



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First التعليم أولاً



Private School Inspection Report

Pearl Primary School

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

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Pearl Primary School

Inspection Date	11 – 14 October 2015
Lead Inspector	Bruce Berry
Date of previous inspection	28 – 31 October 2013

General Information	
School ID	29
Opening year of school	2007
Principal	Abigail Fishbourne
Proprietor	Aldar Academies
Chair of Governors	Mohamed Al Mubarak
School telephone	+971 (0)2 641 8887
Fax	+971 (0)2 642 4046
School Address	PO Box 128484, Abu Dhabi
Official email (ADEC)	pearlprimary@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.pearlprimary.sch.ae

Licensed Curriculum	
Main Curriculum	British National Curriculum
Other Curriculum	
Language of instruction	English
External Exams/ Standardised tests	SATs for Year 2 & 6 Arabic EMSA tests - Year5
Accreditation	British Schools Middle East British Schools Overseas

Students	
Total number of students	699
Number of children in KG	175
Number of students in other phases	Primary 524
Age range	4 – 11 years
Grades or Year Groups	FS to Year 6
Gender	Mixed
Percentage of Emirati Students	29%
Largest nationality groups (%)	1.UAE 29% 2.UK 12% 3. Jordanian 7.8%
Number of students with SEN	58
Number of students with G&T	10

Staff	
Senior leadership team	Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of Arabic, Inclusion Manager and Admin Manager
Number of teachers	55
Number of TAs	31
Teacher-student ratio	1:20 KG/ FS 1:20 Other phases
Teacher turnover	25%

Fee ranges

AED 40,400 (premium)

Introduction

Inspection activities	
Number of inspectors deployed	4
Number of inspection days	4
Number of lessons observed	76
Number of joint lesson observations	9
Number of parents' questionnaires	87 (14.3 %)
Details of other inspection activities	Lesson observations; meetings; work scrutiny; review of documents; surveys; discussions with parents and students

School	
School Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer a curriculum that provides knowledge, challenge and progression delivered through high quality teaching, learning and assessment provide opportunities for students to develop individual abilities and talents through creativity, sport, teamwork, leadership, performance and service promote intercultural understanding and support mother-tongue language development through the curriculum, enrichment and charity, action activities ensure students are equipped with the skills and attributes they need to succeed as life-long learners in a 21st century world –information technology, creative thinking, critical analysis, problem solving and decision making provide a caring and supportive environment in which students respect each other, feel safe and happy, and in which they thrive
School vision and mission	<p>“every child an achiever”</p> <p>“to provide a world-class, holistic, international education</p>

	for students whilst at the same time ensuring the highest standards of academic achievement”
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, deputy principal (DP), inclusion manager, head of Arabic studies and administration manager (associate member). The middle leadership group comprises of year group leaders, lead teachers for specialist subjects and SLT. The school is owned by Aldar Academies. The strategic governance group (SGG) body is made up of parents, Aldar Academies’ CEO, a parent university representative, principal, DP and head of Arabic.

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

SEN Category	Number of students identified	Details
Intellectual disability	0	
Specific Learning Disability	34	Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia
Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (ED/ BD)	7	
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	5	
Speech and Language Disorders	9	
Physical and health related disabilities	1	
Visually impaired	0	
Hearing impaired	0	
Multiple disabilities	2	

G&T Category	Number of students identified	Details
Intellectual ability	2	EP reports indicate high IQ
Subject-specific aptitude (e.g. in science, mathematics, languages)	7	
Social maturity and leadership	0	
Mechanical/ technical/ technological ingenuity	0	
Visual and performing arts (e.g. art, theatre, recitation)	1	
Psychomotor ability (e.g. dance or sport)	0	

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 A	Very Good
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Performance Standards	Band A High Performing			Band B Satisfactory	Band C In need of significant improvement	
	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 Pearl Primary School provides a very good quality of education, with some outstanding features. Senior leaders, staff, proprietor and governors have, in a short time, transformed the leadership structures, implemented curriculum innovations and created opportunities for consistency of learning aligned to students' needs. The changes have been fully embraced by all staff, students and parents and are creating a consistently high quality of education.

