



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



Summary Inspection Report

Pearl Primary School

Published in 2013

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Pearl Primary School	
Inspection Date	6 th – 9 th May, 2012
School ID#	029
Type of School	Private
Curriculum	British
Number of Students	482
Age Range	KG1 – Grade 6
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Maureen Chapman
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Introduction

The school inspection was conducted by three inspectors, who observed 59 lessons and saw every class in the school at least once. They met with the school's leadership team, teachers, support staff, groups of students and a representative from Aldar Academies. They also observed assemblies, break times and extra-curricular activities.

Description of the School

The Pearl Primary School opened in 2007 in its current location. The school is owned by Aldar Academies. It aims to provide an education that develops the highest attainment and standards, and promote life-long learning. It aims to maximise the learning potential of every student and, through a range of creative, imaginative and challenging learning experiences, encourage them to develop their knowledge and skills. It also aims to instil in all students a sense of responsibility and an understanding of the need for courtesy and consideration to others.

The student population is made up of 51 different nationalities. The largest national group are Emirati at 22%, followed by British at 19%. Approximately 55% of the students are Muslim, and 56% speak English as an additional language; 37% speak Arabic as their first language. There are 119 students in the kindergarten (KG) classes and 363 in the older primary classes. Overall there are 260 boys and 222 girls. Currently, 50 students have been diagnosed as needing support for non-severe special educational needs and 33 receive support for English as an additional language.

The annual school fees are AED 39,600 inclusive, regardless of grade. Teachers' monthly salaries range from AED 14,500 to AED 16,500. Overseas and locally recruited teachers get the same salary, but the overseas teachers receive an additional package, which includes accommodation, flights, cargo and medical insurance.

The principal heads the leadership team, with support from the deputy principal and four key stage co-ordinators, under the governance of Aldar Academies. Each key stage co-ordinator is responsible for two school grades as well as one UK core subject - English, mathematics, science or information and communication technology (ICT) - across all grades.

The Effectiveness of the School

Band A

Grade 2

Inspectors judged The Pearl Primary School to be a high-performing school.

The last inspection in March 2010 also rated the school as Band A and made three recommendations for development. These were to:

- i. improve the teaching of Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies
- ii. introduce a topic-based approach to learning across the curriculum
- iii. carry out more rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation throughout the school.

The school has responded very well to all three recommendations. The Arabic teachers have received very good support and training in facilitating more interactive and collaborative learning. This is apparent in the classroom, where students are enjoying lessons more and making better progress, though not yet at the very high level seen in other core subjects. A theme-based curriculum is now in place across all subject areas. This allows for more integration between subjects, so that deeper learning takes place. It has also led to closer collaboration between class teachers and specialists such as Arabic and Islamic studies teachers. Monitoring and self-evaluation through consistent assessment and target setting are now very good.

The Pearl Primary meets its aims very well. Overall attainment compares very favourably with international standards. Standards in English, mathematics and science, as seen in class and evidenced by UK Standardised Assessment Test results, are outstanding. Students in English classes display an excellent understanding and use of extended vocabulary and a clear understanding of text organisation, even in grade 1. Students make outstanding progress within sessions and from year to year in English, mathematics and science. Progress in Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies has improved and is now good because of the recent changes in teaching style, but their impact has yet to raise attainment above satisfactory. Students' written assignments in Arabic are usually quite short and do not extend their skills. In some non-core subjects, such as physical education, French and history/geography, progress is satisfactory but students are not always challenged enough to maximise their achievements. Students acquire excellent basic skills in the lower grades, and targeted support where required helps them to access the English-medium curriculum very effectively. Some outstanding work is done in small group or individual pre-teaching sessions for students who are less able or have special educational needs. This work allows them to participate in theme-based activities across all subjects with confidence. General support for students who speak English as an

additional language is extremely good. As a result, some of the highest attaining students in reading and writing in grade 6 come from this group. Students' progress is regularly evaluated in most subjects through internationally recognised standardised assessments, and good use is made of this information to promote their learning

The development of a moral framework for students is outstanding. It is reinforced regularly during assembly and lessons. Behaviour is exemplary at all times. Students are very respectful of staff and show respect and compassion for others. Students have helped to promote a friendship bench in the courtyard, where those who have no-one to play with can sit. There are targets to shorten the length of time a child has to sit for before being invited to join in play. In assembly, many children said they had used the bench successfully. There are excellent opportunities for students to take on responsibility as prefects or by helping the teacher in class. They are also encouraged to give presentations and perform before others, even in the KG classes. These duties and activities are very effective in developing the self-confidence and maturity essential for successful transition to the next stage in their education and for future leadership. In addition, students benefit from an outstanding range of extension and extra-curricular activities that are organised by the school. Many attend the 30 plus different extra-curricular activities run every term after school, including sports, arts and crafts, a homework club and master classes for gifted & talented students.

The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers in English, mathematics and science display excellent subject knowledge. The skills of teachers in Arabic and Islamic studies are less well developed, but are clearly improving through the focused training. Students are extremely capable, collaborative and independent learners. They plan their own research and learning. This is supported, especially in science, by teachers giving them open-ended tasks. A recently introduced 'Think Pink' marking scheme uses pink pen for comments on students' work to show where they can make improvements. They are encouraged to self-correct, research, and apply learning to future situations. In all classes learning aims, targets and assessment feedback are made extremely clear so students know exactly what they have to do to succeed. Teachers plan carefully for different ability groups, both in class activities and expected outcomes. The school is very well supplied with support staff, but they are not always used effectively throughout each lesson. Some are well qualified and experienced, but others are not sufficiently involved in planning to know how they can help at every stage of the lesson.

