



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



Private School Inspection Report

Palestine Private Academy

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

Iqraa

Palestine Private Academy

Inspection Date	1 - 4 November 2015
Date of previous inspection	26 - 29 January 2014

General Information		Students	
School ID	170	Total number of students	1187
Opening year of school	January 1981	Number of children in KG	150
Principal	Mahmoud Hijah	Number of students in other phases	Primary 631 Middle 406
School telephone	+971 (0) 3 7678914	Age range	4 years to 15 years
School Address	Al Muwaiji, Al Ain	Grades or Year Groups	KG – Grade 9
Official email (ADEC)	palestine.pvt@adec.ac.ae	Gender	Mixed – Boys: 556 Girls: 621
School Website	----	% of Emirati Students	Less Than 1 %
Fee ranges	AED 2,400 - AED 6,900	Largest nationality groups (%)	1. Jordanian 35% 2. Palestinian 22% 3. Syrian 21%
Licensed Curriculum		Staff	
Main Curriculum	Ministry of Education	Number of teachers	67
Other Curriculum	N/A	Number of Teaching Assistants (TAs)	5
External Exams/ Standardised tests	----	Teacher-student ratio	15:1 KG/ F 17:1 Other phases
Accreditation	-----	Teacher turnover	33%

Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	5
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	95
Number of joint lesson observations	0
Number of parents' questionnaires	110
Details of other inspection activities	Lesson observations; meetings; work scrutiny; review of documents; surveys; discussions with students, teachers, parents and the owner of the school

School	
School Aims	
School vision and mission	Vision: preparing a generation believing in God, able to look to the future with all its challenges, contributing to the renaissance of its country through professional development programs and interacting with the community's various bodies. Mission: Our school is looking forward to building generations of students who are able to learn, gain knowledge, take responsibility and establish strong links between school management, teachers and family to become one unit that creates an attractive learning environment and benefiting from the community's services and institutions.
Admission Policy	The school admits all applying students, provided capacity is available. Activities and interviews are used to determine the students' educational requirements.
Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)	The senior leadership team (SLT) comprises of the Principal, Vice Principal, subject coordinators, supervisors.

SEN and G&T Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

SEN Category	Number of students identified through external assessments	Number of other students identified by the school
Intellectual disability	0	0
Specific Learning Disability	1	0
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	0	0
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	0	0
Speech and Language Disorders	0	0
Physical and health related disabilities	1	0
Visually impaired	16	0
Hearing impaired	1	0
Multiple disabilities	0	0

G&T Details (Refer to ADEC SEN Policy and Procedures)

G&T Category	Number of students identified
Intellectual ability	1
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	7
Social maturity and leadership	2
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	1
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	27
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	42

The overall performance of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A	High performing (Outstanding, Very Good or Good)
Band B	Satisfactory (Acceptable)
Band C	In need of significant improvement (Weak or Very Weak)

School was judged to be:	BAND (C)	Very Weak
--------------------------	-----------------	------------------

	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
Performance Standards	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
Performance Standard 1: Students' achievement						
Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills						
Performance Standard 3: Teaching and assessment						
Performance Standard 4: Curriculum						
Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students						
Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management						

Summary Evaluation: The school's overall performance						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

The Performance of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall performance

The quality of education provided by the school is very weak. The school leadership and governance have failed to provide a safe and caring learning environment for all students. They have demonstrated very weak capacity to effectively address the required school improvement needs. There is a lack of vision and strategic planning that has resulted in an uncoordinated approach to overcoming the school's significant weaknesses.

A high turnover of teachers is a limiting factor. A high quality learning environment for students' has not been created. The quality of teaching is very weak. The curriculum and its delivery are not appropriately modified to meet the needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN). Almost all students do not make the progress they are capable of. Students have not been adequately supported through the provision of appropriate resources. School leadership capacity to improve the school is very weak as there is a lack of understanding of effective strategies to overcome the weaknesses in teaching, learning and student outcomes.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

Progress in tackling the areas for improvement since the last inspection has been very weak. Students' 21st century skills are still not being developed by teachers in their lessons. Collaboration, research, and independent skills are evident in very few lessons. There has been no progress in the use of assessment by the school. Teachers still do not set challenging targets, adequately measure student progress over time and ensure that tasks in lessons are matched to the needs of all. Training for teachers and leaders for evaluating the work of the school has brought about little change or impact upon classroom teaching, learning and student outcomes. Information and communications technology (ICT) provision is solely provided by two laboratories with a set of computers in each, with no other resources being evident in classrooms. The school has introduced art into the timetable. The quality of school self-evaluation is now much weaker than it was at the time of the last inspection.

