Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews
Review Report

AMA International School
Salmabad – Northern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 13-15 January 2020
SP026-C3-R015
Introduction

The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews (DPS), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of eleven reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons and other activities, scrutinised students’ written work and analysed the school’s performance data and other documents. They met with the staff, students and parents. This report summarises their findings and recommendations.

**Summary of review judgements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development and social responsibility</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching, learning and assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment and meeting special needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality assurance of outcomes and processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, management and governance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity to improve</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The school’s overall effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The chart demonstrates the school’s overall effectiveness throughout the last three reviews.
School Report

☐ School’s overall effectiveness ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- Students’ attainment is inconsistent both in internal and external examinations. Their standards, progress and learning skills are inadequate in core subjects across the school.
- Students’ behaviour, their attitudes towards learning, compliance with school systems and commitment to Bahraini values are inadequate. Their self-confidence and leadership skills are not sufficiently developed.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate across the school. This is due to low expectations and the ineffective use of teaching strategies that engage students. In most lessons, learning time is not utilised effectively nor are assessment results used to ensure that students learn and provide support for students.
- Students’ academic and personal needs are neither rigorously identified nor sufficiently met. The procedures around students’ arrival and dismissal are unsafe.
- The school’s self-evaluation lacks comprehensiveness and accuracy. The strategic plan is not focused on current priorities and the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders’ lack clarity, consistency and coordination. Teachers’ individual training needs are neither sufficiently identified nor met.
- Although good physical infrastructure exists, the school lacks required human resources such as a specialist to identify and cater to the needs of students with disabilities.

Main positive features

- The infrastructure and facilities of the school.

Recommendations

- Secure a safe school environment by ensuring the safety of all students during their arrival and dismissal.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
  - adopting a comprehensive approach to self-evaluation to accurately identify areas for improvement and utilise these to create effective plans
  - reviewing the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders to ensure that they focus on improvement priorities, guaranteeing coordination, consistency and continuity of workflow across the school stages
— rigorously monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure the identification and meeting of teachers’ individual training needs.

• Raise students’ standards, understanding and learning skills across the school.

• Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  — using engaging and motivating teaching and learning strategies that develop students’ self-confidence and leadership roles
  — managing learning time productively
  — using assessment results for learning and supporting students of different learning needs, and raise expectations in lessons, activities and written work.

• Support all students both academically and personally through providing the required learning specialists to develop their skills, improve their attitudes towards learning and their commitment to Bahraini values.

☐ Capacity to improve ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

• The school’s overall effectiveness has been inadequate in the past two review cycles.

• The school is going through a transitional period, with a series of organisational and procedural changes taking place in quick succession. The impact of these measures is yet to be seen.

• The self-evaluation indicates an overinflated view of the school’s performance. The strategic plan does not focus on improvement priorities, particularly in safety measures or student outcomes. The school’s judgement of its performance in the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) is higher than that reached by the review team by one point in the academic achievement and by two points in all other aspects.

• Challenges facing the school include the instability in senior leadership, lack of coordination and continuity across all school stages, students’ poor awareness of safety, and their weak standards and basic skills. Communications across the school are not effective in boosting staff morale or promoting teamwork.

• The school has a significant number of students with complex learning needs, yet these needs are neither formally identified nor met. The school lacks the required learning specialists and effective academic and personal support programmes catering to the needs of all categories of students.
Quality of outcomes

☐ Academic achievement ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- In the 2018-2019 internal examinations, students achieved high pass rates in most core subjects, though their proficiency rates varied. There are inconsistencies in marking with inflated results, particularly in Arabic and mathematics.
- In the Elementary and High Schools’, pass rates are high, ranging between 95% and 100% in most subjects. In the Middle School, pass rates range between 74% in Grade 8 science and 100% in Grade 9 Arabic.
- Proficiency rates in the Elementary School range between 51% in Grade 6 and 90% in Grade 2, both in mathematics. In the Middle School, the range is between 22% in Grade 8 Arabic and 53% in Grade 8 English, and in High School, it ranges between 22% in Grade 11 mathematics and 69% in Grade 10 biology.
- A small proportion of students opted for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Their performance is below world averages in the majority of the subjects.
- In the 2019 IGCSE, out of fourteen students who attempted the examination, 13 passed in four or more subjects. However, the percentages of students attaining B or above were inconsistent, ranging from 0% in business studies and economics and 100% in chemistry, physics and Arabic as a foreign language. In the 2019 IBDP, five students out of the twenty three who sat the examination passed the diploma. The percentage of students attaining 5 or above was inconsistent, ranging between 0 in the majority of subjects and 100% in physics SL, which was attempted by three students.
- In lessons and written work, students’ standards, progress and learning skills are inadequate across the school. Students’ performance in the lower Elementary Grades, IB and IGCSE is better, their standards being broadly in line with curriculum expectations. The vast majority of students across the school show limited ability to learn independently, think critically or solve problems.
- Although students’ speaking skills in Arabic are appropriate, their reading and writing skills are inadequate across the school.
- In English, while speaking and reading skills are adequate for the majority of students, writing skills are underdeveloped. Students in the High School make better progress in lessons and their literary skills are appropriate.
- Students’ basic arithmetic skills are weak and below curriculum expectations across the school, though better in Grades 1 to 3. In the upper Elementary and Middle Schools, students face difficulties in adding unlike fractions and solving linear equations, due to their weak basic skills. However, in the High School a few students in IB understand integration techniques in calculus.
• Students across the school show weak understanding of scientific concepts. However, in the very few better lessons such as High School biology, students develop an adequate understanding of concepts such as fertilisation and zygote formation.

