



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



Private School Inspection Report

Polaris Private Academy

Academic Year 2016 – 2017

Iqraa

Polaris Private Academy

Inspection Date	January 23, 2017	to	January 26, 2017
Date of previous inspection	February 9, 2015	to	February 12, 2015

General Information	
School ID	219
Opening year of school	2011
Principal	Hatem Darwish
School telephone	+971 (0)2 642 5117
School Address	Al Najda Street, Al Dhafrah, Abu Dhabi.
Official email (ADEC)	Polaris.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School website	www.polarisschools.com
Fee ranges (per annum)	Vey low to low (AED 9,150 to AED 14,500)
Licensed Curriculum	
Main Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MoE)
Other Curriculum (if applicable)	---
External Exams/ Standardised tests	MoE in each grade
Accreditation	---

Students		
Total number of students	1223	
%of students per curriculum	Main Curriculum	100%
	Other Curriculum	---
Number of students in other phases	KG	216
	Primary:	458
	Middle:	267
	High:	282
Age range	4 to 19 years	
Grades or Year Groups	KG to Grade 12	
Gender	Boys and girls	
% of Emirati Students	2%	
Largest nationality groups (%)	1. Syrian: 20%	
	2. Jordanian: 19%	
	3. Egyptian: 18%	
Staff		
Number of teachers	73	
Number of teaching assistants (TAs)	10	
Teacher-student ratio	KG/ FS	1:24
	Other phases	1:15
Teacher turnover	22%	

Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	5
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	129
Number of joint lesson observations	12
Number of parents' questionnaires	34; return rate: 3%
Details of other inspection activities	Inspectors held discussions with the management body, principal, senior managers, teachers and other members of staff, children/students and parents. They reviewed a wide range of school documentation and students'/children's coursework. They observed assemblies, school activities, arrivals, departures and intervals.

School	
School Aims	'Our school main focus will be on achieving effective involvement of students by emphasizing student-centered classroom approach as well as activating the role of parents and the local community. The ultimate goal is to develop students as communicators, thinkers and a problem solver.'
School vision and mission	'High quality instruction, stimulating educational environment, effective community partnership, creative generation with high sense of belonging. Through sophisticated educational system and community partnership, our school will provide outstanding education to prepare a generation with high sense of faith, loyalty, and creativity of thinking and skills.'

Admission Policy	The admission policy is inclusive. KG to Grade 5 are interviewed; Grades 6 to 10 complete an entrance examination; and Grade 11 and 12 students have an interview prior to admission.
Leadership structure (ownership, governance and management)	Leadership comprises the principal, four heads of section for each phase and subject coordinators. The school is supported by the management board and a governing body.

SEN 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 internally
Intellectual disability	5	6
Specific Learning Disability	4	0
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	0	0
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3	0
Speech and Language Disorders	1	4
Physical and health related disabilities	3	0
Visually impaired	0	2
Hearing impaired	0	4
Multiple disabilities	0	0



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

G&T Category	Number of students identified
Intellectual ability	18
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	43
Social maturity and leadership	31
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	11
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	17
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	39

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)

The school was judged to be:	Band B	Acceptable
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	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						
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The Performance of the School

Evaluation of the school's overall performance

The overall performance of the school is acceptable. Most students' attainment is in line with curriculum expectations and their progress towards learning objectives is acceptable in most classes. The school maintained this performance during the recent period of significant curriculum change. Attainment and progress are good in the kindergarten (KG). The school's new leaders have taken steps to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, students' achievement has improved, particularly in the KG where classrooms and outside areas are developed well to meet the needs and interests of children. Across the whole school, boys and girls have respectful relationships with their teachers and acceptable attitudes to learning. They apply Islamic values consistently when they interact with each other, and their knowledge about Emirati culture and heritage is a strength. Subject coordinators are in the early stages of monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers themselves do not consistently use accurate data to meet students' individual needs. Students have few opportunities to be creative and independent. The school recognises the need to make better use of its specialist resources, such as the science laboratories, and to increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in classrooms for teaching and learning.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

The school has made acceptable improvements since the last inspection. Students' attainment and progress have improved in Islamic education, English, mathematics and science. The level of students' active participation in lessons has increased most in the KG where children can apply their knowledge and skills more independently.. Recent improvements in senior leaders' analysis of attainment data and identification of students' individual learning needs are resulting in interventions to support students' learning. Self-evaluation is more accurate and is contributing to professional development programmes to improve teaching. The impact of these improvements is not yet consistent enough across the whole school. Overall, however, school leaders' capacity to improve the school is acceptable.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

