



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Palms Primary School
West Riffa - Southern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 29 November - 1 December 2011

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The Schools Review Unit

The Schools Review Unit (SRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent national authority, attached to the Cabinet and set up under Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008, amended by the Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. 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 seven 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		Palms Primary School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		2005											
Age range of students		6-12 years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary			Middle				High				
		1 - 6			-				-				
Number of Students		Boys	61		Girls	47		Total	108				
Students' social background		Middle to advantaged											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village		West Riffa											
Governorate		Southern											
Number of administrative staff		3											
Number of teaching staff		11 & 1 teacher assistant											
Curriculum		English National Curriculum/Ministry of Education for Arabic, Islamic Studies and Citizenship											
Main language(s) of instruction		English/Arabic											
Principal's tenure		6 years											
External assessment and examination		Cambridge Checkpoint starting from 2012											
Accreditation (if applicable)		-											
Number of students in the following categories according to the School's classification		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties		
		26			-			-			-		

Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade 1 has a class teacher, whereas Grades 2 to 6 have subject specific teachers• The school has been approved to be a Cambridge International Centre• One day each week has been designated an early dismissal day to allow for teachers' professional development• Seven out of the 11 teachers are newly recruited in the school since September 2011.
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Review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	2: Good			
The school's capacity to improve	1: Outstanding			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	2	-	-	2
Students' personal development	1	-	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	2	-	-	2
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	-	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	1	-	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	1	-	-	1

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: 2 Good

The school's overall effectiveness is good with outstanding features. Students' personal development is outstanding since most students are extremely well-behaved and show great maturity, responsibility and respect towards each other and their teachers. Students' academic achievement is good, mainly due to the effective teaching and learning. Curriculum implementation is good, while support and guidance is outstanding. The effectiveness of leadership, management and governance is outstanding since it has been successful in maintaining students' good standards, despite the sudden changing circumstances in the school's. Staffing problems were resolved by the successful arrangements made for recruitment and efficient professional development of the seven new teachers this academic year. The school has high levels of satisfaction among both parents and students.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school has effective leadership with the ability to accurately identify the strengths and areas for improvement and set plans for development. This is evident from the strategic and action plans which have clear priorities based on rigorous self-evaluation. Furthermore, these are being thoroughly monitored and reviewed to meet changing circumstances. The school is successful in maintaining good achievement by students and effective teaching and learning, despite the fact that more than 70% of its staff are new teachers. This success is mainly due to the high quality weekly professional development programme established to cater to the identified needs of teachers. The Board of Directors support and, monitor the school's performance very well and the Board contributes directly to plans for the school's development. These factors enhance the school's capacity to improve further.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 2 Good

Lesson observations, students' work and the results of internal testing indicate that most students demonstrate standards above age-related expectations in almost all of the core subjects. Students attained slightly above average rates in the school's internal examinations in core subjects in 2010 and 2011, ranging between 77% and 94%. Students' levels of skills, understanding and knowledge are demonstrably good in lessons and in their written work. These good levels are also evident in students' performance which is consistently above the level expected for their age.

Analysis of performance data shows that students have made good progress in almost all core subjects over the past three years. The analysis is supported by the proficiency shown by students in lessons. The progress of the majority in lessons is good, since students successfully acquire the basic skills in core subjects. They have good oral and written communication skills in English and are confident in expressing themselves clearly, using an extended vocabulary. They can read a range of texts in all subjects with expression, fluency and good comprehension. In Arabic, students listen well and speak and read fluently. They accurately use basic grammar and comprehend a range of texts. However, the majority of students' writing skills are less well-developed across the school.

In science, most students are meeting age-appropriate standards. They understand various scientific concepts and a few students in higher grades are exceeding these standards, as they have a good understanding of advanced scientific terms and concepts. They can explain ideas well. However, students' scientific enquiry and practical skills are less well developed. Younger students, for example, are not confident in communicating the concept of a fair test, an important idea for practical science work. In mathematics, most students acquire basic skills with a clear understanding of arithmetical operations, fractions, concepts of geometry, such as parallel and perpendicular lines, and handling data. However, a few students' reasoning and enquiry skills are less effectively developed.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school sensitively monitors attendance and punctuality and encourages outstanding attendance by giving certificates to the few students with 100 per cent attendance. Students

participate with full enthusiasm in school life, both in lessons and by celebrating many special events like 'Care Day'. They show a good level of understanding and work collaboratively in lessons. Their behaviour and confidence are outstanding. They diligently take up leadership roles as class representatives, class monitors and members of the School Council. Additionally, the senior students regularly help younger students to improve their English listening and reading skills.

Students feel safe and secure in the friendly and supportive family environment which is enhanced by the school's effective behaviour management. They have a well-developed understanding of Bahrain's heritage and culture, which is encouraged carefully during social studies lessons and through excursions to heritage sites, such as the Jasra Handicraft Centre. Students show pride when celebrating national day and cultural and heritage events. Most students display an excellent comprehension of Islamic values with mutual respect and tolerance, which is evident in their interactions around the school. Students also respect the social fabric of the school, which is evident from their mature behaviour during break times and their care of school facilities.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 2 Good

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and they enthusiastically provide clear explanations, delivering well-planned lessons which are productive and orderly. In satisfactory lessons, time and behaviour management are less effectively utilised.