The leadership of the school will require very significant external support to raise academic standards.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

These skills are very weak. The school has made little effort to introduce any changes to the curriculum to promote innovation. Teachers have not heard of

this initiative and no continuous professional development (CPD) has been provided, so innovation is neither embedded in the curriculum nor is it a part of the overall school culture. In KG, children are not allowed to talk to each other and this seriously hampers their communication skills. In all grades there is too much teacher control and domination of lessons to allow opportunities for creativity, originality and independent learning and thinking. If given the opportunity, students can interact with each other and collaborate. This does happen occasionally in English lessons. Cramped classrooms in the boys' section, with large group sizes in many classes hinder opportunities for quality interaction and collaboration between students. The curriculum has not been adapted or enhanced to spark students' interest or encourage the use of personal initiative.

The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- a large majority of the relationships among students are mutually supportive
- standards in Islamic education are in line with curriculum expectations
- students have a good understanding and appreciation of Islamic values
- students have good levels of respect and knowledge for the heritage and culture of the UAE.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- the urgent need to ensure that child protection procedures are more rigorous and immediately implemented so that corporal punishment is no longer used in the school
- students' achievement across the range of subjects and phases
- the rigour and understanding of school self-evaluation
- identification and recognition of the most important strengths and weaknesses in school performance
- the quality of lesson planning, teaching and assessments to be more focused on meeting the needs of both individuals and groups of students
- development of the role and accountability of middle leaders
- the need for leadership at all levels to understand their roles and accountability to ensure standards improve at a swift pace
- provision of increased quality resources and teaching that encourages play, exploring, discovery and independence in the KG.

Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	Weak	Acceptable	Acceptable	
	Progress	Weak	Acceptable	Acceptable	
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	
Arabic (as a Second Language)	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	
Social Studies	Attainment	N/A	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	N/A	Weak	Weak	
English	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	
Mathematics	Attainment	Weak	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	Weak	Weak	Weak	
Science	Attainment	Very Weak	Weak	Weak	
	Progress	Very Weak	Weak	Weak	
Language of instruction (if other than English and Arabic as First Language)	Attainment				
	Progress				
Other subjects (Art, Music, PE)	Attainment	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	
	Progress	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	
Learning Skills (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)		Weak	Weak	Weak	

The school does not administer any external benchmarking tests. Attainment cannot therefore be objectively measured against international or national comparisons. The absence of any standardisation procedure means that the trend data produced by the school lacks validity. School data indicates that standards have fluctuated significantly over the last three years. Standards of attainment in Islamic education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science rose during 2013/14 and fell again during 2014/15.

Attainment as measured against authorised and licensed curriculum standards is weak in all subjects except Islamic education where it is acceptable. The development of learning skills is weak across all grades.

On entry to the school, all students speak English as an additional language (EAL) and have very limited skills in speaking, reading and writing. Most students do not demonstrate the levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that are in line with curriculum expectations. Attainment and progress in Islamic education are acceptable. Most students have clear knowledge about Islamic culture and sufficient ability to read and memorise the Holy Qur'an. A large minority are able to apply knowledge regarding the Pillars of Islam.

Attainment on entry to KG is very weak in English, mathematics and science. In Arabic it is weak. Attainment at end of KG2 is very weak in English and does not meet national expectations. KG2 children have very limited vocabulary and know only a few words of English. In mathematics, children count by rote to 10 but have no understanding of the value of number. In Arabic, children cannot recognise common words containing high frequency sounds.