The school does not yet promote innovation effectively enough except in the KG where activities such as ‘rainbow day’ encourage all children to be creative and independent. At this phase, teachers make effective use of data-show facilities. A few activities are beginning to support innovation across the rest of the school including, for example, the ‘junior engineer’ competition. The school garden encourages those who take part to be inventive and contribute to improving the environment. Large touch-screen computers are now available in the minority of classrooms but these are not yet used effectively. Overall, the school has yet to develop or teach effectively the skills that underpin innovation.

The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- the learning environment, resources and leadership of the kindergarten
- the professional development programmes being used to improve the quality of teaching
- the attitudes of most students to learning and their relationships with teachers and each other
- students' understanding of Islamic values and their knowledge of Emirati culture.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- students' attainment and the quality of teaching, particularly at the primary, middle and high phases
- opportunities for students to be innovative, creative and independent learners
- teachers' use of information about students and assessment data to adapt lessons to meet the needs of all students
- the use of the specialist resources, including ICT, to promote students' learning
- the impact of middle leadership on developing the quality of teaching and promoting students' achievement.



Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

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



Students' attainment and progress are acceptable overall and good in the KG. KG attainment and progress data, linked to MoE age expectations, indicates good achievement. In the rest of the school, MoE standardised test data is insufficiently moderated and unreliable. Al Thanawiya pass rates, which included teachers' own assessments for Grade 12 in the summer of 2016, were high. The school did not provide data for external examinations taken in December 2016. Students' present coursework confirms that attainment is good in the KG and acceptable in the rest of the school. Overall, all groups of students, including those with special educational needs (SEN) or who are gifted and talented (G&T) make similar progress. Higher attaining students are often provided with work that does not accelerate their progress sufficiently.

Students' achievement overall is acceptable in Islamic education and it is good in the KG. In KG, the majority of children are attaining above age-related expectations, for example in the way they can explain how Allah protected Al Kaaba against Abrahah's attack. In Grade 3, most students attain in line with curriculum expectations. For example, they can describe confidently the benefits of fasting. By Grade 11, most can make links between Islamic instruction and their daily lives in line with curriculum expectations including, for example, when they talk about how to apply Islamic rules and instruction related to their families.

Students' achievement overall is acceptable in Arabic and it is good in the KG. By the end of KG, the majority of children can name the days of the week and describe the weather demonstrating speaking skills and understanding at levels above those expected for their age. In Grade 5, most can read age-appropriate paragraphs using accurate 'Tashkeel' and following grammar rules. By Grade 9, most students are aware of how to write for different purposes although the quality of their writing is inconsistent. Most students in middle and high phases can read Arabic text fluently with appropriate expressions and answer comprehension questions in line with curriculum standards.

In social studies, students' achievement is acceptable overall and good in the KG. The majority of children in the KG can identify and describe traditional UAE clothing with greater knowledge and confidence than expected for their age. In primary, most students' achievement is in line with curriculum expectations. For example, in Grade 4 they can list the main harbours in the UAE and locate them on maps. By Grade 12, most students can describe the roles of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and discuss the importance of having various energy sources.

Students' achievement overall is acceptable in English and it is good in the KG.



Reading and speaking skills are stronger than writing. Children enter the KG with few English skills. By the end of KG, the majority can understand instructions in English and hold conversations with their teachers at levels above those expected for their age. In primary, most students attain in line with curriculum expectations. For example, in Grade 1 they can sort words by their initial sound. By the end of high school, students can write texts using correct paragraph structure. Students have few opportunities to write extensively in English across the curriculum and, as a result, writing is generally below what is expected by age.

Students' achievement overall is acceptable in mathematics and it is good in the KG. By the end of KG, for example, the majority of children can count in English and predict what comes next in a pattern with confidence above that expected for their age. By the end of primary phase, most students have a sound understanding of positive and negative numbers and can plot these on graphs, at age-appropriate levels. In high school, most students apply age-appropriate mathematical concepts accurately. For example, most in Grade 12 can solve quadratic equations. Students have too few opportunities to apply their mathematics to solving practical problems related to the world.

