



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First **التعليم أولاً**



Summary Inspection Report

Palestine Private Academy

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Iqraa

Palestine Private Academy

Inspection Date	26 th – 29 th February 2012
School ID#	170
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	Ministry of Education
Number of Students	1,122
Age Range	KG – Grade 9
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Mohmoud Ahmed Hejaa
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of five inspectors, who observed 69 lessons. They considered the progress made in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection report, standards and progress made by students, the ethos of the school, the quality of students' learning experiences, their progress and the teaching they receive.

Description of the School

The school was established in 1982. The current principal has been in place since 2005. During his tenure the number on roll has nearly doubled from 600 students. There are aspirations to further develop the school but as yet no clear strategic plans. The school aims to provide a cognitive, social, healthy and creative education. All students are of Arabic heritage and 99% are Muslim. The main student nationalities represented are Jordanian (41%), Palestinian (24%), Syrian (18%), Egyptian (8%) and Yemeni (3%). Students from Afghanistan, Sudan and Pakistan make up the remaining number. No students are recognised as having special educational needs. The school teaches the MoE curriculum in all grades with English introduced in the kindergarten (KG). There are no tests for entry to the school at KG. Students wishing to join in later grades must supply an academic report from their previous school. Annual fees have not risen for several years, and range from AED 2400 in KG to AED 5812 for middle school students.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band C

Grade 6

Inspectors judged the Palestine Private School to be in Band C; that is a school in need of considerable improvement.

The school has made minimal progress since the last inspection, and still fails to meet its stated aims. There have been some organisational improvements, but they have had little impact on students' performance. There is now a school board, but it does not fulfil its strategic monitoring role or ensure that improvement planning is coherent and effective. Subject supervisors are enthusiastic but lack direction, and so cannot raise standards or the quality of teaching. They have no job descriptions to identify the key components of their role, and have received no training in how to observe lessons or analyse data. Supervisors meet with their teams regularly to discuss curricular content, but only discuss organisational issues rather than how to improve educational provision and outcomes. Their lesson observations are unrealistically positive, and fail to identify development areas to improve teaching and progress. Finance has been made available to develop a computer suite, but this one-off event has not been

considered as part of any strategy to develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. Consequently, the very limited ICT facilities cannot be used as an effective tool to support learning.

Available test data indicates that standards and progress are acceptable in relation to the expectations of the MoE curriculum in English and mathematics, but not in ICT, Arabic or other subjects. Children in KG do not have the opportunities they need to learn through planned play activities and are therefore not developing the basic skills they need to begin to be confident independent learners. Students' reading skills in Arabic are better than their oral and written skills. Islamic studies enable students to understand the values and concepts of the Holy Quran. Most students in grade 9 English lessons are able to respond to questions using simple but accurate spoken English. The introduction of new English curriculum resources has added more interest and enjoyment to learning. By grade 9 students have acquired basic computational, algebraic, geometric and scientific skills, but do not have the opportunity to apply these skills through practical work or investigations, either in groups or independently. They are therefore unable to think critically or relate their understanding to new situations. Overall, standards and progress fall well short of those expected from a world-class education and show no sign of improving.

The school collects MoE test data and limited class-based evaluations of students' progress. The results are not analysed or used to focus improvements. For example, teachers are aware that girls outperform boys in all subjects but the school does nothing to identify why, stating simply that 'boys are boys'. The school does not use standardised international tests, so has no useful comparative data against which to evaluate progress or set targets.

Most students have a positive attitude to school and their teachers. Students from different nationalities get on well. Students understand and respect the values of the UAE, but this is mostly developed through external contacts because the school provides few activities relating to UAE culture. Students' moral sense is derived from Islamic studies. Most have a clear understanding of proper behaviour, but do not always show it. Girls are more compliant, and with few exceptions have positive attitudes to learning. Boys sometimes behave badly, particularly when they become bored in lessons and during recreation, and this sometimes becomes violent. Some students do not fully understand how to behave in front of visitors.

Most teaching does not meet students' needs. Work is not adjusted in any way to cater for different ability levels. For example, staff say that work is modified for less able students, but there were no examples of this during the inspection and

minimal evidence of it occurring previously. Students are expected to be just recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their learning. Girls sit placidly during these times but boys can become restless and this can lead to poor behaviour. There are some rare exceptions. Teaching in a small number of English and mathematics lessons engaged students and gave them the opportunity to express opinions, in a positive atmosphere where they felt secure. In most lessons, textbook activities based on a limited curriculum provide little opportunity for extended writing or creative work. Students rarely work in groups or on their own, and no thought is given to developing their critical thinking or exploration skills.

Although the curriculum complies with most of the requirements of the MoE, there is no music, and art is discontinued after grade 6, and the curriculum fails to develop the skills elements identified by the MoE. The curriculum falls well short of both ADEC's expectations and what an effective internationally benchmarked curriculum should offer; it does not specify the steps in learning that individual and groups of students need to take, it lacks breadth and is unbalanced. The curriculum does not motivate students, and the slavish focus on coverage of the units of work holds back pace and challenge. Teachers do not modify the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of less able or gifted students. There is little promotion of UAE culture and traditions, other than National Day celebrations and competitions. No activities are offered beyond school to increase students' experiences. Within the school, students can only participate in Quran recitation and chess competitions or maths challenges to extend their learning. The curriculum does not prepare students well enough for the next stage of their education, or provide the skills, knowledge and understanding they will need in later life.

