Pearling International School is located in central Doha, Qatar in an area with many expatriates mainly from Europe, the Indian sub-continent, South East Asia and the wider Middle East region who make up the student enrolment along with approximately 20% Qataris.

The school follows a slightly modified version of the National Curriculum of England, using the International Primary Curriculum in primary and the International Middle Years Curriculum in secondary. The teachers are mostly British and Irish, or are international English-speaking teachers with training or experience of teaching in the UK. The school opened in September 2014 and continues to expand, opening Year 10 in September 2016.

Head of Primary, Malcolm Price and Curriculum Coordinator, Louise Carbert talk about the IPC at Pearling International:

The International Primary Curriculum was introduced here at Pearling International School when the school opened in September 2014. It was experimental as we started from a very small base with mixed classes, and teachers sharing timetables and subjects. It has supported us extensively through a period of significant growth and change.

Supporting new school expansion

From the start, we found the IPC to be invaluable. It’s very robust and has supported all the staff, regardless of their teaching experience, through the challenging first two years. It’s very flexible which meant that we could use it in the context that we were in initially, and it’s continued to work well through our development. It helped us to grow the school with a learning structure in place.

“The IPC has supported us extensively through a period of significant growth and change”
During our first year, some primary year groups expanded so much that we needed to split into two classes. We now have three form entry up to Year 2 and continue to expand massively. The IPC was the constant thread, giving us the roots that we needed throughout this rapid phase of growth.

The IPC has also helped our staff cohesion, giving us one common learning approach in order to work together. Some primary subjects are currently split between teachers, and the cross-curricular nature of the IPC is helping us all to keep connected to the theme.

All the support from IPC, within the curriculum framework itself and in the training, is helping us to develop as a school in the right way and as we’ve grown, the IPC has continued to fall into place. It’s given us the support and confidence to know we’re meeting the learning needs of our children and our teachers.

Supporting teachers

The detail in each IPC unit acts as a valuable guide for our teachers, but still gives them plenty of room to make each theme and every learning task right for them and for the needs of their children. This flexibility means the teachers can make the tasks fit their resources, their own experiences, and also draw on the skills and experiences of our parents and other teachers in the school community.

Lots of elements of the IPC guide you as a teacher: the suggestions for the entry points which ‘hook’ the children into their learning; the knowledge harvest which helps you to enable children to direct some of the learning; the tasks that encourage independent and group learning; the regular reminders of the knowledge, skills and understanding; and the assessment rubrics which focus assessment on the development of skills in each unit, and provide appropriate learning advice for you to move a child on to the next level.

Our IPC coordinator champions the IPC, remains focused on the IPC goals, helps teachers to keep the learning rigorous, and to make sure the goals are met in a fun, learning-focused way.

Benefitting from IPC membership and training

As a member of the IPC, we are able to contact the IPC team and also other IPC teachers in other schools to ask questions, to get ideas, and to help us get through the challenges we’re facing.

This was particularly valuable during our introduction. We found we could talk to people across the world who had faced similar challenges and we were able get advice from them. Within the IPC website, we could look at the stories from other schools and get ideas of the different ways that other teachers had tackled the units. It gave us the confidence that we could use the IPC not only for cohesion, but also as a tool for ideas that we could adapt for our own circumstances. We also found the website useful for planning and assessment. It was a constant go-to and we’ve continued to use it in that way. For example, some of the teachers have struggled to fit in much science so we’ve used the cross reference guide to the National Curriculum of England to see what had been covered and the gaps that needed to be filled. The rubrics make it very clear.

Training has also been extremely helpful. We did some initial introductory training and this helped to
get us up to speed and ready to go. Louise has since participated in the Bottom Line Nine training course. It’s a training course to prepare for IPC accreditation, looking at the Beginning, Developing and Mastering criteria and it’s helped us to start planning for our steps towards IPC accreditation. It has given us a focus to move forward in the right way. On the course, what was also helpful for Louise was meeting a Headteacher of an IPC Mastering school from her home town of Bolton which meant Louise was able to make a visit to the school and learn about their best practice during her summer break. Connecting with other IPC member schools is proving to be such a great way for helping us to move forward.

The Bottom Line course recommended assessing a minimum of one skill per subject, per unit. This is an approach all our primary teachers are now applying. These practical solutions mean that we know what we need to do to get ready for pre-accreditation. Working towards IPC accreditation is a great way for all of our staff to move forward together as a team; giving us a focus for what to achieve. It will help us equip our teachers to deliver the IPC confidently and we think that will be key to our success.

**Learning with the IPC**

The IPC is particularly valuable for our school as the majority of our children speak English as their second language. IPC allows children who have English as a second language to develop their language skills at the same time as learning. The unit entry points help to engage them immediately in the learning. For our first entry point (the Chocolate unit), we took the children to a chocolate factory. It was absolutely fabulous for engaging the children into the theme, even those with poor English language. It helped us to realise how important the entry point is and now we put a lot of effort into every one of them. The entry points encourage the children to talk about their learning, and for our EASL children, the more they talk, the more their English language improves.

