Dear Parents,

Learning is at the centre of the PDO School and believe me, it’s an incredible time to be a professional educator! Teaching students and administering schools have never been more challenging. By now, most educators are aware that scientific advancements in brain research and imaging technology have changed cognitive psychology and neuroscience forever and that some discoveries from this research have implications for what teachers do in schools and classrooms. In fact, the new knowledge coming from brain research to classroom practice has grown so much over the past two decades that it is now recognized as a separate area of study, referred to as ‘brain-compatible teaching’ and ‘brain-friendly teaching’, but also as ‘mind, brain and education’ or ‘educational neuroscience’. These studies look at what we are learning about the human brain and determine if it has implications for decisions teachers make every day again regarding instruction, curriculum and assessments.

At the PDO School we are very happy with the implementation of the IPC (International Primary Curriculum). We use the IPC as an effective curriculum to help children learn and develop and to develop the PDO School as a learning-focused school. The IPC has been designed to help teachers help children learn effectively and with enjoyment.

The IPC is based on six aspects of brain research. They are the evidence about:

- The behaviour of neurons and the importance of connections (IPC link: The Big Picture)
- Neuronal constellations, the existing neuronal clusters to which new learning is added or existing learning consolidated (IPC link: The Knowledge Harvest, Mind Mapping)
- The links between stress and learning and the importance of ‘high challenge, low stress’ or ‘relaxed alertness’ (IPC link: Rigour and Engagement)

Great Learning
Great Teaching
Great Fun
http://www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com
• Learning styles, or the way learners take in information and experiences differently (IPC link: Researching)

• Multiple intelligences, or the way in which information and experiences are processed (IPC link – Reflecting and Recording)

• Slow thinking, or the way the brain processes complex information over time (IPC link: Reflecting and revisiting)

We will provide more detailed information about the above mentioned IPC links in the coming newsletters.

The PDO School committed itself to become an ‘IPC-accredited school on mastering level’ before January 2013. To achieve this IPC Accreditation we use a Self-Review Process. This provides an external view of the school’s implementation of the IPC and will lead to the awarding of an externally validated mark of quality to the school.

The IPC Self-Review is based on nine key criteria:

• A clear focus on children’s learning

• Shared outcomes about the kinds of children we are helping to develop

• Implementation of classroom practices that help children develop as we would like

• International mindedness

• An appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and reflection leading to understanding

• Appropriately rigorous children’s learning, and teacher’s high expectations of it

• Implementation of brain-friendly elements of the IPC

• Implementation of themes through integrated yet separate subjects

• Assessment and evaluation that supports and informs learning rather than dictates it

The developmental stages of each of these criteria are described in a rubric. The rubrics follow the established IPC pattern of ‘Beginning, Developing and Mastering’. Each of these is a description of a stage that the school currently occupies. Each is also capable of development. Mastering does not imply that everything is perfect. It implies that the school is working and developing at the highest level of implementation. The PDO School is on its way to achieve the mastering level!
International Mindedness

One of the nine key criteria of IPC Self Review is ‘International Mindedness’. The IPC was designed only after discussions and research about the world our young children are, and will be, a part of. Which qualities and attributes do young children need to develop to be part of that world? For IPC ‘International Mindedness’ is one of those attributes and one that is going to be central to the lives of children who may:

- Travel more
- Work away from their home country in different cultural settings
- Work in their home countries but for organisations operating within different cultural parameters
- Live in their home countries alongside increasingly diverse cultures
- Be a part of solving world problems, such as the environment, that require the contribution of different cultures
- Live in a world that is influenced significantly by events generating from within cultures other than their own

The development of international mindedness is not straightforward. It is a complex issue with just one of the complexities being the links between the developmental levels of young children and what it means for them to be internationally minded at different ages through the primary school.

It is a basic principle of the IPC that it is not possible to use IPC without implementing those elements related to the development of international mindedness. This criterion encourages the PDO School to make that commitment explicit.

Celebrating of religious and cultural events

At the PDO School we have at the moment 310 children from 33 different nationalities. The PDO staff wants to demonstrate a deep commitment to the development of international mindedness as one of the characteristics for its children and make it a consistent and central part of the school’s regular reviews of learning and teaching. We want to learn about the different religious and cultural celebrations. They should reflect the international nature of the school. We want to give all children the opportunity to learn about a variety of religions and cultural celebrations, including their own.