Progress in English, mathematics, science and Arabic is weak as teaching does not challenge or meet the needs of the range of abilities. There is no progress from KG1 to KG2 in English, mathematics or science. Both more and less able students are not challenged appropriately because teachers do not use assessment effectively. The subject knowledge of English teachers is weak and they do not pronounce words correctly. Leadership in KG, English, mathematics, science, and Arabic, is very weak; coordinators do not have a clear understanding of the needs of students or their attainment. There is no effective system to regularly measure students' academic progress.

Performance Standard 2: Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
---	----	---------	--------	------

Personal development	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	

The majority of students in all grades behave well, whilst also being well-mannered. Relationships between students themselves are positive with the majority of them also respectful to teachers. A minority of students expressed feelings of insecurity or felt threatened by some staff due to corporal punishment and verbal threats being used in lessons.

Most students do not have the skills to be innovative, take risks in their learning or enough opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills. In lessons, many students are compliant and have passive attitudes towards learning as a result of low challenge and slow pace being provided for them by teachers. Students lack a positive work ethic. Too many students, especially in KG, rely too much on teachers to help them. They are not confident in suggesting initiatives, with their creativity skills being underdeveloped. Where given the opportunity they can excel. For example, in one English Grade 9 lesson, four students had researched the life of Charles Dickens, which was then shared with their class and demonstrated students' good research skills, presentation skills and independent thinking.

Students have good appreciation of the role and values of Islam in UAE society. They are attentive to the Holy Qur'an when it is recited during assembly and in lessons. They use many quotations from the Holy Qur'an. Their appreciation of their own culture and heritage and knowledge about other world cultures is lacking for example they do not know about pearl diving. Students have a limited understanding of the need to protect the environment, conserve energy or learn about and experience other world cultures. They have little involvement as volunteers within the local community.

In all grades except KG, very few students adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. They bring sweets to school and the cafeteria does not offer many healthy food choices. Students have limited responsibilities in the school, other than supervising the

movement of students during assembly and break times. This is a low level of student involvement so their influence on their school is minimal. Attendance at 96% so far this year is very good.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
------------------------------------	----	---------	--------	------

Teaching for effective learning	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	
Assessment	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	

The quality of teaching is very weak. Most lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be weak or very weak. Teaching in English, mathematics, science, Arabic and social studies is weak, with KG being very weak. Teaching in Islamic education is acceptable. In all subjects, teachers dominate by talking too much, repeatedly going over examples on the white board themselves or by selecting students from the class. This does not effectively meet students' needs, with many accomplishing little during the lesson. Lessons in English and science are textbook or worksheet driven.

Teachers have good subject knowledge in Arabic, Islamic education, mathematics and science. English teachers have acceptable subject knowledge in middle school grades. In English from KG and primary grades, teachers have weak knowledge of English and do not understand how students learn. A few teachers in mathematics, English and science know how well their students are learning, but have no strategies to support their progress.

In mathematics and science, objectives are shared with students and teachers make adequate use of data show projectors. In Islamic education, learning objectives are clear, with some acceptable use of ICT and time management. Also, in Islamic education, teachers draw cross curricular links with Arabic and science and sometimes use plenaries at the end of lessons to assess learning. A few examples of good levels of teacher-student interactions were observed in Arabic and in the girls' upper grades in mathematics.

There are no effective systems to monitor progress. Scrutiny of student workbooks revealed that many teachers just tick work with little or no comment or encouragement. Students do not know whether they are being successful and what they need to do to improve. They are provided with few opportunities for creativity,

individual interpretation, experimentation, with minimal planning to enable students to apply critical thinking, problem solving or independent learning skills in relevant contexts. This does not allow students time to reflect or consider innovative ways of doing things.

Lesson planning and implementation do not cater for the full range of abilities. Work that is planned specifically for lower and higher ability students is not often observed in actual lessons. Students respond well if provided with opportunities to think for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a teacher was using a programme for reflection of mathematical shapes and students were able to hypothesise, discuss with their groups and achieve a very successful outcome.