Students make very good progress across many areas of learning. The excellent assessment strategies provide students with challenging work aligned to their identified needs. The outstanding personal development and care and guidance procedures enable students to effectively develop their academic and social skills in a caring and safe environment. Emirati students make less progress than other groups, particularly in writing. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slow and the challenge for some students too low.

Progress made since last inspection and capacity to improve

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a very high standard of educational provision. The newly established dispersed leadership structure has empowered staff to take ownership and responsibility for areas of learning. Staff have passionately embraced the changes and form a united unit in driving up standards. The cross-curricular innovations enable students to learn subject skills in a more integrated way. Arabic teachers have embraced student-centred learning strategies and this has a beneficial impact on students' engagement and progress. The self-evaluation form (SEF) presents an accurate assessment of the quality of the school. The school has excellent capacity to maintain and improve the high quality education already being provided.

Development and promotion of innovation skills

Most students demonstrate excellent self-discipline in lessons and around the school. They help one another unprompted and share and collaborate readily. Critical thinking is a feature in the majority of lessons. Independent use of information and communication technology (ICT) is a common feature of lessons in all subjects. The high quality curriculum review process ensures innovation is incorporated into planning. This includes exciting and challenging cross-curricular topic theme days, such as 'the Vikings are coming'. The students' science club focuses on experimentation and innovation. The new innovation room encourages independent research. Students initiate some of the activities in the extra-curricular programme. They have run a charity fund-raising campaign for

Nepal and Syria in the recent past. External moderation of standards is an innovative assessment strategy introduced by the Aldar Academies Group to benchmark standards across their group of schools.

The inspection identified the following as key areas of strength:

- high quality leadership and governance provide vision, impetus and direction for continually improving the existing high standards
- staff are committed, energetic and dedicated in promoting high standards of academic and personal development
- the exceptional care and guidance procedures create a safe and nurturing environment resulting in enthusiastic, confident and happy learners
- excellent communication procedures provide parents with regular information on their children's progress and engage them as active partners in the learning process
- highly structured and effective assessment strategies to monitor and review students' progress, identify improvements and create challenging learning goals
- highly effective support to ensure that all students with special education needs and those who are gifted and talented fulfil their potential.

The inspection identified the following as key areas for improvement:

- the attainment and progress of Emirati students
- the level of pace and challenge in a few lessons.

Performance Standard 1: Students' Achievement

Students' achievement Indicators		KG	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education	Attainment	N/A	Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	N/A	Good	N/A	N/A
Arabic (as a First Language)	Attainment	Very Good	Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Very Good	Good	N/A	N/A
Arabic (as a Second Language)	Attainment	Very Good	Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Very Good	Good	N/A	N/A
Social Studies	Attainment	N/A	Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	N/A	Good	N/A	N/A
English	Attainment	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Outstanding	Very Good	N/A	N/A
Mathematics	Attainment	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
Science	Attainment	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
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	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
	Progress	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
Learning Skills (including innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration)		Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A

Most children in early years foundation stage (EYFS) start school with skills and experience that are below those typically seen for their age group, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. On entry, most children do not speak English as a first language. Their skills in language and communication develop quickly. They make at least good and frequently very rapid progress in developing confidence, self-esteem and self-reliance. Their achievement in spoken English is impressive for their age and stage of development. Children are able to write, make marks and develop their hand control skills. When they leave the EYFS most children can communicate confidently and enthusiastically in spoken English. They have a very secure grasp of the concept of number. Older children can manage to calculate that 150 small cubes are needed to measure the perimeter of a large shape.

English National Curriculum (NC) standard assessments tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) show the number of students attaining at least expected levels is above UK averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In KS2 SATs, a large majority attain above expected levels across the three areas. There is significant progress in writing from KS1 to KS2. The school continues to maintain high standards over time.

Attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are very good. In almost all lessons, students are working successfully above age-expected curriculum levels. In English, almost all students make very good progress in speaking, listening and reading from Years 1 to 6. They speak confidently, respond to questions and develop their own ideas. By Year 6, most can express opinions clearly and respond critically to those of others. In mathematics, students make rapid progress in the acquisition of basic number skills and the use of operations in calculations. For example, Year 4 students are able to undertake multiplication questions at Year 5 and Year 6 levels. In science, Year 2 students have a very secure knowledge of the different stages within a life cycle. By the time the students are in Year 5 they develop their ideas about minerals and their respective properties through investigation and exploration.

Attainment and progress are good in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. In Arabic, most Year 6 students can express opinions and can apply grammar rules well. In Islamic education most students know and understand Islamic values and are enthusiastic to apply them in their own lives. Special educational needs (SEN) and gifted and talented (G&T) students make very good progress as a result of the outstanding programmes and support structures in place to meet their individual needs. Emirati students' attainment is lower than all other students in reading, writing and mathematics in KS1 and KS2. The gap closes significantly by KS2 in reading and mathematics, but not as much in writing.

In all year groups and classes, students are enthusiastic, highly motivated and happy learners. They take responsibility and ownership for their learning. They have defined targets across all areas of learning and energetically strive to meet and exceed them. Students collaborate very well with each other, share ideas and solve problems. They can give their ideas to connect their learning to real life situations. For example, Year 2 mathematics students searched their school environment for examples of two dimensional shapes. The development of students' critical thinking and problem solving skills is an integral component in nearly all lessons. For example, Year 6 science students test their theories to check if their marshmallow and straw constructions are strong enough to survive an 'earthquake'.

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	Outstanding	Outstanding	N/A	N/A
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding	N/A	N/A
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	N/A	N/A

Students' behaviour, attitudes and relationships in lessons and around the school are excellent. Students demonstrate exceptional self-discipline and are highly sensitive to the needs of others and extremely respectful to adults and other students. They are very proud of their school and the rich diversity of the school population, which gives them a strong sense of belonging and being part of a community. The outstanding focus on health and well-being means the students have an increasing awareness and are knowledgeable about how to keep safe and healthy. Attendance is very good at 97% and punctuality is outstanding.

Students value the features and characteristics of life in the UAE. They are very aware of the part technology plays in their daily lives. From their lessons in social studies, they build a considerable knowledge of the history and culture of their community and have an increasing understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

Students are extremely active in their school community as members of the student

council, and as librarians and monitors. They are diligent, extremely hard working and able to develop their own ideas through investigation, exploration and discovery. They are highly aware of the need to care for and foster a sustainable environment for the future. For example, the student-led gardening club focuses on growing their own vegetables.

Performance Standard 3: Teaching and Assessment

Teaching and Assessment Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Teaching for effective learning	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
Assessment	Outstanding	Very Good	N/A	N/A

The quality of teaching is very good across the school. It ranges from outstanding to acceptable; the teaching was very good or outstanding in 57% of lessons observed. Teachers have extensive knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them. In EYFS, they demonstrate strong expertise in organising learning through play. The progress the children make is reinforced extremely well by adults who interact with them regularly, engage in conversation and ask meaningful and relevant questions to encourage them to think, consider options and make decisions. Children enjoy imaginative play, creating their own scenarios and simple models from a range of media and materials. There is a very secure balance between activities, where children initiate and choose for themselves, and those directed by adults.

