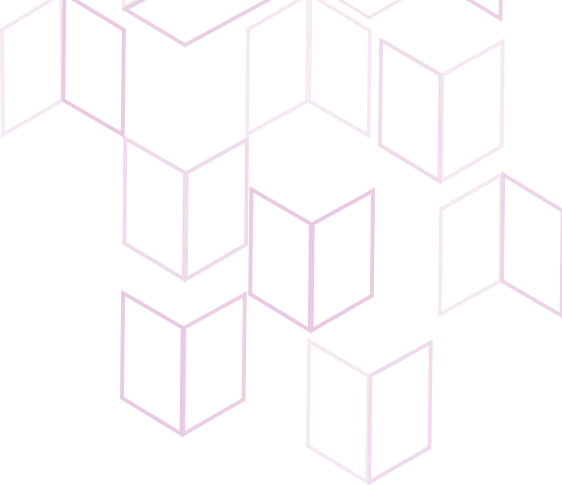
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#### References:

11. UNESCO. Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education – 16 November 2022. Paris: UNESCO, 2022 [Link](#)







هيئة الشارقة للتعليم الخاص  
SHARJAH PRIVATE EDUCATION AUTHORITY



Our Vision: Excellence in Education



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