



PALMS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The Palms Experience



School Handbook

Palms Education is Revolutionary and Transformative.

We are future-focused, not past-entrenched.

We are DIFFERENT!

(Ekua Mansoa Addae, Founder, PIS)



Competitive advantage in the Industrial Age rested on mass production and standardization of products. These factors influenced the design of education as we now know it, where student performance is measured by the accumulation, retention and regurgitation of factual knowledge.¹

The current Knowledge Age, however is dynamic, highly-fluid and unpredictable, with the sole constant being 'change'.². It is an era which only rewards individuals who possess '... *inclusive competencies, such as the ability to make local-to-global connections, recognise differing perspectives, think critically and creatively to solve global challenges, and collaborate respectfully in different types of social forums*'.²

There is therefore the imperative for our educational system to reflect the needs of this era and develop individuals, who can adapt and keep pace with the expectations and demands of a rapidly-changing world, so as to contribute to a greater humanity.^{4,5}

Quintessential Palm Attributes

Thinker

Communicator

Principled

Inquirer

Knowledgeable

Open-Minded

Risk-Taker

Caring

Balanced

Reflective

We Are Globally-minded

Attributes of the *Quintessential Palm*

As *Quintessential Palms* we make every effort to be:

- **Inquirers** – Everywhere we go, be it in school or at home, we ask questions and develop our research skills, in order to find answers to our ‘wonderings’.
- **Knowledgeable** – We value knowledge and strive to acquire these in various disciplines, to ensure we are well-informed.
- **Thinkers** - We use our initiative, as well as critical and creative thinking skills, to take ethical, effective decisions that solve problems.
- **Communicators** – We express our thoughts and ideas confidently and respectfully, and also listen attentively to others’ perspectives to learn from them.
- **Principled** – We demonstrate honesty and integrity in all our dealings. We do the right thing at the right time.
- **Open-minded** – We value our culture and ideas, and also respect those of others. We pay attention to others’ perspectives and evaluate them respectfully, understanding that we are all different, and diversity is the essence of life.
- **Caring** – We demonstrate love, consideration, empathy, compassion and respect when dealing with others, as well as our environment.
- **Risk-takers** – With adequate planning and courage, we are bold enough to try out new things. When faced with challenges, we are resilient and persevere till success is achieved.
- **Balanced** – We appreciate the importance of being well-rounded global citizens. As such we strive to give equal emphasis to all aspects of our lives. We participate actively in all disciplines, and in all learning opportunities, both curricular and extra-curricular, so as to achieve holistic development.
- **Reflective** – We carefully consider our actions and their consequences, drawing lessons from these to improve our work and life.³

We believe that by developing these ten attitudes, students, staff and members of *the Palms Family* can be ***Quintessential Palms***:

True stewards of their gifts and world, making a positive impact wherever they find themselves!

Our Curriculum



With this consciousness, Palms Blends the Montessori and IB curriculum frameworks to offer an educational package, which in addition to furnishing students with **knowledge** and conceptual **understanding**, hones their 21 century **skills**, and positive **attitudes**, to enable them take responsible **action** in society. These are the **Five Keystones** that underpin the Palms approach to education:

With these competencies, students, thirty years from now, can adapt, create, learn, unlearn and relearn, in order to survive, thrive and impact their world. They can be *Quintessential Palms*: globally-minded individuals, who identify themselves as stewards of both their talents and world, and can collaborate with others wherever they find themselves, to make a positive impact in society.

To gain a full understanding of the Palms Curriculum, we answer six critical questions:

- Who learns?
- When and where do we learn?
- Why do we learn?
- What do we learn?
- How do we learn?
- How do we evidence learning?

Who learns?



Every member of the Palms Family is a Learner, be they student, teacher, administrator, janitor or parent. We believe learning never ends: there is always a better way to accomplish tasks, and this is worth discovering... so we never stop learning.

We are a learning community!

