



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Balqees Primary Girls School
Dumistan - Northern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 5-7 November 2012

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The Schools Review Unit

The Schools Review Unit (SRU) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (NAQQAET) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. It is established to raise standards in education and training.

The SRU is responsible for:

- evaluating and reporting on the quality of provision in all schools and kindergartens
- establishing success measures
- spreading best practice
- making recommendations for school/kindergarten improvements.

Review involves monitoring standards and evaluating the quality of provision against a clear set of indicators. The reviews are independent, objective and transparent. They provide important information for schools and kindergartens about their strengths and areas for improvement to assist in focusing efforts and resources as part of the cycle of school improvement in order to raise standards.

Review grades are awarded a four-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Outcomes or provision are at least good in all areas and outstanding in the majority.
Good (2)	Outcomes or provision are at least satisfactory in all areas and good in the majority.
Satisfactory (3)	A basic level of adequacy. There are no major weaknesses, or the majority of areas are satisfactory. Some areas may be good.
Inadequate (4)	There are major weaknesses or the majority of areas are inadequate.

Introduction

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of nine reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons and other activities, examined students' written and other work, analysed data concerning the school's performance and other documents, and talked with staff, students and parents. This report summarises their findings and recommendations.

Characteristics of the school

School's name		Balqees Primary Girls School															
School's type		Government															
Year of establishment		1981															
Age range of students		6-12 years															
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High							
		1-6				-				-							
Number of students		Boys	-	Girls	763				Total	763							
Students' social background		Most students belong to average income families.															
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12				
	Classes	4	5	4	4	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Town /Village		Dimistan															
Governorate		Northern															
Number of administrative staff		6 Administrators and 3 technicians															
Number of teaching staff		59															
Curriculum		Ministry of Education (MoE)															
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic															
Principal's tenure		2 months															
External assessment and examinations		NAQQAET's national examinations															
Accreditation (if applicable)		-															
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding				Gifted & Talented				Physical Disabilities				Learning Difficulties			
		35				248				6				26			
Major recent changes in the school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointing a new principal in the current academic year 2012-13 Appointing two assistant principals in 2012-13. 															

Table of review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	3: Satisfactory			
The school's capacity to improve	3: Satisfactory			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	3	-	-	3
Students' personal development	3	-	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	-	-	3
The quality of the curriculum implementation	3	-	-	3
The quality of support and guidance for students	3	-	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	3	-	-	3

Key:

- 1: Outstanding
- 2: Good
- 3: Satisfactory
- 4: Inadequate

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

- How effective is the school in meeting the needs of students and their parents?**

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school's overall effectiveness changed from being judged good in the previous review in December 2009, to satisfactory in this one. This is due mainly to the inconsistent use of self-evaluation results in strategic planning. These are not used sufficiently well when setting objectives. The effectiveness of teaching has become inconsistent as has the learning difficulties programme, particularly in terms of students' achievement in lessons. However, the presence of some competent and outstanding teachers has helped in implementing some effective learning and teaching strategies, which do contribute to the satisfactory progress most students make in most lessons and which encourage them to develop their personalities. The students are committed to regular attendance, and their work is usually well displayed to enrich the school's environment. Parents and students are well satisfied with the school.

- How strong is the school's capacity to improve?**

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school's capacity to improve has also changed from being judged good in the previous review to satisfactory this time, due to the inconsistency in making use of self-evaluation results. Although the school's senior leadership identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the strategic plan identifies a range of programmes and activities that aim to develop performance, implementation is inconsistent. This is reflected particularly in the students' achievement and the teaching and learning processes. Although the school's leadership has been unstable, most teachers have helped in improving the procedures taken to deal with behavioural issues, which led to a decrease in behavioural problems. The role of the senior leadership in cooperation with the improvement partner provide satisfactory capacity to improve the weak aspects in the school.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Grade 3 students attained standards above and slightly above the national average in Arabic and mathematics respectively from 2010 to 2012. Grade 6 students also attained standards above the national average in Arabic, mathematics, and science. Attainment in Arabic was the highest from 2010 to 2012. Standards in English were very close to the national average in 2010 and 2011, which were not reflected by the students' actual levels of attainment and achievement in lessons.