We respect the Shell Policy (as discussed and handed out to all head teachers): ‘that Shell schools and Shell affiliated schools are non-denominational schools and that religious and
cultural celebrations should reflect international nature of the schools and should not be dominated by one religion or culture. It is important that schools are sensitive to the local conditions and the wishes of the parents. The schools should attempt to do so outside the normal school hours as this will allow parents to request that the children can opt out of the celebrations without missing learning time

On Behalf of the Team,

Yours sincerely,

Peter Wassink
Head Teacher
PDO School
Passion for Learning!
www.pdoschool.org

PDO School’s definition of International Mindedness

‘International Mindedness is the ability to respect and value the cultural and linguistic diversity of our school community, by developing an understanding through learning about, from and with each other’

Request

We wish to embrace our commitment to creating children who are “international minded” and therefore certain traditional celebrations that used to take place during the school day will now not be celebrated in the same way. We feel it is very important for us to recognize all the different cultures and the special traditions of our whole community therefore we would like to ask our parents to let us know when a special celebration is taking place in your culture. Please let Shifaa (assistant administrator) know which dates you have special celebrations that you wish us to recognize. We want to create a board that parents can use to post photographs, texts, stories etc to help us understand about their culture and that invites us all to read something about these traditions. This is to promote a greater cultural awareness and promote the international mindedness of every member of our community.

We also wish to ensure that all of our parents are aware that if they wish to celebrate a particular event after school or during the weekend using the school facilities, we are happy to accommodate you.
New students

Shiloh, Sean and Sheikainah arrived in our school, joining our Pre-nursery, P1 and P4. Aya also started this week in Pre-Nursery. Matthijs joined our P6 in our Dutch Language Stream. Welcome to all of these children, we hope you have a great time in Oman and our school.

Leavers

Alvaro (IN) and Jorge (P2) are leaving us next week as they are moving to Australia. We wish their family all the best of luck and a great time in wonderful Australia!

A clear focus on children’s learning

To keep you informed about the learning within our school you should receive a weekly class newsletter from your child’s class teacher which outlines the specific learning taking place. Please use that information to support any home learning or discussions with your child/ren. In the general school newsletter we will share with you the learning that is taking place in one specific class. This week’s contribution is from DP1/2.

Learning in DP1/2

In DP1 we are currently learning about ‘Family and Friends’. As part of that unit we learned to set the table in our classroom and have “tea” with our friends. During IPC time we enjoyed cutting out the cutlery and plate and learned where to put these utensils and why. During our house visits we learned a lot about our friend’s bedroom and his/her favourite toy.

During Book week we worked hard by cutting out a lot of pictures. You wonder why? We wanted to make our own ‘picture alphabet book’. We did some cutting at home and some in class. Our mums and dads loved the cutting too. We are becoming very good at this skill.

It was good to have the experience so that at home and in school we can talk, work and learn about the same subjects. We took a photograph of our ‘picture alphabet book’. Maybe you recognize us.

In DP2 we learned a lot about our senses. The most exciting part was the sensory bag. Our teachers asked us to bring in 5 things from our home country, related to our senses.
Do you want to know what we brought to school? Just ask us when we are on the field or in the playground or look at our drawings in the corridor or classroom.

At the moment we are learning songs for our assembly. We are working hard to use our podium voices so everybody can hear us and understand what we are saying and singing. Thanks mums and dads for all your hard work at home with us we appreciate that a lot.

**HSE week**

Next week we will have a focus on Health and Safety in the school. During the week the learning will be specifically related to Health and therefore early in the morning, at 7:55, on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday the whole school will do some exercise on the field or on the basketball court. All children who are there (and of course Mums and Dads if they wish) will join in doing some Zumba dancing, or stretching or other exercise to “wake up” the brain and promote a better learning environment.

The children will be learning about how they can stay healthy and active. The class teachers’ newsletters should explain to you any further details in relation to the class learning.
**Safety issues**

Unfortunately we have become aware that there continue to be problems within the car park and at the Karavaan car park. For safety reasons we wish to reiterate that our car park needs to be safe for all children! Our rules are there to keep everyone safe and PDO asks all of us to be vigilant and to reinforce our safety rules whenever we see unsafe situations.

- Switch off your engine
- Small children should be taken out of the car
- Wear seatbelts at all times
- Drive in the car park at walking pace
- The car park is a one way system, do not reverse
- The school zone is a 30 km zone, please drive slowly outside the school area
- The drop-off zone is for dropping off only, please drive as far as possible to avoid queuing behind you

**Thank you for keeping our children safe**

**Important Dates**

Please double check the swimming gala dates as these have been changed!

**October**
- 22 –26 October: HSE week
- 29 & 30 October: Parent teacher conferences

**November**
- 5 – 9 November: Mid Term Break
- 19 November: Swimming gala P4 –P5
- 20 November: Swimming gala P2 –P3

**December**
- 10 December
- 18 December: Last day of Term One
- 19 December: Start of Winter Break

**January 2012**
- 7 January: Start of Term Two