When and where do we learn?

Palms are lifelong learners! We learn everywhere and every time: in the classroom, on the playground, on the street, at home, everywhere!

Every space is a learning space, every moment is a learning moment, and an opportunity to acquire new knowledge, hone a skill and develop a positive attitude.

Learning never ceases for us!

Why do we learn?

"... education (is) for independence; preparing (us) not just for school, but for life."

Dr. Maria Montessori



Learning is for life! Our goal is not to achieve student success that is limited to the schooling years. Learning is for impact, both now and in the future. In the now, Palms education is action-oriented, challenging students to make necessary lifestyle, attitudinal, family, and neighbourhood changes, in response to the knowledge acquired in school.

Being future-focused, learning is designed to develop in students relevant skills, competencies, attitudes and dispositions that will make them lifelong learners. These are individuals who can continue learning new skills and acquire new knowledge, applying these in creative ways to solve societal problems, long after they have left school.

Learning and assessment activities are therefore not focused on students memorising and regurgitate facts, passing examinations, and forgetting everything shortly after. They are geared towards effective application over the course of their lives. This is why learning at PIS

is hands-on, and student-led; and assessment is varied, as well as development-focused. We believe that in this way, students will develop the knowledge and skills that will lend them a competitive edge, enabling them thrive as successful global citizens in future.

Our job at PIS is to prepare learners for life, not just to pass examinations!

What do we learn?

At PIS, we offer a delectable array of disciplines and opportunities, meant to whet students' learning appetites, get them excited about learning and stimulate them to extend learning beyond the walls of the school.

At Palm:

Students Acquire Knowledge



Students during their journey will experience: local and international Languages, Mathematics, Zoology, Botany, Geography, Government, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Economics, Astronomy, Computing and many more. They will learn various sports, visual art, music, theatre, dance, and other forms of art. They will also learn the art of service, to prepare them for impact.

This bouquet of academic, sports, arts and service disciplines and opportunities have been so designed to pique learners' curiosity, enable them identify their unique gifts, and prepare them to serve their world with these talents.

Students Gain Conceptual Understanding



The goal of *Palms Education* is not to simply accumulate and regurgitate facts. No! The focus is more on gaining conceptual understanding. We strive for deep, rather than superficial learning, so that students can transfer and apply knowledge across disciplines, extending it

beyond the classroom into their homes, lives and communities. This is what we call '*Transdisciplinary Learning*.'

Students are encouraged to draw on their prior knowledge, as well as knowledge acquired in various disciplines, to accomplish academic tasks and projects. By this, they deepen their understanding. They also begin to appreciate the applicability of knowledge, discovering that experiences in school are connected to the real-world. This makes education meaningful and relevant to our learners. Their intrinsic motivation is therefore heightened, and they are excited to come to school every morning, eager discover new things and take giant strides on their learning journey.

At PIS, learning is not a drag! It is fun!

Students Hone 21 Century Skills and Competencies



At Palms, we believe that,

"What you know is not as important as what you can do"

(Ekua Addae, Founder, PIS)

As such we place significant emphasis on skills that students acquire. Skills represent an index of academic success, and we tailor every lesson to develop these. This is because it is skills that children will use in future to make an impact, not necessarily the facts they have accumulated in school.



As such, we focus on these five key competencies, which have several embedded sub-skills:

- **Thinking skills**
 - Critical and creative thinking, innovation transfer
- **Research Skills**
 - Information and media literacy
- **Communication skills**
 - Reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting, and non-verbal communication
- **Social skills**
 - Respect, collaboration, responsibility, conflict management and resolution
- **Self-management Skills**
 - Emotion management, organization skills, reflection

We believe that as children use these skills in their day-to-day tasks, projects and assignments, they become better at them and develop into life-long learners. Consequently, they will be better equipped to adapt and adjust their knowledge and skill-sets in future, to meet whatever demands the labour market makes of them, thirty years from now.

