



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

Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Arabian Pearl Gulf School
Manama - Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 14 - 16 November 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 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		The Arabian Pearl Gulf													
School's type		Private													
Year of establishment		1996													
Age range of students		6-17 years													
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High					
		1 to 6				7 to 10				11 to 12					
Number of students		Boys	509				Girls	359				Total	868		
Students' social background		Various social backgrounds													
Classes per grade		Grade		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		Classes		7	7	7	7	5	3	3	2	2	2	1	1
Town /Village		Manama													
Governorate		Capital													
Number of administrative staff		5													
Number of teaching staff		92													
Curriculum		<p>Grades 1 to 8 :</p> <p>American curriculum with subjects taught in English : Lebanese curriculum: French and Arabic Bahrain Ministry of Education: religion & social studies</p> <p>Grade 9 to 10: British international examinations curriculum based on International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)</p> <p>Grade 11 to 12:</p>													

	International curriculum based upon the International Baccalaureate (IB) Full Diploma			
Main language(s) of instruction	English and Arabic			
Principal's tenure	10 years			
External assessment and examination	IGCSE IB Full Diploma			
Accreditation (if applicable)	IGCSE/IB Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) IB Office (IBO)			
Number of students in the following categories	Outstanding	Gifted & Talented	Physical Disabilities	Learning Difficulties
	-	16	-	9
Major recent changes in the school	Twenty new teachers had started in post shortly before the commencement of the review			

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	2	3
Students' personal development	2	2	2	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	3	3	3
The quality of the curriculum implementation	3	3	3	3
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	2	2	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	3	3	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

Arabian Pearl Gulf School's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Although students' personal development and the guidance and support they receive are good, their academic progress in many lessons is only satisfactory. The school attains some high external examination results with the small groups in the senior school. Teaching and learning is often satisfactory with a similar proportion being good. However there is a significant proportion of teaching that is not securing enough progress in the students' learning, particularly in Arabic. Teaching does not consistently challenge students to investigate ideas and learn at levels that are well matched to their different abilities, because assessment is not used sufficiently to guide their next steps. The team that governs, leads and manages is committed to making the school excellent and is bringing change. Most parents are supportive of the school and pleased with what it provides.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Capacity to improve is satisfactory because there are no major weaknesses in the school's processes for assuring both good and satisfactory outcomes for students. Attainment is high in English and broadly in line with expectations in the core subjects, year on year. Planning points direction based on adequate school self-evaluation and strategic planning. This correctly sets the improvement of teaching as a main priority. The school faces a number of challenges and is systematically addressing these, including improving aspects of health and safety and the continuing assessment and elimination of risks, so as to provide a better and safer learning environment.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' academic achievement is satisfactory. Students attain high pass rates in the internal examinations, but these are not moderated against objective benchmarks so have very limited reliability. Small cohorts of senior students achieve well and attain good results in external IB and some IGCSE examinations. In Arabic and English, a very high proportion secured A* to C grades in IGCSE in both 2010 and 2011. In mathematics and physics, results are more in line with average expectations whereas in biology and chemistry, results are slightly below average. In lessons, students' levels of knowledge, understanding and skills vary considerably. On balance across the school, this leads to the majority of students achieving the expected levels in the core subjects, except in English where their progress and achievement is good.

Almost all students have good oral communication skills in English and use a broad vocabulary confidently. They can read fluently with good comprehension and expression. High School students show appropriate progress in extended writing, for example in composing well-reasoned persuasive arguments. However, students' creative writing in Grades 1 to 8 is less well-developed, especially considering their competent speaking, listening and reading skills. In Arabic also, students are better at speaking and reading, particularly in the Primary School. They have accurate grammar, but less confidence in their writing skills and so make slower progress, particularly in the High School.

In mathematics, students have sound basic skills and concepts. Primary and Middle School students are able to perform basic arithmetical operations and solve simple word problems with many understanding more difficult number relationships. High School students have an understanding of a number of mathematical topics. However, only a few students, particularly in the High School, are able to use mathematical concepts and skills to solve problems independently. Similarly in science, students have good scientific knowledge. High School students have a good grasp of many physical phenomena. Generally, throughout the school, students' practical and investigative skills are insufficiently developed.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Students are punctual. Firm procedures are in place to follow-up any late arrivals. Most students participate enthusiastically in school life, from competing to answer questions during the morning assembly to eagerly asking questions and completing tasks in lessons. Although there are extensive activities for younger students, seniors are involved in a limited choice with the impact on their personal development being less.

In lessons, students develop confidence and many take responsibility for their learning. They use their initiative and have opportunities to take on leadership roles and work independently, such as when conducting laboratory experiments. However, in less effective lessons, students have fewer opportunities which restricts them from developing age-appropriate practical and personal learning skills. Although the Student Council is still in its infancy, students are keen to represent the opinions of their peers and discuss matters of concern.

Good relationships exist between students and they demonstrate thoughtful behaviour. They show respect for all and willingly help to maintain the cleanliness of their school. Students have good knowledge and understanding of Bahrain's heritage and Islamic values. They participate and contribute in many national events and festivals, such as welcoming Eid days, celebrating the National Day with a fashion show and drawings of cultural monuments in Bahrain.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to give clear explanations. Lesson planning often only outlines topic and learning objectives. Where good planning occurs, teaching and assessment strategies are also indicated. In the better lessons, about half of the lessons observed, teachers clearly explain objectives and move on to use a range of activities to promote learning. They use questions and strategies carefully to both challenge and support students of all abilities, for example in the use of graded-word problems and mental puzzles in mathematics. Planning generally does not cater enough for the varied learning needs, ages and abilities of students and questions do not stimulate more able students to

think creatively. Where lessons are inadequate, about one in ten, unchallenging activities and low expectations limit students' progress.