Lessons in all subjects and in all years form part of well-constructed units of work. Individual lesson plans specify learning objectives and indicate how they will be achieved through activities that almost all students find interesting and motivating. Learning resources in classrooms are plentiful and used well to help all students learn successfully. They are supplemented by outstanding library provision and learning technologies. Warm relationships, supported by clear classroom rules and routines, prevail between teachers, assistants and students. Very effective questioning is a feature of the large majority of lessons; most successfully incorporate a range of activities designed to meet the needs of students at different levels of attainment. These are successfully supplemented by additional strategies and targeted support for SEN students; and to stimulate the interest of G&T students. The teaching in most subjects concentrates on helping students to think critically. In English lessons, for example, students are taught how to evaluate texts

against specific criteria and are expected to justify their opinions. In mathematics and science there is a strong emphasis on practical investigation and experimentation to solve problems.

The quality of assessment practices and procedures is of very high quality. It benchmarks the outcomes against UK national averages for the key stages. Baseline assessments are used effectively to assess students' starting points, set targets and formulate plans for individual students. Middle leaders regularly meet with teachers to review students' outcomes and agree necessary actions. Senior and middle leaders undertake regular assessment reviews across the school to identify areas for intervention and support. Excellent moderation strategies are embedded in assessment practices. At school level, workbook reviews ensure assessments are accurate. External moderation by Aldar Academies Group creates a consistent approach to assessment across their six schools.

The rigorous analysis of student performance feeds into development planning at school and subject levels and strongly influences lesson planning. Written and spoken feedback is thorough and constructive. It highlights how work can be improved. The evaluation of their own and others' work is a routine feature of lessons in most subjects. In a few lessons, assessment for learning is not used effectively. This leads to a slower pace of learning and insufficient challenge in the learning activities.

Performance Standard 4: Curriculum

Curriculum Indicators	KG	Primary	Middle	High
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Curriculum design and implementation	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A
Curriculum adaptation	Very Good	Very Good	N/A	N/A

Curriculum design and implementation are very good. A high quality planning process ensures breadth, balance, continuity and progression in all subjects for students at all levels of attainment from EYFS1 to Year 6. Topics are structured as enquiries. The topic themes effectively link and support the development of understanding and skills in literacy, mathematics and other subjects.

Senior leaders keep the curriculum under systematic review. Subject objectives are harmonised and schemes of work regularly refreshed to maintain the relevance of the curriculum and to keep it innovative and challenging. The curriculum is adapted

very well to meet the needs of all groups of students. It provides plentiful opportunities for students to take the initiative, show enterprise and make contributions to the way the school works and to life in the community. For example, they can suggest new extra-curricular activities; take part in experimental science club activities; be part of student-initiated charity work and volunteer to escort prospective parents on school tours. An extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities provide students with additional opportunities to learn and develop. The systematic development of students' knowledge and understanding of UAE culture and society features in schemes of work 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	Outstanding	Outstanding	N/A	N/A
Care and support	Outstanding	Outstanding	N/A	N/A

The outstanding protection, care, guidance and support procedures create a safe and very caring environment for students to develop their personal qualities. Pastoral support is highly effective at all levels. In EYFS adults are extremely encouraging and actively participate in children's learning. They provide excellent support to boost children's personal independence and progress in this area of learning is exceptional. Children know staff value their contributions and as a result they approach adults, including visitors, with confidence. In Years 1 to 6, class teachers provide excellent support for students' welfare and social development. The highly effective Circle Time sessions allow students to explore everyday feelings and emotions. For example, Year 4 students shared ways to help others if they were upset about a particular situation. The session combined students' using their collaborative and high order thinking skills with designing their own solutions for challenging social issues. A highly professional and exceptionally well-led multi-disciplinary team provides outstanding support for SEN students. They build strong relationships with parents to engage them as active partners in supporting their child academically and socially.

The behaviour policy promotes a very positive caring culture where students feel

secure. They demonstrate excellent levels of self-discipline and show care and compassion for each other. Procedures for monitoring absences are very effective, leading to high levels of attendance and punctuality. The school has a child protection policy and all staff fully understand their responsibilities. Employees have been approved and have undergone all necessary checks. There is strong security, with all visitors checked. The effective health and safety team ensures that the school is well maintained, equipment regularly checked and risk assessments updated. The clinic offers very high quality first aid provision. The school nurse and her assistant actively promote healthy lifestyles through talks to groups of students.