The quality of assessment practices and procedures is very weak. There are no external benchmarking tests, so the school cannot be objectively measured against international or national comparisons. Internal assessment procedures are very weak in all subjects. Standardised testing is not used to gauge progress over time of individual students or any groups.

Assessment for learning is not understood or implemented, the result being that pace of learning and the level of challenge in the majority of lessons is very weak. The outcomes of the learning that occurs during lessons is not used to plan future lessons that challenge students of different abilities. Target setting and assessment are not used to develop students' understanding or group work. They are therefore unable to formulate necessary actions to improve learning opportunities.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
-----------------------	----	---------	--------	------

Curriculum design and implementation	Very Weak	Weak	Weak	
Curriculum adaptation	Very Weak	Weak	Weak	

There has been no significant development since the previous inspection and many of the weaknesses in the curriculum remain. The curriculum implementation in primary and middle phases is weak, in KG it is very weak. The curriculum lacks breadth and balance and fails to motivate or challenge students sufficiently. There are few opportunities for students to develop their own ideas, make links with other subjects, or connect learning with real life situations. The curriculum in the majority of lessons, fails to apply learning beyond textbook exercises and many of these are not fully completed. There are gaps in the coverage of the curriculum so new

learning does not build sufficiently upon previous work. This adversely affects students' achievements, particularly the development of basic skills.

There is no modification of the curriculum to ensure the needs of those above and below average ability are addressed. Lesson plans indicate the learning needs of different groups, but these are not based on assessments. Moreover, this planning is not evident in practice. Planning in both primary and middle school phases for English, mathematics and science, is directly from the textbook resulting in limited creativity and teaching innovation in lessons. The school does not review, adjust or extend the curriculum on offer to students.

The planning in KG does not take into account that very young children learn best through practical and direct hands-on experiences. There is no continuity between KG1 and KG2 as children are being taught the same objectives. For example in mathematics lessons both grade levels were learning numbers '1-5' and the letter 'E'. In KG, all lessons are very teacher directed and children have no choice in what they do and there is no stretch or challenge. For example, a student in KG1 was asked by an inspector to count up to ten, which the child did easily; the teacher intervened and said that it was '5' day and the student could only do work in relation to '5' and not go beyond it. Planning and delivery of lessons do not make cross-curricular links. This means most of the learning that the children are exposed to is relatively meaningless and they are unable to make connections to real life examples.

There is not a diverse enough range of activities or resources that allow students to know more about the world around them and to fully appreciate similarities and differences. There are very few opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular activity. There are a few links made between subjects such as in mathematics lessons where ICT is used to enhance mathematical understanding. English textbooks sometimes make links to other subjects. For example, students learn about the cities and countries as the River Nile flows through on its route to the Mediterranean Sea. They also learn about the life of the explorer and writer Ibn Battuta.

The school has organised a few cultural visits to help students become aware of the area in which they live but the provision is very weak. The appreciation of UAE tradition and culture permeates the social studies curriculum. For example, planned events focus on traditional dancing, Flag Day and National Day. In assemblies, students learn about the UAE such as the life and strong influence Sheikh Zayed had on the Emirates Society.

Performance Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
---	----	---------	--------	------

Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/ safeguarding	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	
Care and support	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak	

The school has very weak formal procedures for the safeguarding of students. An appropriate child protection policy is in place however staff do not have a full understanding of it. They have not had recent relevant training. New teachers have had no training since they arrived this year. Corporal punishment of students is taking place with teachers and senior leadership hitting students. Verbal mistreatment is also taking place with students being called ‘animals’ by teachers in lessons. Many students from different grades individually approached the inspection team to let them know of their concerns. In the majority of lessons relationships between students and most of their teachers is acceptable.

Arrangements to ensure campus security are adequate. Records are appropriately kept in order and relevant certificates are in place. The school premises are not adequately maintained. Fire alarms were inoperable and notices placed over them. Toilets flood and have no soap or tissues available. In KG toilets pans are of too large a size for children this age. In many classrooms, the door handles are missing. The boys’ section is particularly poorly maintained with cramped classrooms and corridors that are dark and narrow. Very little natural light is available to students in these classrooms. Playground shading for boys is too small for the number of students. The playground is poorly maintained with many trip hazards. Display of student work is very weak, with few notice boards available and with those that are present often having torn displays with very little student work or evidence of celebration. Students do not have sufficient awareness about keeping a healthy environment. There is a lot of garbage on the ground during break time and when students leave classes. The canteen is very crowded and this results in some students at the end of the break being unable to buy food. KG children bring healthy food to school.