In the best lessons, teachers use open and probing questions to help students develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, where students justify their ideas and opinions with enthusiasm. Most lessons are orderly, teachers have positive relationships with students, maintain effective pace and use time well. Ready encouragement and support motivates students, who respond positively to praise. For example in English, a whole-group discussion led to effective paired working, while in Arabic, brainstorming and singing motivated students well. Lessons are mostly teacher-centred. In the best lessons, this and other styles are appropriate and promote successful learning.

In less effective lessons inefficient use of time and slow pace cause students to lose interest. There is limited support given to low-achieving students and the planned activities engage too few students, resulting with many sitting as passive listeners. Generally throughout the grades, not enough opportunities are given for students to develop investigative learning skills through working individually and in small groups, without being overly reliant on the teacher. Teachers and students confidently use interactive whiteboards, although many teachers are too dependent on them, which constrains the use of other more appropriate methods.

Where teachers make good use of assessments of students' prior learning teaching is good. However, there is inconsistent use of assessment by teachers overall, both to inform planning and guide teaching in lessons. Although student work is regularly marked, this rarely includes comments that help students to know how to improve their own work. Teachers give regular homework, which enables students to consolidate and extend their learning.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Subjects from the Ministry of Education, American curriculum, Cambridge International Examinations and IB Diploma programmes provide a sound basis. There are limited modifications made to adapt the curriculum to cater to the different levels of students' needs, including high and low achievers. Class teachers and subject coordinators regularly review the individual subject curriculum to evaluate success in promoting students' achievement and identify changes needed. However, coordinated organisation of

curriculum review across subjects and in response to the changing needs of students is lacking.

In a few lessons, teachers make links between subjects, for example by using mathematics calculations during science lessons. However, there are insufficient planned cross-curricular links to help students apply their learning. Also the absence of linked assessment to key skills across the curriculum is limiting, for example in reading, writing, numeracy and IT. The school encourages students to contribute to national activities that develop citizenship, celebrating International Days and charity walks. Social studies and the Community, Action and Service programmes and resources support the school's strong community spirit, as do educational field trips and visitors such as the dentist, nutritionist and origami expert. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities which broaden students' interests and experiences. The introduction of the IB Diploma is promoting good learning about cultural diversity.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

Students are guided and supported well. Induction is thorough and students settle quickly. The school monitors students' academic progress using effective procedures and a well-organised system. Diagnostic assessments of students identify support needs and appropriate remedial activities are provided. The school is committed to students' personal development and uses a range of systems to recognise and carefully monitor their needs. Discipline expectations are consistent and students respond well.

The school has a well-established, effective system for supporting students with special needs in Arabic-language subjects. However, in English-language subjects, special needs students have more limited support. Counsellors closely monitor the support given by teachers and keep parents well-informed. Class teachers are readily available to advise on personal and academic concerns.

Students receive effective guidance and career counselling in the higher grades. Parents are well-informed about their children's progress through various methods, underpinned by quarterly parents' meetings.

The caring and respectful ethos promotes an acceptably safe and healthy environment. Although assembly points are marked in case of fire, risk assessment is insufficiently attentive to ensuring the environment is maintained to a high standard of safety, for example by addressing issues such as having regular fire escape drills, levelling the uneven

playground surface and guarding electrical fixtures. Counsellors are trained in first-aid. Daily incident logs are clearly documented with actions recorded.

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 is well led by a dedicated principal who is supported by the proprietor and senior team. Leaders have ambition for the school and drive improvement, because there is a strong desire to provide the best to fulfil students' needs. Equal opportunities are promoted and ensure that students from different backgrounds are supported and encouraged similarly well. Students are included academically and socially, with high examination attainment in some subjects, but in parts of the school the achievement and progress of students is not maximised.

Professional development opportunities are provided for staff, so as to help them keep up-to-date and well informed about new developments in curriculum and teaching. Subsequent implementation is not consistent and leads to unevenness in the rates of students' progress in different parts of the school. Adequate efforts are taken by senior staff to ensure that standards are raised by sharing best practices across subject departments. The qualities of the best lessons are not used to improve those that are not so good. Also, the management of curriculum and assessment within and across subject departments is currently too fragmented. Leaders are not bringing coherence to the teaching and learning of transferable key skills. Changes in staffing have been considerable recently and these have been managed smoothly with good induction procedures.

The leadership team has made sure that the school's arrangements for guiding and supporting students are effective. However the premises generally do not match the ambitions held for the students by the proprietor and principal. Parents are pleased with the work that the school is doing and are realistic in their views about what can be achieved in the short and medium term. For the school to advance significantly, the quality of the premises currently presents a barrier. Planning is underway to improve accommodation in the short and medium term. A small governing body group has been formed, which is knowledgeable about the school and which seeks to improve it, based on satisfactory school self-evaluation and strategic planning.

The school's main strengths

- There is ambition and commitment from the principal and proprietor to give all students an excellent education, reflected in students' high attainment in some examination results and their progress in English
- The focus on meeting the personal development needs of students through the good quality of guidance and support provided by teachers and counsellors
- School leaders know the students well and have high visibility in ensuring the happy atmosphere in the daily life of the school.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- increase the proportion of good or better teaching by ensuring appropriate strategies to challenge students to participate fully and learn more quickly
- ensure assessment information is used in teaching to help teachers meet the different needs of students within classes more effectively
- monitor and evaluate teaching more rigorously and systematically, with class visits, advice and coaching to ensure teachers know what to do to improve their teaching and the students' rates of progress
- strengthen the coherence of the curriculum and its assessment so as to improve students' acquisition of knowledge and understanding and their application of key skills
- accelerate and refine the implementation aspects of strategic planning with regard to providing a better and safer environment.