The students attain high pass rates in the core subjects, between 90% and 100%, and the competency rates match these high pass rates in both cycles. These results reflect the performance of most of the students in lessons in the first cycle, while, in the second cycle, they reflect the students' performance in the good lessons, especially in Arabic and in science, where most students acquire investigative skills well. Performance in other core subjects is no better than satisfactory, due to the differences among second cycle students in acquiring basic skills, such as reading and writing in English and multiplication and division in mathematics. Skills in information technology are also satisfactory.

Students' achievement in the core subjects in the previous three years, 2010 to 2012 is satisfactory, Good lessons, such as in Arabic and science help students achieve well, due to the effective teaching strategies, while their progress is no better than satisfactory in the rest of the lessons, because the support provided to different students is too varied. Students in the first cycle make clear progress in their written work in most subjects, while the students of the second cycle achieve well in written work only in science. Students' development in the rest of the subjects is satisfactory.

The school conducts diagnostic tests for the all grades in the first cycle. In Grade 4, it identifies outstanding students, low achievers, and those with learning difficulties, in order to provide them with enrichment and remedial programmes. Accordingly, the performance of the outstanding students is good in the 'Knowledge Lights' programme and in most lessons due to developing their higher order thinking skills. However, the students' progress in the 'Learning Difficulties Programme' is merely satisfactory, because their performance is weaker than it might be, since they do not receive appropriate support.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most students are enthusiastic and motivated towards their learning due to the effort of most teachers in the good lessons, especially in Arabic and science. Effective learning strategies help students to work collaboratively and take leadership roles. These foster their ability to be responsible and to express their views, such as in the 'Young teacher' programme. This motivation dips in the satisfactory and inappropriate lessons, and also outside lessons. Although students are offered opportunities to participate in activities and committees, particularly during recess, the impact overall is no better than satisfactory with students gaining adequate levels of self-confidence.

Most students are committed to regular attendance and are punctual, with few cases of lateness. Actions taken by the school encourage students to attend early, through the effect of the competition 'Say no to late arrival'. Most students feel safe and secure, where harmony and mutual respect prevails among them and the teachers in the lessons, during the recess and around the school.

Most students demonstrate good understanding of the heritage and culture of Bahrain, and its Islamic values. These values are reinforced by the school in the lessons and the extra-curricular activities, such as participating in the Heritage Festival, and visiting the crafts centre. The 'behavioural values project', helps students to acquire understanding and commitment to good manners and conduct.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Teachers' subject knowledge is inconsistently reflected in their performance in lessons. It is evident in their enthusiasm, elaboration and in their use of techniques such as giving explanations with examples and operating the 'young student-teacher' and 'learning through play' programmes. However in some subjects, such as mathematics in second cycle, and in English throughout, basic skills are not taught well enough and lead to inconsistency in students' achievement in the second cycle particularly.

The use of some learning resources, such as smart boards, learning flashcards and shapes, help students acquire skills, knowledge, and understanding in both cycles, especially in Arabic and science to a good level, while such use is inconsistent across other subjects.

Students show enjoyment in class activities, especially in the good and some satisfactory lessons, due to the teachers' verbal reinforcement and encouragement through stickers, stars and presents. Teachers have effective management of the students' behaviour. Nevertheless, the lack of motivation, and concentration by students, due to the uninspired teaching in most satisfactory lessons, prevent the low achieving students from taking part sufficiently. The indistinct roles in group work lead to achievement being concentrated only on outstanding students. In some lessons there is elaborative explanation and long introductions, which clearly impact adversely on good time management in those lessons.

Higher order thinking skills, such as deduction, prediction, and creative brainstorming, are developed in some lessons, especially in science and Arabic. These help develop students' skills of perception in those lessons and bring challenging, but the teaching of these skills is less evident in lessons other than science and Arabic.

Students are given assignments and homework, which are followed up through regular correction and feedback in both cycles, especially in science and English, though the accuracy and quality of this varies too much in English. Differentiation is evident in most activities in the lessons as are evaluation methods. These vary and, include individual and group assessments, both verbal and written. There is verbal and group assessment in most lessons but the quality of marking and feedback varies too much. Less care is provided than necessary in using the assessment results to inform learning, which does not then help teaching to meet the students' learning needs as well as it should.

□ How well does the implementation and enrichment of the curriculum meet the educational needs of the students?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school implements an appropriate range of learning experiences for different groups of students, appropriate programmes for the gifted students, for example, include 'the smart students' challenge', but their impact is not clear in many lessons. Programmes offered to students with learning difficulties are not so good. Curriculum enrichment helps students acquire basic problem solving and life skills, especially in Arabic, which are made relevant and connected to life in the first cycle rather better than in the second.