The school does not make sure students are safe, and gives them little useful guidance. There are no effective systems to track students' progress and provide timely support. The social worker deals with inappropriate behaviour but school leaders make no attempt to deal with the causes. Boys have no male role models within the school to talk with, or to provide guidance. There is no child protection policy, and no understanding of the concept amongst school leaders. Teachers have had no training to help them identify vulnerable students, or how to take resulting action. MoE moral checks are in place for all but two teachers. There have been no checks on other staff, including the bus drivers. The school behaviour policy is not consistently applied, and this gives mixed messages to students. Attendance registers are only taken after the second or third period. This disguises the high percentage of students who arrive late. The school's procedures for lateness were not followed during the inspection. The principal

states that corporal punishment is banned, but there is a tacit understanding that pulling ears, holding a student's chin and 'tapping' them with books is acceptable. The school clinic operates efficiently, but not all medicines are locked away. There is no prayer room in the girls' section. The very limited guidance provided to students to help them select their next school is based primarily on fee levels.

The school grounds are relatively spacious but the sports areas do not meet ADEC requirements. The new KG building has suitably sized rooms and a secure covered play area. There are some potentially dangerous electrical sockets and exposed wiring. The two extension buildings are light, and displays enhance their appearance. When class sizes are over 20, the rooms become too overcrowded for effective learning. The older boys' section is not fit for purpose. The small, overcrowded classrooms limit the range of teaching strategies that can and should be employed. The neon lighting has no covers and the wiring is exposed. The air-conditioning units are poorly sited and drip water on pedestrians. In an emergency, students would have to be channelled through dangerously narrow corridors to the exit. No fire drill or evacuation practice has taken place despite this being recommended in the last report. The science laboratory serving the whole school is too small and basic to promote good learning. Dangerous chemicals and substances are kept in an open cupboard. This is also the case with cleaning materials. The library is not conducive to reading and research. The school guard does not always challenge visitors, and at times is absent from his post.

Resources are poor throughout the school. There are sufficient teachers to cover classes, but the demand on their time is very high. There is no lab technician or librarian, and there are no support assistants in the KG classes. The covered play area in the KG has virtually no play equipment. Classroom resources are extremely limited. Students have restricted access to the computer rooms, there are no computers in classrooms, and there is no access to the internet for investigating the wider world. The only technology to support foreign language teaching comprises two damaged tape recorders. The library is too poorly stocked to promote reading in Arabic or English. School transport is unsafe. Students do not use seat belts even when they are available, and the school was recently fined for overcrowding of a bus after a parent complained. There is no canteen, and the food storage arrangements and areas for students to eat in are unhealthy and unhygienic.

The leadership of the school is weak at all levels. Self-evaluation is far too generous, so the school's leaders have no clear understanding of its strengths or areas for development. The strategic plan is imprecise; it does not identify the timescales, financial implications or intended outcomes necessary for it to be

effective. Staff are given instructions by the principal in terms of teaching strategies, but these are not followed up to see if they are implemented or have any impact on learning. Teachers are keen to improve but the principal and vice principal do not know enough about what is going on in classrooms to provide informed support to teachers or students. In addition, their low aspirations convey a negative message to teachers about students' abilities. For example, they accept project work that relies solely on copying and pasting information from the internet, and the principal states that grade 9 students are too young to engage in research.

Poor resources and the lack of training for teachers severely hold back the school's ability to improve, or to provide value for money. Fees are low. The current audit statement shows a significant donation to a political organisation in Palestine, which reduces available income for use by the school. Teachers' contracts are honoured, but their low salaries mean the school has difficulty in attracting staff, specifically male teachers. Of the 65 staff, 63 are female. The principal can give many reasons for why the school has not improved, but has failed to take action to overcome them. The senior leaders do not have the drive or capacity to improve the school.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the quality and effectiveness of senior leaders by ensuring that they:
 - i. provide drive and direction for the school;
 - ii. increase their understanding of good classroom practice and provide support to teachers to improve teaching; and
 - iii. raise their expectations of what students are capable of.
2. Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and use the results to devise a coherent and informed school improvement plan that:
 - i. is focused on raising students' achievement;
 - ii. contains suitable time-scales;
 - iii. is underpinned by adequate finance and timely procurement procedures;
 - iv. identifies and holds to account key personnel for its implementation; and
 - v. is regularly and critically monitored by the school board.
3. Improve the effectiveness of subject supervisors by:
 - i. clearly establishing what they are required to do;
 - ii. providing them with a written job description;
 - iii. providing them with suitable training so they have the knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their role effectively; and

- iv. providing enough time for them to carry out their job.
4. Raise students' progress and attainment by:
 - i. improving the range of experiences in lessons so students are engaged and challenged;
 - ii. ensuring that KG children have a good range of opportunities for hands-on learning through play;
 - iii. encouraging teachers to broaden the curriculum by becoming less dependent on set texts;
 - iv. improving the learning environment, particularly in the boys' section;
 - v. ensuring resources are adequate to support and enrich learning in all subjects;
 - vi. using available data to inform planning and meet the needs of student of all abilities; and
 - vii. introducing high quality standardised tests, to benchmark school performance and individual students' academic progress.
5. Improve the care, protection and guidance students receive by:
 - i. ensuring no student is subject to any form of corporal punishment;
 - ii. introducing a child protection policy, with training on its implementation for all adults;
 - iii. eradicating all anti-social behaviour, especially in the boys' section;
 - iv. providing students with effective academic support and guidance so they can make informed choices about their futures;
 - v. devising a positive behaviour policy and ensuring it is consistently implemented; and
 - vi. providing access for boys to appropriate male role models so they have an adult to talk to.
6. Attend to the breaches of ADEC regulations, and health and safety concerns, communicated to the school as a matter of urgency.