Areas for improvement

• Students’ standards, progress and learning skills, particularly in mathematics and Arabic.
• Students’ attainment in both internal and external examinations in core subjects.
• Students’ writing skills in both Arabic and English, their understanding of scientific concepts, and development of basic arithmetic skills and problem-solving.

☐ Personal development & social responsibility ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

• Students’ participation in school life is limited. This adversely affects their development of self-confidence. Their leadership and social skills are not sufficiently developed in and out of lessons.
• Students’ attitudes towards learning and commitment to work ethics are inadequate. In the better lessons, particularly in the lower Elementary School and in the High school IGCSE and IB, students behave appropriately. However, there are numerous incidents of misbehaviour in and outside lessons, including bullying, disrespect to teachers and noncompliance with school rules. The existing procedures to deal with these incidents are ineffective and students do not receive any break time activities to enable them to channel their energy to a positive cause.
• A few of the more able students assume leadership roles while leading morning assemblies and participating in Students’ Council, ‘Global Goal Team’ and fund raising for charity. In lessons across the school, their communication and leadership skills are not sufficiently developed, because the majority of lessons are teacher-centred with limited student involvement and few opportunities to exchange views or work in collaboration.
• Students respect the National Anthem, celebrate National Day and participate in events such as ‘Bahrain First’, while a few students visit homes for the elderly. However, their understanding of Islamic values and Bahraini culture is less apparent as observed in inappropriate conduct between a number of students in the senior grades.
• Although students participate in health and environment awareness programmes such as ‘Healthy Breakfast’, annual walkathon and ‘My Green School’, their adherence to a healthy lifestyle and safety procedures is inadequate. This includes an unhealthy choice of food, smoking, and non-compliance with safety warnings during arrival and dismissal. The school’s policy on the use of cell phones and other electronic devices is unclear, and students do not feel safe as incidents of cyber bullying are not dealt with effectively.
• Students participate in competitions such as ‘Football League’ and ‘World Adolescent Robotics’. A student has won first place in the ‘Ironman’, Bahrain competition. However, these opportunities are limited to a few students, hence the development of students’ competitiveness and innovation is limited across the school.

Areas for improvement

• Students’ behaviour, their work ethic and commitment to Islamic values and Bahraini culture.
• Students’ self-confidence, attitudes towards learning, participation in school life and assuming leadership roles and responsibilities.
• Students’ communication skills and their sense of competitiveness.
• Students’ health awareness, their psychological comfort and their adherence to safety procedures.
Quality of processes

☐ Teaching, learning & assessment ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- In the majority of lessons across the school, teachers use ineffective teaching and learning strategies, centred around question and answer and whole class teaching. This leads to the disinterest of students, hindering their progress and acquisition of basic learning skills. However, in a few better lessons as in the IGCSE and IB, effective strategies are used such as the jigsaw strategy and think-pair-share which engage students adequately in their learning.

- Although resources such as worksheets and educational videos are used the impact is limited in the majority of lessons as teaching does not kindle students’ curiosity or ensure their participation.

- Learning time is not used effectively in most lessons due to unclear instructions and quick transition between activities, with a focus on procedures at the expense of developing students’ understanding and skills. Disruptive behaviour in a few lessons negatively affects productivity, though in the better lessons, particularly in the lower Elementary School, behaviour contributes to a smoother learning experience.

- Assessment for learning is ineffective in most lessons as it mainly focuses on group assessment and collective responses. Tasks are mostly below curriculum expectations. Assessment results are not used effectively to inform teaching or support students’ different learning needs, especially the low achieving who mostly rely on teachers to provide answers. Feedback is generic in lessons and written work, tending to overlook mistakes.

- Teaching does not focus on challenging students’ abilities, apart from a few opportunities for literary analysis and debating world issues in English in the few better lessons.

- The use of technology is limited to the use of projectors to present teaching material in the form of PowerPoints, with a few opportunities to use Google classroom for the IB students and the use of personal phones to search information in High School. However, this opportunity is sometimes misused as students merely copy the material from their devices without understanding the content.