The school's rich and broad curriculum ensures that students achieve very well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The part of the curriculum

that follows Ministry of Education (MoE) guidelines, namely Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies, is improving in comparison with other UAE schools, but expectations for students are not yet sufficiently high to raise attainment levels significantly, particularly in writing in Arabic.

All subjects are now integrated through the introduction of themes. This allows English language excellence to be promoted and targeted across all English-medium taught subjects. In mathematics students are grouped in ability sets, so that the pitch of the work is correct for all students. The KG curriculum is designed to maximise the children's skills acquisition, especially in early reading and phonics (the sounds that letters make). They are given opportunities to practise the skills they learn during 'free flow' activity sessions with both guided and self-selected play activities.

Opportunities are missed to maximise the students' learning about the culture of the UAE. The flag is not raised on a daily basis, nor is the national anthem sung or UAE culture celebrated by the school as a community. The UAE values, culture and history are promoted and celebrated well in some classes and linked with curricular themes. This is not sufficiently consistent throughout the school to enrich students' understanding and knowledge of the country they live in.

Students who have special educational needs benefit from extremely effective personalized provision, as do students who speak English as an additional language. Such students participate in class actively alongside their peers and most reach expected standards in a short time. Gifted or talented students are given extension activities to ensure that they make accelerated progress in specific subjects. Staff support and guidance for students are outstanding, including the use of professional consultants where appropriate. For example, an educational psychologist visits the school several times a year to assess students identified as having special education needs. Each visit includes advisory sessions with parents and students to ensure that the type and level of support are continuing to fully meet the student's needs.

Excellent arrangements for all aspects of the safeguarding of students are underpinned by high-level security, stringent staff screening, and further supported by the curriculum. Comprehensive relevant policies are in place, and all the staff consistently adheres to them. Online safety is ensured when students access the internet through a 'nanny net' with firewall filters. Any unauthorised absence from school is followed up immediately. Students receive rewards for good behaviour, attendance, punctuality, hard work and attainment. Attendance and punctuality have improved since the introduction of class Teddy Bear awards and class privileges such as a film, popcorn or 10 minutes of extra break time.

Sanctions are fair and supportive. They emphasise solving problems through advice from teachers and early involvement of parents, rather than punishment.

The support for Muslim prayer is inadequate. The designated prayer room is very small and situated very close to the music rooms. The Islamic studies room is set up for prayer and can be used as an alternative, but students have limited access to it.

The school keeps the buildings and premises in very good condition. Maintenance is logged meticulously. There is a comprehensive review and replacement schedule to identify any deterioration of structure or facilities over time. The school ensures a clean and healthy environment for its students, and employs full-time cleaning and maintenance staff from contracted companies. The indoor play area is large, and there is sufficient shaded space outdoors for most physical education activities and play. Only the football pitch is not shaded. Most learning areas are also spacious. A few of the smaller specialist rooms can get overcrowded, but they are only used occasionally. The premises are very secure, and surrounded by a high wall. Two security staff are on duty at the entrance throughout the day to ensure all visitors sign in and out, and that all staff and parents wear an appropriate badge. Another security guard is on duty at the main gate at night.

An outstanding range of learning resources enhances the classrooms, the shared independent learning areas, the library and the teacher resource areas. Modern ICT facilities, including a wi-fi network, are available all around the school. There is a good mix of reference books, reading books, educational games and computer software. The library has 13 books for every student, although too few of these books are in Arabic. The music and sports departments have excellent equipment. The staff are mostly highly qualified. The teacher/student ratio of 1:12.6 is very good. The level of classroom support staff is also high, even in the older grades, although there are no Arabic-speaking support staff for Arabic lessons or in the KG classes. The Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies teachers are not deployed effectively, as they are often scheduled to teach across all seven year groups rather than building closer relationships with a smaller group of students and teachers.

Annual fees are in line with similar schools in Abu Dhabi, but Pearl Primary provides very good value for money in terms of the facilities and opportunities it offers, and the outcomes students achieve.

The principal provides outstanding leadership and provides a very clear vision and strategic direction for the school. These are embodied in its stated aims and aspirations to achieve excellence in standards of attainment, the quality of

teaching and resources, and the all-round care of students and staff. This vision is disseminated very effectively to all stakeholders, and everyone has worked together very quickly to successfully implement changes to address the recommendations of the last inspection. The principal works very closely with the management board and staff, and regularly seeks feedback and suggestions from parents and students. She is committed to devolved management, and the key stage co-ordinators are increasingly contributing to strategic decision-making with her support. The school has a very good track record of improvements, especially in teaching and learning, over the past two years and demonstrates a very good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Raise standards of attainment in Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies by:
 - i. further developing Arabic teachers' ability to deliver interactive collaborative lessons;
 - ii. scheduling the teaching of Arabic, so that each teacher works with fewer age groups and can plan more productively in collaboration with the class teachers; and
 - iii. raising the profile of Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies among all staff, students and their parents.
2. Increase students' knowledge and appreciation of UAE values, culture and history by fully integrating these aspects into the curriculum and daily life of the school.
3. Ensure that the spiritual needs of Muslim students are fully met by working to provide a suitable, accessible space for them to pray in.