In lessons, generally, students are motivated, encouraged and effectively supported to acquire skills and knowledge and achieve the expected standards appropriate to their ages and abilities. Analytical thinking skills are well-developed in many English and Arabic lessons where most students read stories critically and are able to predict future events with good reasons. Students are motivated to develop independent thinking and imagination through extended writing. However, investigative and reasoning skills are less well-developed in mathematics and science with few opportunities provided for students to develop practical skills.

Lesson planning is thorough and provides challenge for students' different learning needs and abilities. For example, the more able students are given activities that enable them to further their understanding and achieve high standards. In many lessons teachers vary the

exercises according to students' needs and effectively facilitate tasks for individual work. Low achievers are helped to overcome their learning difficulties.

Teachers use a range of strategies and resources that excite students and enrich their learning experiences. Most teachers use different teaching resources such as video clips, pictures and flash cards that engage students and increase their enjoyment. In many lessons, students are provided with opportunities to discuss and express opinions and they are stimulated to interact and work together.

Homework is regularly given to students and is frequently a consolidation of exercises completed in lessons. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods that carefully evaluate students' understanding and skills. Students are continuously assessed and effective feedback is given to help them improve. Additionally, their written work is rigorously checked and guidelines are written to help students improve. Most teachers use both open and probing questions that challenge and expand students' thinking. However in a minority of lessons, the teachers depend mostly on general observation, which provides too limited assessment of individual student's progress.

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

Grade: 2 Good

Yearly overviews and well-organised and sequenced schemes of work provide a balanced programme to meet the range of students' needs and abilities. Curriculum planning ensures progression and continuity between grades. Students can apply their basic skills well across subjects. Regular curriculum review leads to appropriate modifications, which better meet the different needs, interests and abilities of students, for example by adapting particular aspects of the Ministry of Education and Lebanese curricula for Arabic subjects. The school gives remarkable attention to help students understand their rights and responsibilities, through life skills lessons and class discussions, as well as opportunities to undertake responsible roles in classes. Planned cross-curricular units of study allow students to transfer knowledge and skills between subjects, for example by writing in different forms about myths and legends when studying the Ancient Greeks. Team planning across subjects also promotes common approaches.

The many events and activities throughout the year enhance the curriculum and motivate students. However, after-school activities provide limited choice and are less successful, with limited take-up by students. Visitors, such as a dentist and author, work with students and bring the curriculum to life. Students are involved in community awareness projects,

taking part in a beach clean-up and raising money for a local orphanage. Student work is displayed in all classrooms, adding to the welcoming learning environment.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school makes great efforts to meet the educational and personal needs of students through effective programmes to promote a wide range of values, such as cooperation, initiative and respect. New students enjoy the exceptional orientation week offered to them including a familiarisation tour of the school facilities and an induction day for parents and students to familiarize them with the curriculum and the evaluation scheme.

The school carefully monitors the progress of students' personal development. It also offers diagnostic tests and remedial plans for low achievers by using a range of methods to support students in and outside classrooms. Additionally, Grade 6 students take a prominent role with younger students in teaching them reading, which is reflected in these students making better progress. The school also provides advice to students using various methods through many staff members, such as their social councillor and life skills teachers.

Students in Grades 5 and 6 are very well-prepared for the next stage of their education through taking them on visits to schools they might join and providing opportunities to take mock examinations. The school communicates very effectively with parents about the progress of their children, such as regular reports, weekly plans and student diaries. Students and staff enjoy the healthy and safe school environment.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school's clear vision, which is shared by staff and students, is focused on striving for excellence in achievement and personal development. The school is successful in achieving students' outstanding personal development for and good academic results. This greatly inspires and motivates all school staff including new teachers who praise the support and

encouragement they receive from the senior leadership and Board of Directors in providing professional development programmes.

Self-evaluation is undertaken as a rigorous and continuous analysis of the school's performance. The curriculum is continuously reviewed, updated and modified to meet students' needs. Students' results are analysed and these are used to plan careful support. The four-year strategic plan is also founded on thorough analysis with clear priorities for improvement and realistic general and specific goals within definite time frames. The action plan to achieve these goals has also been reviewed and updated after one year, in order to meet the changing circumstances of the school. Teachers' professional programmes are developed as a result of appraisals and lead to the weekly in-house training sessions, in addition to the various workshops provided to the teachers such as, 'Differentiated Instruction' and 'Class Management'.

Despite the limitations of the campus, the school is making the best use of the space available to provide a stimulating learning environment. However, the constraints of space does not allow for an appropriate sports hall, which the school recognises. It has resolved the problem by renting a nearby playground area.

The school seeks and responds to the views of students and parents exceptionally well through various methods, such as the student council, the suggestion box and many questionnaires. It also has various links with local charity organisations which enrich students' experiences. Moreover, members of the senior leadership are active participants in many educational and charity institutes, for example the Mother and Child Education Programme (MACEP).

The Board of Directors is very well-constituted with clearly identified roles and responsibilities. It meets periodically to monitor the school's performance and contributes to the improvement plans by providing ideas, support and encouragement to the senior management.

The school's main strengths

- The strong support provided to students to assist them to overcome any personal and academic challenges
- Students' outstanding behaviour, their maturity and ability to take on responsibility in various events and activities
- The strong support and encouragement of the Board of Directors, which closely monitors and contributes to the overall development and accountability of the school
- The very well-developed strategic plan which is based on a thorough analysis of the school's situation and an awareness of the priorities for improvement
- The warm and welcoming atmosphere that prevails between students and teachers.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- adopt learning strategies that better develop students' analytical, practical and investigative skills, particularly in science and mathematics lessons
- provide a wider range of extra-curricular activities to better meet the various needs and interests of students.