The school does not have ramps, a lift access to the second floor or any adaptations to the building to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities. The school

has appropriate procedures to ensure that school transport is well maintained. However, the school has weak procedures to monitor and ensure safety of students using buses at the start and end of the day.

The school does not have an SEN specialist and provides very limited support for students who require additional learning support and those who are gifted or talented. The latter group are not identified sufficiently well. These students do not make adequate progress because there are no intervention strategies in place. There is no prayer room for boys.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

Leadership and management Indicators	
The effectiveness of leadership	Very Weak
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Very Weak
Partnerships with parents and the community	Very Weak
Governance	Very Weak
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Very Weak

Leadership of the school is very weak. The senior leadership has not shown enough rigour, direction or a pace of change necessary to improve the school. There has been very little improvement since the last inspection. The school does not have an effective self-evaluation form (SEF). The one provided is no more than a judgment grade for each standard with no evidence shown as to how the judgment was arrived at.

School evaluation is very weak and limited due to the absence of external benchmarking and the lack of standardised assessment data. The quality of information gained by the school has very limited value and validity. Middle leaders have little impact on school performance because they have had very little training and have no authority to make changes. Role descriptions, where they exist, have no impact statements, expectations or accountability factors built into them. They are not being held to account by senior leaders for the outcomes of students in their areas of responsibility.

The monitoring procedures and processes in the school are very weak and do not



improve teaching. Few lesson observations are undertaken. Where they do they have no real focus, little target setting for teachers, or review dates when improvements should be made by. In nearly all subjects, the curriculum leaders had no overview of standards with their knowledge being only for the classes they taught.

Professional development is very limited and not effective. This term the school has employed the services of an outside continued professional development (CPD) provider to provide overall training. The focus of their input is based on staff surveys only as opposed to the senior leadership determining where their focus should be to bring about overall school improvement.

There is a Governing Council but it has not met for over a year. The minutes of the meetings indicate that there is no focus on standards or holding the principal to account for them. The Parent Council meetings follow a similar pattern of few meetings taking place. The parental involvement and influence on the school is minimal and very weak. Communications with parents is limited to three consultations per year. Record cards are being introduced this term for the first time. Parents voice the opinion that they like the school and appreciate the work they are doing.

Teacher turnover at 33% is very high. Induction processes are very weak for new staff, especially in child protection training. There are currently two vacancies in the school for a Social Worker for the boys and SEN coordinator. This seriously impairs the support and guidance for the boys and SEN and gifted and talented students.

Resources are very weak. The school has many cramped classrooms, especially in the boys' section. Classroom resources are mostly textbooks with insufficient materials to support the lessons or to allow students full access to the curriculum. In KG, ICT, science and mathematics there is a serious lack of quality resources that encourage exploration, discovery and experiential learning.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Eradicate corporal punishment immediately.
2. Allow students more opportunities to meet their potential and take more control of their own learning by ensuring that teachers stop dominating lessons by the use of demonstrations and talking over students when they are set tasks.
3. Improve the rigour of school assessment processes by:
 - i. thoroughly analysing student performance data
 - ii. monitoring systematically the quality of teaching and learning
 - iii. ensuring there are quality processes to identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in school performance.
4. Develop accurate self-evaluation practices and routines that enable it to identify its main strengths weakness and priorities with particular regard to the quality of teaching and adaptation of the curriculum.
5. Develop the role and accountability and provide quality professional development of middle leaders so they become 'leaders of learning'.
6. Leadership at all levels needs to review and understand their accountability and leadership function in ensuring standards improve at a swift pace.
7. Improve KG teaching, learning and resources so that students are provided with a rich curriculum of experiential learning.