Students' achievement is acceptable in science. Children make good progress and have good levels of attainment in the KG. The majority can describe how to stay healthy and explain the importance of personal hygiene at levels above those expected for their age. Students make acceptable progress for their age in primary and by Grade 4 most can accurately describe the water cycle. Skills in planning and carrying out practical investigations are less well developed due to under-use of the laboratories.

Students' achievement in other subjects is acceptable overall, although variable across subjects. Achievement in PE is consistently acceptable in all phases. In age-appropriate ways, most students develop a range of sporting skills and learn about the importance of health and fitness. In design, technology and innovation (DTI) achievement is weaker overall. Most students have acceptable ICT skills in all phases. Achievement in art and music is better because learning is integrated with other subjects. For example, children in KG develop singing and art skills through learning about the colours of the rainbow.

Students' learning skills are acceptable overall. For example in the KG, where skills are good, they can collaborate well to complete tasks and work for long periods without the direction of the teacher. Students in the primary and middle can complete basic research tasks and work together. As students become older they only occasionally have opportunities to take leadership roles.

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

The overall quality of students' personal and social development and their understanding of Islamic values are acceptable. Their innovation skills are weak. Children in the KG have more positive attitudes towards learning and better innovation skills because teachers systematically develop these in lessons. Across the school, relationships between students and adults lead to generally calm and purposeful lessons. Attendance is good at around 94% across the school. Punctuality to lessons is acceptable overall, although a few students regularly arrive after assemblies.

Students apply Islamic values consistently and show respect for others. This is noticeable during breaks when students socialise together. Almost all students are suitably knowledgeable about the broad aspects of UAE's heritage and culture. This is supported in social studies lessons and regular celebrations of cultural events such as National Day. During assemblies, students sing the national anthem and respectfully observe the flag. Students know about and respect the cultural backgrounds of others at the school.

Social responsibility and innovation skills are generally weak because the school has not yet focused sufficiently on promoting them. The student council gathers views through surveys but has limited responsibilities overall. A few students, such as those in the gardening club, show responsibility towards the local community by tending the school gardens. Class leaders are responsible for behaviour, tidiness and energy conservation. Older students help during parents' consultations. Overall, students only have a few opportunities to contribute to local and international communities. Children in the KG volunteer within the school to help distribute

resources in lessons.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The overall quality of teaching is acceptable. Most teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and all have benefited from recent training. This has improved the quality of teaching overall, most notably in the KG. Teachers in the KG regularly plan and deliver active and engaging lessons. They have developed the classroom environment more successfully by providing effective displays and a wider range of learning resources, including ICT, to link learning to the world. Across the rest of the school, further improvements have yet to be made to support teachers' understanding of how to match activities to students' interests and needs. For example, teachers do not make enough use of attainment data to modify lessons or use resources to enliven learning. Teachers in primary to high school still rely on workbooks and worksheets too much, partly because most teachers are required to move between classrooms. This limits the opportunities students have to write extensively, develop critical-thinking skills and be innovative. Teachers use questioning adequately to involve students in learning and to develop knowledge. Questions usually require only short answers and focus on the recall of facts. Questions lack challenge, especially for higher achieving students.

Students' formal coursework is assessed regularly and they are provided with helpful feedback. As a result, attainment and progress when compared to MoE standards have improved. Students' classwork is also marked regularly. Feedback on this work does not make clear how well students have achieved or what improvements can be made, and errors are often uncorrected. Students themselves do not have enough opportunities to review and critically analyse their own progress and plan their next steps. Lessons often finish abruptly and without an opportunity for students to compare their learning against learning objectives or targets. The school is using benchmarked attainment data increasingly to identify where students require additional teaching. As a result, additional classes are now available to help students in need of extra support.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum adaptation	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The overall quality of the curriculum is acceptable and with strengths at the KG. It is broad and balanced and meets all the requirements of the MoE licence. Students have too few opportunities to develop their interests and skills outside timetabled lessons, however. The KG curriculum ensures children link their learning across subjects and to the world, but not thereafter. Skills relating to innovation are beginning to be taught in Design Technology (DTI) but lessons are not yet challenging enough. As a result, students' innovation skills are not yet developing well. Senior leaders and subject leaders review the curriculum periodically. The school has managed the modifications to the curriculum generally well. For example, they have introduced general and advanced streams, business administration and more teaching in the medium of English. Challenges arising from changes to the scope and sequence of the curriculum and the availability of resources have now largely been resolved.

