



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

Review Report

Ahlia School
Saar - Northern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 24-26 November 2014

SP060-C1-R060

Table of Contents

The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews	1
Introduction	2
Characteristics of the school	2
Table of review judgements awarded	3
Review judgements	4
Overall effectiveness	4
Students' achievement.....	5
The quality of provision	6
Leadership, management and governance	8
The school's main strengths	10
Recommendations	11

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews (DPS) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) 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 DPS is responsible for:

- evaluating and reporting on the quality of provision in all private schools and kindergartens
- establishing success measures
- spreading best practice
- making recommendations for private 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 private 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 five 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		Ahlia School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		2010											
Age range of students		6-12 years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High			
		1-6				-				-			
Number of students		Boys	103	Girls	63	Total		166					
Students' social background		Most are of middle class background											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	2	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village		Saar											
Governorate		Northern Governorate											
Number of administrative staff		12											
Number of teaching staff		15											
Curriculum		International Baccalaureate Diploma - currently in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) stage											
Main language(s) of instruction		English and Arabic											
Principal's tenure		4 years											
External assessment and examinations		-											
Accreditation (if applicable)		-											
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties		
		-			-			-			8		
Major recent changes in the school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishment of Grade 4 in 2012-2013, Grade 5 in 2013-2014 and Grade 6 in 2014-2015 • creation of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Students Council • appointment of a new Academic Coordinator • establishment of the school cafeteria. 											

Table of review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	4: Inadequate			
The school's capacity to improve	4: Inadequate			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	4	-	-	4
Students' personal development	3	-	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	4	-	-	4
The quality of the curriculum implementation	4	-	-	4
The quality of support and guidance for students	4	-	-	4
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	4	-	-	4

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: 4 Inadequate

The school's overall effectiveness is judged as inadequate, along with all aspects except personal development which is judged as satisfactory. The school lacks rigorous self-evaluation that is linked to strategic priorities, planning and policies. Professional development needs are not based on systematic monitoring of performance. Pass rates are generally high, but standards and progress in lessons are mostly inadequate. Students' understanding and skills are below age expectations, teaching strategies are not effective, time is poorly managed, students' learning needs are not supported, and assessment is not used effectively to plan for learning. Although students behave well and feel safe, opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively are inconsistent. The curriculum is not enriched to meet students' different needs.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The school's capacity to improve is inadequate due to the absence of rigorous self-evaluation, clear strategic planning and effective professional development programmes that are needed to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning and develop students' standards and progress. The school's key management structure is not sufficiently staffed and the available resources are too limited, negatively impacting the school's ability to carry out essential improvements. Staff deployment is an issue, with the qualifications of many teachers not matching the subjects and age groups they teach. The school lacks well-established procedures to monitor performance, particularly in teaching and learning.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Students consistently achieve high pass rates in the school's internal examinations. However, their performance has significantly declined in mathematics and English in Grade 6, ranging from 60% to 65% in 2014-2015 mid-term assessments. Proficiency rates are significantly down in English and mathematics, particularly in upper primary grades, ranging between 14% and 25%. Tracking of the same cohort's work indicates a clear decline in performance of most students, particularly in English and mathematics.

Students demonstrate weak standards during lessons and in their academic work, particularly in English, and mathematics. Most of Grade 2 students are unable to form plurals of nouns with the accurate use of '-s' and '-es'. In Grade 6, students find difficulty in understanding the subject matter when reading a text. Although the majority of students have an age appropriate grasp of speaking, listening and reading aloud skills in languages, their writing and reading comprehension skills are under-developed due to low expectations. In Grade 1 science, students have age-appropriate knowledge of a plant's structure and its different parts. Grade 6 students exhibit age appropriate knowledge of some basic scientific concepts. However, students' practical and investigative skills are not sufficiently developed. This is due to low number of practical activities provided within the curriculum. In mathematics, the majority of students from Grade 1 feel comfortable finding the near doubles. Students in Grades 5 and 6 have age appropriate basic arithmetic skills. Nonetheless, due to insufficient understanding of key mathematical concepts and limited utilisation of opportunities available in the course books, students' problem solving skills are under-developed.

Across the school in all core subjects, a significant number of students do not make at least the expected progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly the high achievers and those with learning difficulties. Too few opportunities are provided for them to actively participate in lessons, with an insufficient range of activities that cater for their different learning needs. In general and as a consequence of the ineffective teacher-led approach used, students' inquiry skills are not sufficiently developed.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Attendance rates are high, above 95%, although there are inconsistencies in the school's attendance policies and practices. Lateness rates in the mornings are relatively low and most students attend lessons on time.

The majority of students participate appropriately in lessons, particularly when activities are engaging and they play an active role in their own learning. They enjoy participating in extra-curricular activities such as book fairs and break time activities. Students show confidence while working individually in the majority of lessons. They take on responsibilities such as the role of class monitor. Students are involved in the recently established students' council but it is not yet effectively able to channel their ideas. Other leadership roles are limited. Students work with each other adequately, when given the opportunity. For example, Grade 2 students paint and colour fish well together as part of a class activity. However, the majority of students' independent learning skills are not sufficiently developed. Students behave well and show respect to all including their teachers. They feel safe and have positive relationships with their peers. Their understanding of Bahrain's culture, heritage and Islamic values is enhanced in the social and Islamic studies lessons and through their participation in the celebration of National Day.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Although the majority of teachers have secure subject knowledge, many lack understanding of the appropriate practices in elementary education which hinders better facilitation and engagement in learning. In the better lessons, the more able students are encouraged to participate through the House Points system and are engaged due to the use of effective strategies such as role-plays and games, particularly in a few Arabic lessons. However, in the majority of lessons, students lose interest and become distracted as a result of over dependence on direct questions that target only a small group and lead to teacher-centred lessons.