Our Focus is the Future; not the Past, not the Now!

(Ekua Addae, Founder, PIS)

Students Develop Positive Attitudes

"Credentials may open the door, but character will either keep you in the room or throw you out!"

(Ekua Addae, Founder, PIS)



Attitude, behavior and character are of absolute importance for success in school, family, community, and society at large.

Through the ***Quintessential Palm Attributes***, we emphasise the need to develop good character traits alongside knowledge, conceptual understanding and 21 century skills.

Virtues of appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect and tolerance are all developed, as students work towards exemplifying attributes of the ***Quintessential Palm***.

We do not just talk about these positive attitudes, we model them as teachers, administrators and staff. We also teach and assess learners on these, to ensure they actually embody the traits.

At Palms, we believe that character is everything!

We Learn to Make an Impact



With Palms education, learning transcends the walls of school, extending into students' personal, family and community lives. We know learning has taken place when it results in a change of personal lifestyle, behaviour, family life, domestic procedures and processes, etc.

We encourage learners to explore opportunities to apply their learning at home, in school and their neighbourhoods. With these 'little' acts of responsiveness and problem-solving,

learners ready themselves to make bigger impact in the society, should they find themselves on larger stages in the future.

How do We Learn

Palms Education is very different! Learning is specifically designed to realise the transformational objectives of the School. Consequently, learning is thematic, hands-on, collaborative and inclusive.



Learning is Thematic

By thematic, we mean learning is designed around broad, real-life themes which aim to bring lessons to life, making them meaningful to learners. This approach also presents children with challenging experiences, compelling them to develop and use their skills and attitudes in extensive ways. Themes touch on topics or central ideas that relate to the issues of our world, giving students an impetus to think critically and creatively about real-life situations. By this, they are able to link their classroom experiences to the real world, making them

appreciate the relevance of their knowledge, and offering them the stimulus to learn more. In thematic learning, learning is not abstract. It is meaningful, relevant, significant and challenging, offering students a reason to come to school to each morning.



We have six themes around which learning is centred, some focusing on scientific concepts, while others have a humanities orientation. These themes are:

- **How the world works**
An exploration of the scientific laws that govern our planet.
- **How we organize ourselves**
It touches on the varied ways in which human societies are organised. It also encompasses rights, responsibilities and citizenship
- **How we express ourselves**
An inquiry into the modes of self-expression, in terms of feelings, ideas, culture, nature, values and beliefs. It encompasses creativity, as well an appreciation of art and aesthetics.
- **Who we are**
An exploration into the concept of self, identity, beliefs and values, human relationships, as well as physical, mental, personal, social and spiritual health.

- **Sharing the planet**
Explores the interdependence among humans, plants, animals and resources. It also touches on their need to share limited resources, as well as humans' responsibility towards the planet and its inhabitants.
- **Where we are in place and time**
An inquiry into history and civilisations, and an appreciation of their impact on the present and future.

Each theme runs for a period of six to eight weeks, during which time a central idea is generated as the focus of study. Learning in all subjects is then connected to this central focus. This approach breaks down the '*silo mentality*' helping students appreciate the linkages that exist among various disciplines. It also supports deep conceptual understanding as each subject reinforces and supports understanding of the central idea. Most importantly, it enables learners to develop their iterative thinking abilities, compelling them to draw on prior knowledge, as well as knowledge acquired in various subjects to tackle assigned tasks and projects. Learners practice what happens in real life ie. drawing ideas from different disciplines, industries, business units and departments, to address a common issue in business or the community.

Learning is Hands-on



The Knowledge Age student is not a passive participant in their education. They are not a '*tabula rasa*', mere spectators and memorisers of facts. Today's student is full of ideas, questions and propositions. They possess the motivation and capacity to discover, manipulate, and create new information and ideas^{6,2,7}

Today's child is curious, and Palms provides the environment in which children's curiosity finds expression. It is through this that deep learning is achieved. As such Palms education is hands-on! It is practical! It is multi-sensory! We employ constructivism as our predominant teaching approach, and learning is accomplished through the process of '*Inquiry*.'