- Although learning outcomes that match curriculum expectations are displayed in all lessons with the three-layered success criteria, implementation fails to meet expectations. In a very few good lessons differentiation better caters for individual needs, such as the adequate distribution of tasks among students in debating activities. However, in the vast majority of lessons differentiation is insufficiently used and fails to cater to students’ different learning styles and support them according to their abilities.
Areas for improvement

- Use of effective teaching and learning strategies that engage students and enable them to progress and develop their basic learning skills as per curriculum expectations.
- Productive use of learning time.
- Utilisation of assessment results to measure students’ learning and support them, particularly the low achieving.
- Implementation of differentiation to meet the students’ varying needs and challenge their abilities.

☐ Empowerment & meeting needs ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- The school conducts diagnostic tests and classifies students into different categories. However, this is not carried out meticulously to identify students’ academic levels and basic skills, nor to implement support programmes to meet their academic or personal needs.
- High achievers are given a few opportunities to participate in activities such as ‘Quiz Bee’ and ‘World Robotics Olympiad’. However, their abilities are not well challenged in and outside lessons.
- Low achievers and students with learning difficulties receive insufficient support. Although remedial lessons are on offer these are not done purposefully, as there is more focus on preparing students for the test rather than improving their skills. Students’ progress is not systematically monitored.
- The school records incidents of misbehaviour and holds lectures on topics such as ‘Positive Discipline’ and ‘Bullying’, but the effectiveness of these procedures is too little as is evident in the recurrence of these incidents.
- The school provides a few opportunities for students to participate in activities such as the morning assembly. However, extracurricular activities such as the IT and Arabic clubs do not sufficiently cater to students’ interests or develop their talents.
- The school facilities are adequately maintained, and evacuation procedures are rehearsed. However, safety procedures around students’ arrival and dismissal are insufficient as there are significant traffic congestion and parking problems in and outside the campus. A few students are dropped off on the highway who then cross the barrier and the adjacent road.
- The school maintains records of students with chronic diseases, while a significant number have more complex needs and disabilities. However, the school staff lacks awareness of their needs and currently there is no provision to support these students in their learning process.
Areas for improvement

- The school’s safety procedures in relation to students’ arrival and dismissal.
- Identification of students’ varying needs and the provision of academic and personal support programmes.
- Developing students’ experiences, interests and talents through a variety of extracurricular activities.
- The accurate identification of students with complex needs and disabilities and the provision of specialist support and programmes.
Quality assurance of outcomes and processes

☐ Leadership, management and governance ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- The school has conducted surveys among stakeholders and identified a set of areas to be addressed. However, the self-evaluation of all aspects of school work is inaccurate and does not cover the entire school performance as identified areas do not reflect the school’s actual improvement needs and priorities.

- The five-year strategic plan is focused mostly on school expansion and increasing student enrolment, with insufficient attention on areas of improvement relating to student outcomes or quality of teaching and learning.

- The new leadership is aware of the school’s current context and has initiated plans for improving the school’s performance. The curriculum has been reviewed recently to align with the expected standards, and a few changes have been made in relation to student drop-off and pick-up procedures. However, the impact of these measures is yet to be seen.

- Training programmes are provided to teachers such as the online training ‘EduCare’ Workshops, provided on topics such as ‘Class Management’ and ‘Differentiation’. However, these sessions are not based on accurate identification of teachers’ training needs and hence have little impact on students’ progress in lessons.

- The new leaders show support to staff and are working on improving communication amongst them. However, roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are unclear and lack coordination, consistency and continuity of workflow across school stages.

- Although the school has the required facilities and infrastructure, these resources are not used appropriately to enrich student learning. The school has a shortfall in human resources such as a specialist to identify and cater to the needs of students with disabilities.

- There is a Parents’ Council but with a lack of clarity on how it functions. Parents’ voices are not well heard. The school has developed a few links with local communities such as charitable institutions and students visit the home for the elderly. However, these links are not effective to help students develop academically or personally.

- The school is going through a transitional period due to its recent change in management and the senior leadership. The current Board of Directors is comprised of two members of the school management and is aspirational and aware of the school’s needs. However, the Board is yet to formally include a diversity of expertise. Accountability for the school’s performance is yet to be ascertained.
Areas for improvement

- Comprehensive self-evaluation to accurately identify improvement priorities.
- Strategic and action planning to address school improvement needs and develop its overall performance.
- Provision of effective professional development training based on teachers’ individual needs and monitoring the impact on students’ progress as per curriculum expectations.
- Coordination and continuity of workflow across school stages to ensure better outcomes.
### Appendix 1: Characteristics of the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the school (Arabic)</th>
<th>مدرسة أما الدولية</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the school (English)</td>
<td>AMA International School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year of establishment</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Building 208, Road 408, Block 704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City / Town / Governorate</td>
<td>Salmabad / Northern</td>
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<td>School’s telephone</td>
<td>1759 8444</td>
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<td>School’s e-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amais@amais.edu.bh">amais@amais.edu.bh</a></td>
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<td>Age range of students</td>
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<td>Number of Students</td>
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<td>Classes</td>
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<td>Optional IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) for Grades 11 and 12</td>
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<td>Optional IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme)</td>
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<td>Accreditation (if applicable)</td>
<td>Candidate status of CIS (Council of International Schools)</td>
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