There is a strong emphasis on textbooks and knowledge acquisition rather than development of students' understanding and skills through the use of student-centred strategies; these are only occasionally implemented in too few lessons, a positive example

being learning by experimenting in a science lesson in Grade 5. Behaviour is appropriately managed in most lessons. However, the pace of lessons is generally slow as activities do not meet most students' learning needs and only limited support is provided, especially to low achievers, hindering their progress. This leads to students' disengagement and behaviour disruption in some lessons.

Opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills are too few, emphasis being on completing tasks and with questions usually being direct so offering limited opportunities for reasoning, analysis or justification. Activities do not challenge students' different abilities, particularly the more able ones, as they are not based on clear understanding of the different learning needs. In many lessons expectations are too low, negatively impacting students' progress.

Although homework is assigned in most subjects, it is generally standardised regardless of students' learning needs, rarely being assigned to reinforce or enrich learning but instead mainly focussing on completing class work. Verbal and written on-going assessment takes place in most lessons, but it is not used to inform teaching and provide appropriate support or challenge students' different abilities. Furthermore, feedback both in lessons and in students' written work is too limited to guide students on how to improve the quality of their work.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

An adequate range of subjects that matches the requirements of the implemented American curriculum and the MoE Curriculum for Arabic subjects is offered. However, classroom activities are not sufficiently enriched to meet students' needs, particularly the high achievers and those with learning difficulties. The curriculum review process gives sufficient attention to modifications in the Primary Years Programme (PYP), but the opportunities for challenge included in the course books are not sufficiently utilised to develop practical and problem-solving skills. Links between subjects are planned in the syllabus but not sufficiently used to enable students to transfer their knowledge of one subject to another. Consequently, students' writing skills in languages are under-developed.

Students' are encouraged to participate in activities like National Day celebrations and field trips to historical sites that develop their sense of belonging. A satisfactory range of extracurricular activities is provided, including a recycling art competition and healthy food week. These adequately broaden students' experiences and promote their interest. However, delivery of the curriculum does not equip students with the inquiry and investigative skills

needed for their next stage of education. Suitable links are established with the local community including parents and the Civil Defence Department which gives health and safety talks. Book fairs and competitions are organised. Students show respect and care for the fabric of the school.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

A one-day induction programme introduces students and their parents to the school, including a school tour and rules and regulations. Students' performance is recorded in progress reports which include evaluation of students' skills and comments on how they are performing. However, students' progress from one year to another is not effectively tracked. Comments on students' personal development are maintained and sent regularly to parents. Insufficient support is provided to students with special educational needs, whether learning difficulties or behavioural problems, as the school does not deploy a qualified person nor offer the required Individual Educational Plans (IEP). Resources available are too limited to ensure progress.

When help is needed, students go to their teachers, school nurse or general director. However, there are no regular meetings to address their concerns. The newly appointed social worker is establishing some procedures that could help monitor students closely, but these are not yet implemented. Adequate guidance sessions are provided by the leadership and teachers to advise students on their next stage of education. Sufficient communication is maintained with parents through e-mails and diaries. The parent-teacher association (PTA) meets twice a year and enables discussion about students' progress and parents' concerns. Overall, the school is safe but has some minor concerns regarding risk assessments and fire drills.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The school has a vision that focuses on educating the young within a happy environment to achieve their potential. However, this is not communicated to all members of the school's

community and not reflected in important aspects of school work, including the quality of teaching and learning and students' levels of achievement. A rigorous self-evaluation and systematic mechanisms to cover all areas of the school's performance are absent. Strategic planning is effectively an annual school's calendar that hardly provides any details to guide and monitor performance or increase overall effectiveness.

The support given to staff is not sufficient to ensure quality in teaching, particularly with the gaps in the school's key management structure. Workshops on topics such as classroom management and students' behaviour are conducted, but have limited impact on teachers' performance in lessons or the standards of students' achievement throughout the school. More than half of the teachers have limited teaching experience, but the school has no system to identify their training needs based on lesson observations.

Teachers receive annual incentives which are given on the basis of their performance in classrooms and participation in school life. Clear job descriptions are available but teachers are not sufficiently deployed as the qualifications of the majority do not match the subjects and age groups they teach.

The school is gradually developing its facilities, having recently introduced a school cafeteria, but further enrichment is essential in many parts of the school including the library where the number of available books is not sufficient. Science facilities and equipments to promote investigative skills are inadequate.

The school adopts an open door policy and holds regular PTA meetings. It is sufficiently responsive to both parents' and students' suggestions, such as the students' request for a cafeteria and parents asked for the uniform to be changed. Suitable links are established with the local community to enhance students' experiences. For example, students participate in regular field trips and the 'Think Pink' walk at Amwaj in cooperation with the American Mission Hospital.

The Board of Trustees' roles and responsibilities are respected. However, it is not sufficiently supporting the school through effective strategic and financial guidance to make improvements to its educational standards, the well-being of the students and future growth.

The school's main strengths

- Students behave well and feel safe and secure at school.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- establish a rigorous self-evaluation system with clear links to:
 - strategic priorities, planning and policies
 - extensive professional development programmes for teachers based on systematic monitoring of their performance.
- raise students' academic achievement by developing their understanding and skills
- develop teaching and learning with focus on:
 - effective strategies and productive use of class time
 - monitoring students' performance and providing support to meet the needs of all students
 - use assessment to plan for students' learning.