At Palms, we do not tell children what to think. We co-construct knowledge with our learners. Children have a voice and we design learning around hands-on activities that amplify this voice and sustain learners' interest. These in turn drive them to discover knowledge for themselves and apply same in creative ways.

During knowledge co-construction, we proceed from concrete to abstract, ensuring deep learning and conceptual understanding, rather than superficial fact accumulation. As such, children are able to recall concepts learnt, and apply them in new contexts as they progress up the educational ladder.

Learning is Collaborative



Success in the 21 century is hinged on individuals', businesses' and governments' ability to collaborate and leverage synergies, to gain a competitive advantage. As Palms education is future-focused, this same principle applies. Being a community of learners, we give students abundant opportunities to share their learning with colleagues and facilitators, in order to achieve deeper understanding, gain multiple perspectives, challenge their thinking and optimise their learning. By this, we develop their social, communication, reflective and self-regulation skills, which are critical for survival in industry and society.

Diversity and inclusion are emphasized



As child experts, we understand that children are different. Our hands-on, multisensory learning approach therefore stimulates the visual, auditory and kinesthetic neural paths, making it appealing to children with different learning styles and preferences. We design learning with these unique student traits in mind, to ensure that every child benefits from the experience, enjoys it, and most importantly, gains knowledge, skills and deep understanding.

At Palms, no child is left out! Every child is a gem, and our job is to create the enabling environment to unearth this treasure!

How do we evidence learning



For us, assessment is not an end in itself, but a process of and for learning. We are therefore more focused in scaffolding children's learning and giving them regular, timely feedback that guides them to improve and extend their learning. For us, assessment is a tool to further learning, and not a verdict on child success or failure. As such, assessment is development-focused, not judgement-oriented. It is based on the individual and how they are developing, rather than student comparison. For this reason, every assessment in PIS is formative by nature. The goal of assessment is to give facilitators an accurate view of a child's learning, in order to provide the right support. As such, we use a wide spectrum of assessment tools and strategies to judge the extent to which understanding has been achieved, and to inform the next steps in knowledge and skill development.

Among the assessment strategies used at Palms are oral presentations, written expositions, extended projects, case studies, group tasks, individual assignments, research projects, model construction, artistic representations, quizzes, examinations, and many more. Constituting our Continuous Assessment policy, all strategies carry equal weight and contribute to students' overall performance. We believe that by this variety of avenues, each child's ability will be fairly ascertained, areas of challenge accurately identified, and learning better tailored to progress each *Palm* along their individual learning path.

Children's work is appraised on all Five Keystones, ie. knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and action. Feedback is then given on a daily, weekly, unit (4-6 weeks) and termly basis, to keep track of their progress.

At the end of the primary years, students as part of their progression requirements must undertake:

- **A Primary Thesis**
- **A Competency Appraisal and**
- **An Act of Service.**

The thesis comprises detailed research on a topic of choice, a written exposition, artistic representations, oral presentation, as well as an exhibition and public defense of the research work. The goal is to give learners a chance to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, as well as understanding of various scientific and humanities concepts.

The Competency Appraisal assesses learners' understanding of basic arithmetic concepts, as well as their acquisition of specific literacy skills, needed for success in the Middle Years (secondary) programme. Though culminating in nature, it is formative in intent, advising facilitators of learners' areas of strength. Again by highlighting areas in need of reinforcement, the appraisal serves a formative purpose, informing the design of future learning engagements.

The graduation requirement also has a Service component, requiring learners to collaboratively identify and address a need in the community.

By this, they demonstrate they are change agents, ready to serve their world with their gifts.