The IPC learning tasks are very hands-on and practical which is also important for our EASL students. There are many tasks that encourage independent learning and collaboration between small groups of children, and there’s always a buzz in the classrooms during these times. They are relevant to the world today, which keeps the children engaged.

The tasks use a range of ways for children to research and record their learning, and the children enjoy the interactive and practical side to learning. For example, for the We See The World Like This unit, we created an art gallery down the school corridor. One of our parents is an artist and, as part of the unit, he came in with canvases and paints for every child and did a workshop. During the unit, the children produced artwork in a range of media including print and canvas, and in a range of styles including Monet, Renoir and Kandinsky and we displayed their work in our gallery as the exit point for the unit, parents came to visit the gallery and the children talked to their parents about the different work they’d created.

We are linking maths to our IPC themes when we can. For example, during the Space unit, the children measured the distance between the planets and the sun on a scale. We feed in links where it fits and do the same with science.

We know we have the important task of challenging the children with their learning progress as we deliver it within a creative context. The IPC language and the assessment process are explicitly taught and talked about in most classes. We have introduced self-assessment and the children are becoming familiar with using their own rubrics to assess themselves, and of using the Beginning and Mastering language. We use the learning advice given with the IPC assessment rubrics to move the children on. As a result, the children are taking more responsibility for their own learning and often talk about how they can achieve Mastering level.

Planning is key and we still have areas to work on. For example, we sometimes rush our exit points because we run out of time. We know that we need to work on this so that the children can use the exit point to reflect on their learning.

What we do know is that the impact of the IPC on our children’s learning has been significant and we are putting measures in place to assess this impact. We already use IPC language and the learning goals in our reports to show the children’s progress.

**Developing personal skills with the IPC**

The IPC personal goals are helping to bring the entire school community together and also helping our children as individuals. They are becoming more rounded individuals as a result.

We use scenarios within our learning, and also draw on examples from real life, to constantly remind the children about the personal goals. For example, we
For example, Year 5 parents were recently invited in to listen to their children deliver the presentations at the end of The Great, the Brave and The Bold unit. The parents were able to see the children discussing who they thought were the better civilisation; the Romans or the Greeks, and why.

The parents particularly like the practical learning approach of the IPC. They like the connections between the subjects and the links that we make to the theme which, they can see, helps to make learning relevant for their children. They like how the children talk about their learning at home and we send home projects which many parents like to get involved in.

The International Middle Years Curriculum was introduced last year and it’s going well! Teachers can see that the students have enjoyed learning in a more connected way. The IMYC has encouraged us to be more experimental in how the students show evidence of their learning. The exit points, in particular, have really helped with this and we’ve been quite adventurous, which the children love; going to interesting venues and encouraging them to create movies and models to record their learning too.

Our advice to other small or new schools considering the IPC is think about your context and needs. Do you want student engagement? Child-led learning? Parent engagement? These are the aspects that attracted us to the IPC. Understand your school ethos first and then make the IPC work for your school and your specific needs. There are many different IPC units so you can always find ones that will fit with your school’s interests.

The IPC really is fantastic for its focus and cohesion, and for its flexibility and the choices it gives your school.

Moving into the middle years with the IMYC

The International Middle Years Curriculum was introduced last year and it’s going well! Teachers can see that the students have enjoyed learning in a more connected way. The IMYC has encouraged us to be more experimental in how the students show evidence of their learning. The exit points, in particular, have really helped with this and we’ve been quite adventurous, which the children love; going to interesting venues and encouraging them to create movies and models to record their learning too.

Introducing the IPC – for small and new schools

Our advice to other small or new schools considering the IPC is think about your context and needs. Do you want student engagement? Child-led learning? Parent engagement? These are the aspects that attracted us to the IPC. Understand your school ethos first and then make the IPC work for your school and your specific needs. There are many different IPC units so you can always find ones that will fit with your school’s interests.

The IPC really is fantastic for its focus and cohesion, and for its flexibility and the choices it gives your school.
The International Primary Curriculum’s growing learning community includes schools in more than 90 countries around the world. Learning with the IPC means that children focus on a combination of academic, personal and international learning that is both exciting and challenging.

The aim of the IPC is to help every child enjoy learning a wide range of subjects and to develop an enquiring mind, the personal attributes that will help throughout teenage and adult years, and to develop a sense of their own nationality and culture, whilst developing a profound respect for the nationalities and cultures of others. Through the IPC approach to learning, children develop the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to confidently face the world of tomorrow.

The IPC was introduced in 2000 and its continued development today ensures that children are learning a current and highly relevant curriculum based on the very latest research and understanding of how children learn.

The IPC is a part of Fieldwork Education which, since 1984, has been helping schools all around the world to develop children’s learning.
For more information about the International Primary Curriculum visit www.greatlearning.com/ipc

From Fieldwork Education. © 2016 All rights reserved.