Extra-curricular activities, such as 'Memorable Quotations', and The Internet Club encourage scientific research. Others help students achieve well in competitions, such as first place in the Quran Recital competition

Some curricula are analysed, such as mathematics. The school enriches content with projects and development activities, such as the 'Multiplication Festival', and 'Knowledge Companions'. Remedial and enrichment notes help the experiences of most groups of students.

The school reinforces a sense of belonging and citizenship among students, through morning assembly, and participation in national events, such as the Bahrain Festival and arranging field visits, such as to the crafts centre. It is decorated with posters and enrichment resources, which refer to important political achievements and the cultural heritage of Bahrain. Students' work is usually displayed and celebrated well. The first cycle environment is more encouraging to learning than in the second cycle.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 satisfactory

New students settle easily. Grade 3 students are gradually prepared for this level through guidance and advice. Grade 6 students are also prepared for their next level through visits to Yathrib Middle School lectures about it.

The school evaluates the personal and academic aspects of the students, and meets their personal needs adequately through help, such as providing stationary, supporting the blind students through announcements and examinations printed in Braille. Special paths are provided for the physically disabled. The school seeks to encourage the outstanding and the gifted students to participate in programmes and extra-curricular activities, such as the 'Future Conversations' programme, 'Building Self-esteem ' and 'Scientific Research', which are reflected in the good lessons. Recent programmes offered to students with learning difficulties outside the classroom vary in quality and their impact on students' development.

Behavioral values are promoted. Field visits and special occasions are used to solve some issues and reinforce positive attitudes, for example a sketch in morning assembly, titled, 'The Red Rose'.

Parents are kept well informed about the progress of their daughters. Good efforts are made to evaluate risk, and to control food safety in the canteen. Evacuation drills are practised,

and staff encourage students to keep the school clean, protect its belongings and be 'Eco-friendly'.

Leadership, management and governance

- How effective are leadership, management and governance in promoting high achievement, strong personal development and school improvement?**

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school's vision is based on improving achievement. It was written collaboratively with the staff, and is practically reflected in most of the teaching to a satisfactory standard. The strategic plan is set in light of the recommendations in the previous review, but they are inconsistently reflected in school work, due mainly to the ineffective use of the self-evaluation results regarding progress being made against the priorities set.

The school encourages staff in a family setting based on respect and appreciation, and motivates them through incentives and rewards. It also authorises some teachers to take on additional tasks in order to meet the shortages in some middle leadership positions, such as the senior teachers in English and science.

Internal workshops, such as those on creative writing, and improving the classroom learning environment, are held. These are positively reflected in the teachers' performance in most lessons, but not as good as in the second cycle's mathematics lessons. The school uses its resources and facilities to support the academic processes inconsistently. The e-classroom is used more effectively in the second cycle than the first, the same is true for the science laboratory, and the learning resources centre, especially by the Arabic language department. The lack of a drawing room, the shortage of computers and the clash of lessons in the sports hall, causes some of the inconsistency in enriching students' experiences.

The school seeks the views of students and parents through engaging them in evaluating the educational meetings, and being acquainted with the school's vision. The school responds to their views as much as possible, for example through activating the students' and parents' council. The parents' council is not appropriately effective due to the frequent absence of some of its members from meetings.

The school cooperates with some local community organisations and schools. It cooperates with the municipality and police department in the Northern Governorate, which has helped enhance the students' experiences. The board of directors and the technical

committee participate in developing the school work by discussing school-related issues, such as evaluating the strategic and operational plans, the work of the different committees,, student affairs and the teachers' professional competency procedures. This has resulted in improving the school's performance in a satisfactory manner.

The school's main strengths

- Attendance and taking appropriate measures to control absence, and encouraging students to be punctual
- Informing the parents about the progress of their daughters, and seeking their views and feedback.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- improve teaching and learning by:
 - developing students' basic skills more effectively in the second cycle in mathematics and English
 - considering the individual differences of students in lessons and in homework assigned
 - supporting students in lessons more closely, especially the low-achieving students
 - making better use of assessment results, in order to meet the learning needs of the students.
- reinforce positive attitudes in better ways, and develop students' self-confidence and sense of responsibility more
- set and adjust strategic planning objectives according to priorities and check impact by using effective self-evaluation processes
- meet the shortages in human resources, such as senior teachers in English and science.