Early Years Programme



Palms' Early Years Programme (EYP) is a six-year course of study, targeted at children from three (3) months to six years of age. Being an foundational programme, it is aimed at preparing learners for the independent inquiry that takes place in the Primary Years Programme (PYP).

Principally, the EYP aims at achieving the following by the time the child turns six (6).

- Critical brain development
- Sensorial and physical development
- Communication and language development
- Cognitive development
- Personal, social and emotional
- Passion for learning

Critical Brain Development



Insights from neuroscience have designated the period between ... to six years of age as the 'golden years' of child development.⁸ This is because it is regarded as the most critical stage of brain development where neural paths develop rapidly to build the brain architecture. This process is optimised when the brain receives various stimuli through the senses.

In line with Montessori philosophy, the prime focus of Palm's EYP is to engage children in play-based activities, which are actually tasks meant to stimulate areas of the brain that are responsible for attention, concentration, will, sensory awareness, and movement.

Sensorial and Physical Development

By engaging learners in play-based and sensorial activities, the brain receives much needed impulses that sharpen children's visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, tactile, stereognostic, baric, thermic, gustatory and chromatic senses.⁹ These brain-stimulation activities open up millions of neural paths, optimising the organ's architecture, and ensuring that infants are ready for higher-level thinking and communication in future years.

Learning engagements also target children's movement, enabling them develop balance, as well a gross and fine motor skills.



Communication & Language Development

Sensorial activities also supply learners with the vocabulary to express their experiences, feelings, thoughts, about the world around them. These activities enable them develop into eloquent communicators.

Cognitive Development

Literacy and numeracy are at the core of the Early Years curriculum, as these are tool subjects on which higher-level thinking and communication rest. This is therefore a priority area for us, because a deficiency in these competencies will limit learners' ability to engage in the appropriate level of independent inquiry and critical thinking, needed for success in the Primary Years Programme and beyond.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Early learners are given many opportunities to engage with colleagues and facilitators. Through play, they develop their collaborative skills, social graces and empathy. They also develop self-management skills, particularly, emotional control and conflict management. These indeed form the foundation of successful relationships in primary years and life.

In developing their self-management abilities, children are given opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and their environment. They are guided at that young age to be independent by carrying out basic tasks like dusting and tidying up. In their own small ways, they learn to take action and impact their society. This is where seed of global impact is sown: in little day-to-day acts of service.

Passion for Learning

Finally, the EYP whets children's appetite for learning by introducing them to a wide spectrum of disciplines, ranging from Zoology and Botany to Engineering, Geography, Astronomy, Creative Arts and many more. Through stories and hands-on activities, these concepts are introduced to children at the most basic level, igniting their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and getting them excited about progressing up the educational ladder to discover more about our fascinating world.

Their learning experience is presented in seven, fun-packed disciplinary capsules namely:

- Language
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
 - Science
 - Humanities
- Expressive arts and design and
 - Visual art
 - music
 - Drama
 - dance
- Personal, social, and physical education
- Sensorial
- Practical life



What will you see in the EYP Classroom?



A walk into an Early Years room reveals several learning centres, each equipped with colourful resources that advance inquiries in sensorial development, numeracy, literacy, science, humanities, and the arts. There is also a service corner with tools and equipment children use to engage in self-management activities.



Most importantly, children's work is visible all around the learning space, evidencing the learning that is taking place and the level of ownership and voice students exhibit with respect to their learning.



Homework Policy



At Palms, students' day is packed with learning engagements that require active participation. We therefore feel students should rest after school. Also as ardent proponents of holistic development, we believe that participation in chores and extra-curricular activities at home is essential for their growth.

As such, we do not give taxing homework. Any task children bring home will usually involve independent inquiry on digital platforms, interviews with parents, leisurely reading of storybooks, completion of artwork and diagrams, practicing of musical instruments, etc. They will be activities that require little or no parental involvement, as we understand how busy our dear Parents are.