Performance Standard 6: Leadership and management

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

Leadership and management are outstanding. There have been two changes of principal since the previous inspection. In the short time, the principal has been in post, she has successfully transformed the leadership, curriculum, teaching and learning and support structures for students' welfare. The result is high quality educational provision in all subjects and classrooms and excellent support for students' personal development. The school has a very clear vision, which is shared by governors, staff, students and parents. Effective procedures are in place to ensure the vision provides the drive and direction for maintaining ongoing improvements. The leadership has empowered teachers and managers to take ownership of improvements and to take risks to stimulate and enthuse students. Students are energetic, enthusiastic and excited learners. Accountability procedures are exemplary. The excellent performance management system holds staff to account for students' outcomes. It provides opportunities for staff to be fully supported in developing their own skills and knowledge. The continuous professional development program is effectively linked to the school development plan (SDP) improvement areas.

A high quality self-evaluation (SEF) and SDP evidence the good levels of

collaboration between the senior and middle leadership teams (SLT and MLT). The SEF has very detailed analysis of assessment outcomes, their implications for future targeted improvements and links very well with the SDP. The SDP effectively addresses the key elements for improvement across the school, including those from the previous inspection. The school SDP is supplemented by very high quality improvement plans for all subjects, SEN, G&T, assessment and other areas. Senior and middle leaders undertake regular well-structured lesson observations and pop-ins. Areas for improvement are identified, planned and reviewed for effectiveness of implementation.

Parents play a positive and supportive role in the life of the school. There are four parent representatives on the governing body. ‘The Friends of Pearl’ group of parents are very active in supporting the school in multiple ways. Parent volunteers provide assistance at school activities and events. The parents’ questionnaire was extremely positive about almost all aspects of the school. The parents interviewed in the inspection spoke of the remarkable transformation in the short time the principal has been in post. As one parent put it, “the Pearl is back”. Communication with parents is exemplary. A very detailed weekly newsletter provides parents of children in all grades with details of the curriculum; events; success stories; and things parents can do to help their children learn. Full reports and parent-teacher meetings each term keep parents informed about their children’s progress. The welcoming open-door policy enables parents to confidently approach the school at any time. The school has strong links with other Aldar schools and students take part in joint sports and science events.

The governance of the school is outstanding. The Strategic Governance Group (SGG) oversees Pearl School. Parents, local industry, staff, Aldar representative, principal and SLT make up the body responsible for overseeing and holding the school to account for student outcomes. The principal and SLT have goals set against a given set of criteria, with regular reviews to ensure progress in meeting the goals. The Aldar Academies Group undertakes rigorous external checks of the quality of provision through lesson observations, assessing specific aspects of provision and progress monitoring of the SDP improvements.

The school runs exceptionally well on a day-to-day basis. It is calm, safe, well ordered and student centred. There are sufficient well-qualified and effective staff to deliver the school’s curriculum and supporting students’ learning. The premises are well-maintained and reasonably spacious. Displays around the school are used exceptionally well to promote learning and celebrate students’ outcomes. Classrooms are well organised to allow flexibility in learning activities. Resources are plentiful, high quality and are used extremely well to support learning.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Design and implement strategies to improve the attainment and progress of Emirati students to match those of other groups, particularly in writing.
2. Improve the pace and challenge in a few lessons to further accelerate student progress.

Possible breaches of regulations and health & safety concerns

Pearl Primary School

Regulations	
1.	
2.	
3.	
The UAE Flag is raised/ flown every day?	Yes
Is playing of the UAE National Anthem a daily feature at the morning assembly?	Yes

Health and Safety Concerns:
1.
2.
3.

Lead Inspector	Bruce Berry	Date	15 October 2015
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