Adaptations to the curriculum are most successful in the KG where teachers complete a thorough analysis of children's needs and adapt the curriculum to accelerate learning. In the KG, children who require extra support and those who are talented are provided with activities appropriate to their needs. In the primary to high phases, students nearly always receive the same level of work. As a result, more-able students often find work too easy and students who require extra support occasionally struggle to make a start. In the KG, the curriculum has an increased focus on developing children's English language skills. It is thematic and this exploits children's natural curiosity and enables them to make links between areas of learning and apply their learning to the world. For example, when they learn about their bodies, they make links between traditional foods and the Islamic values of cleanliness. In the primary to high phases, learning is adequately linked to Emirati and UAE culture through the textbooks used in all subjects. As yet, the curriculum does not integrate learning skills and innovation effectively in all subjects.

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

The protection, care, guidance and support of students Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection/safeguarding	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Care and support	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Arrangements for protection, care, guidance and support are acceptable overall. Students and school staff are made aware of child protection procedures in assemblies, and parents receive social media communications and newsletters. The school website also provides useful information. The premises are safe, secure and adequately maintained. School procedures to ensure safety on transport are appropriate. Specialist facilities are adequate and suitable adaptations have been made to enable all students to be fully integrated. Arrangements in the KG ensure children are well supervised during lesson changeovers and taught how to move safely around the school. The start of lessons in the primary to high phases can be delayed because a few students leave their classes and can be slower to settle.

The school canteen provides healthy food options and fitness is promoted in PE lessons. The minority of students still bring unhealthy food from home. Relationships between students and staff are promoted well and this has led to improvements in behaviour. Social workers provide academic support and help older students with career and further education choices. Systems to analyse and support students' emotional development are underdeveloped. Bullying is infrequent and, if it does occur, it is dealt with effectively. The school has formal processes to identify students who have special educational needs. The specialist teacher ensures teachers are aware of students' needs. Support for higher achievers is less developed. Parents benefit from regular newsletters which describe school activities and termly reports about their children's progress. Further work is required to encourage students' punctuality by working with parents to promote the importance of being at school on time.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

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

The overall quality of leadership and management is acceptable. Senior leaders provide clear direction and have ensured that standards of attainment have improved. They demonstrate commitment to national priorities and promote inclusion. Appropriate steps are now being taken to check external staff by requesting their qualifications and clearance to work in schools be provided by their employers.

All staff inform the preparation of the self-evaluation form (SEF) and school development plan (SDP). These documents are mostly accurate and make appropriate use of data. Leaders have completed a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of teaching. As a result, well-planned professional development is leading to improvements in teaching. Leaders recognise the need to increase the responsibility and accountability of subject coordinators.

Parents are kept informed, including about changes to the curriculum, by regular and informative newsletters and reports. Their views are sought through surveys and consultation meetings. Regular communications ensure they take an active role in supporting good learning behaviour. The school's website provides adequate information to help parents understand more about their child's learning. A few links to the local and national community are developing.

Governance includes representatives from all stakeholders. Governors conduct regular and systematic reviews, including lesson observations and learning walks. They use these reviews to hold leaders to account. Governors have responded to the turn-over in school staff, including redistributing responsibilities when positions become vacant. The school is adequately staffed and mostly runs smoothly. The specialist facilities are adequate yet underused. Leaders recognise the need to move to teacher bases to improve the learning environment and to improve the use



teachers make of learning technologies, resources and active learning approaches.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve students' learning and innovation skills by ensuring that:
 - i. students are fully involved in planning their own work and critically reflecting on their progress to identify ways to improve
 - ii. students collaborate often to complete tasks that require them to apply knowledge and skills
 - iii. students have more opportunities to transfer knowledge between subjects, be entrepreneurial and creative.
2. Improve students' attainment by ensuring that:
 - i. students have significantly increased opportunities to write extensively in Arabic and English
 - ii. students apply their scientific and mathematical knowledge more frequently to practical and real-world problems
 - iii. students relate their Islamic education and social studies learning to the UAE and wider world contexts.
3. Improve the standard of teaching further by ensuring:
 - i. ICT and other learning technologies are integrated frequently into lessons
 - ii. teachers make effective use of benchmarked attainment data to respond to the learning needs of individuals and groups
 - iii. teachers adapt lesson plans and resources to meet the individual learning needs of students
 - iv. middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching, provide professional support and hold teachers accountable for students' attainment
 - v. teachers are trained in how to make effective use of questioning.