Palms Enrichment Programme



Palms is the off-shoot of Curious Kids Centre (now Palms Kids Club), an extra-curricular children's Club, specialising in the arts, sports and literacy. Having been birthed from such a rich background, PIS partners with Curious Kids Centre to bring a wide range of exciting enrichment activities to learners. These are part of the curriculum to ensure holistic learner development.

Among the enrichment activities on offer are:

- Musical instruments
- Coding
- Swimming
- Ballet, gymnastics & contemporary dance
- Theatre
- Arts and crafts, etc.

School Calender and Schedule

Palms academic year is from September to June, and consists of three semesters.

We operate an extended school day from **6:30am** to **6:00 pm** to give flexibility and peace-of-mind to our cherished parents, who we understand may be held up at work or in traffic. We understand what it means to be working parents!

The School Day

6:30 am	- School Opens
8:00 am	- Session 1 Begins
2:45 pm	- Enrichment Session
4:00 pm	- After-school Care
6:00 pm	- School Closes

Communication

Palms is a family to which Parents, Students and Staff belong. As such, we operates an open-door policy, in order to familiarise members with our unique curriculum, and in turn gain a better understanding of students' peculiar needs.

A meeting can be scheduled after-school hours, with the Homeroom Teacher, while any unresolved concerns can also be directed to the Administration for Management attention. Information from the School is be communicated via email, and telephone, using our official WhatsApp platform.

Being an open-minded school, various interactive platforms will be included, as the need arises, to keep the learning community informed of learners' progress and needs.

Application Process



Enrolment is open to children as young as three (3) months old. The process is as follows:

- Contact Administration and pay application fee
- Receive, complete and return application forms via email
- Visit School with child for communication and social-readiness assessment (18 months and above only)
- Receive enrolment offer and pay enrolment fee

Once these processes have been completed, your child is ready to start school. For children aged three years and above, they will undergo a diagnostic assessment within the first two weeks of enrolment. This helps us ascertain students' academic level, and identify where gaps may exist. Based on this assessment, parents may be called in for further discussion on the best learning path that will suit their ward, to enable them to progress successfully in their educational journey.

Contact

35 Okyeame Anum Street

Community 22

Tema

Telephone: 0245 727 902

Email:

info@palmsinternationalschool.com

Website:

www.palmsinternationalschool.com

References

1. Prince, M. J., & Felder, R. M. (2006). Inductive Teaching and Learning Methods : Definitions, Comparisons , and Research Bases. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 95(2), 123–138.
2. Scott, C. L. (2015a). The Futures of Learning 1: Why Must Learning Content and Methods Change in the 21st Century? In *UNESCO Education Research and Foresight*. Paris.
3. IBO (2023) The International Baccalaureate® (IB) learner profile describes a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success. Retrieved from <https://www.ibo.org/benefits/learner-profile/>
4. Punie, Y. (2007). Learning spaces: an ICT-enabled model of future learning in the knowledge-based society. *European Journal of Education*, 42(2), 185–199.
5. UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?* Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/rethinking-education-towards-global-common-good-launched-4-november>
6. McLoughlin, C., & Lee, M. J. W. (2007). Social software and participatory learning: Pedagogical choices with technology affordances in the Web 2.0 era. *Ascilite Singapore*. Retrieved from <https://ascilite.org/conferences/singapore07/procs/mcloughlin.pdf>
7. Scott, C. L. (2015b). *The Futures Of Learning 2: What Kind Of Learning For The 21st Century?* (No. 14). Paris.
8. Toghyani, R., Shorabi, F. S., Shorabi, H. S., & Tabrizi, S. G. (2015). Check the status of the development of children under age 5 in rural areas of Isfahan using the ASQ questionnaire in 2012-2013 year. *Journal of medicine and life*, 8(Spec Iss 4), 169.
9. The Montessori Mum (n.d.) *What are the nine senses in montessori?* <https://reachformontessori.com/what-are-the-9-senses-in-montessori/>