



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews Review Report

Confidential

**Al Hekma International School
Sanad - Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 04-06 March 2013

SP027-C1-R027

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The 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 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		Al Hekma International School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		1988											
Age range of students		6-18 Years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High			
		1-5				6-8				9-12			
Number of students		Boys	248	Girls	189	Total			437				
Students' social background		Most students are from middle and upper middle income families.											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
Town /Village		Sanad											
Governorate		Central Governorate											
Number of administrative staff		38											
Number of teaching staff		72											
Curriculum		American											
Main language(s) of instruction		English											
Principal's tenure		5 years											
External assessment and examinations		Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT 1, PSAT), International Schools' Assessment (ISA).											
Accreditation (if applicable)		Middle States Association for Accreditation (MSA). Advanced Ed. – North Central Association.											
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding				Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties	
		101				12			1			4	

Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introducing smart boards in all classrooms along with laptops for students and with improved IT communications• Improved sporting facilities• New subjects were introduced to give the students a global perspective of education with emphasis on the arts and social and academic growth and curriculum accreditation• Introducing 2 major programmes for elementary students as a foundation for middle and high School years. The 2 programmes are Economics and Career Education (ECE) and Junior Ambassador Conference (JAC)• Approximately half the teaching staff are new in 2012-2013.
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Table of review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	4: Inadequate			
The school's capacity to improve	3: Satisfactory			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	3	4	4	4
Students' personal development	3	3	3	3
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	4	4	4
The quality of the curriculum implementation	3	3	3	3
The quality of support and guidance for students	3	3	3	3
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	4	4	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 inadequate because key aspects, such as students' academic achievement and teaching and learning, are below expectations in the middle and high schools. In the elementary school these aspects are satisfactory. Teachers possess subject knowledge. However, teaching gives insufficient attention to using assessment results to meet students' different learning needs. Curriculum implementation is satisfactory. Students develop awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and are well behaved. They respect each other and feel safe, which contributes to their personal development. The school responds well to parents' and students' views, and administrative routines run smoothly. Though self-evaluation for most aspects is extensive, it has lacked sufficient prioritizing and focusing of its results on direct planning. Students and parents are generally satisfied with the school.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

School improvement has concentrated on responding positively to accreditation recommendations in order to achieve the awards of external associations. The development of resources and facilities demonstrate the leadership's capacity and commitment to continuous improvement. Regular curriculum review ensures a wide range of extra-curricular activities and effective use of the school's environment to enhance students' experiences. Self-evaluation processes and surveys create a great deal of data. However, these are not used effectively to develop strategies which monitor and ensure sufficient impact on achieving strategic goals. Action planning does not incorporate enough monitoring of progress or reviewing of priorities to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of the school's performance. Teacher appraisal is not linked sufficiently well to professional development for it to have impacted effectively on improving teaching in the middle and high schools.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Internal test results suggest that achievement is much better than it actually is. Over the last three years, almost all students at all three phases have attained pass rates exceeding 60% in all subjects in internal examinations, except in high school mathematics where 88% students attained above 60% marks. A significant cohort of students has scored much higher pass rates but the proportion exceeding A-grade fluctuates between grades and over time. Latest figures show a rise in the number of lower achievers in higher grades, but with consistently good attainment in the early grades, however, significant fluctuation in high achievers is observed in core subjects. Results from these internal tests do not reflect the standards seen in lessons and students' work, which are substantially lower, particularly in higher grades. Students' average levels of attainment in external examinations including SATs and International Schools' Assessment (ISA) are consistently well below the averages of similar schools. Significant numbers of students are under-achieving in reading, writing and mathematics literacy.

The majority of elementary school students, in lessons, demonstrate good standards in English, and satisfactory standards overall. However, students' achievement in lessons, declines in middle and high school and is inadequate. Elementary school students demonstrate appropriate standards in Arabic. However, the older students are under-performing, particularly in the high school. In English, the majority of elementary school students demonstrate higher than expected standards. Conversely, the majority of middle and high school students perform below age-expectations. In science, the majority of elementary school students' standards are in line with age-related expectations. However, students in the middle and high schools show standards well below age expectations.

Students are showing good progress in English and in science in elementary school. However overall, progress is satisfactory in elementary school and inadequate in middle and high school.

In Arabic and in English, students' writing skills, across the school, are under- developed, whereas, their reading and speaking skills are age-appropriate. Additionally, students' problem-solving skills, practical and investigative skills are insufficiently developed.

How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The majority of students are punctual and attend regularly, with appropriate actions taken by the school when a number of students continue to arrive late to school and lessons. The majority of students participate enthusiastically in school life. They are responsive during assemblies and enjoy participating in events and sports. In the most effective lessons, students enthusiastically contribute to activities, particularly in the elementary school. For example, the majority of elementary students compete eagerly to gain credit in economic and career education (ECE). However, across the school, a significant proportion of students lack enthusiastic participation in many lessons.

Students show confidence and the ability to work collaboratively. They enjoy leadership roles when given opportunities. For example, members of the Junior Ambassadors Conference (JAC) and Young Leadership Conference (YLC) responsibly research global and local concerns and make interesting presentations. Members of the elementary, middle and high school student councils express their views confidently and they appreciate that their voice is heard. However, students show limited independence and responsibility for their learning due to having few opportunities to develop these in lessons. Most students behave in a mature and respectful way. They feel safe and secure and have good relationships with each other and their teachers. Students demonstrate good understanding of Bahrain's heritage, culture and Islamic values.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. However, the majority of middle and secondary school teachers are less secure in how best to teach students of different ages and abilities. In effective elementary lessons, teachers make careful use of discussion to foster students' understanding, such as encouraging them in social studies to share experiences and make links with their lives. Nevertheless, in most lessons, teachers give insufficient attention to promoting skill development and students' understanding, and instead focus on more limited-textbook driven, factual acquisition.

While in the most successful lessons, open-ended questioning allows students to share opinions and develop critical thinking, teachers predominantly use closed questions for

factual recall and which does not provide opportunities for students to reason and justify answers. Lessons are orderly. Elementary teachers have effective classroom management skills and carefully organise activities. Classroom and behaviour management are weaker in the majority of middle and high school lessons, leading to a lack of purpose, pace and productivity.

Many teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to motivate students. In effective elementary lessons, creative use of different teaching and learning strategies and resources engages students' interest through, for example, collaborative group work, motivating use of science apparatus, and active spelling activities in English. In less productive lessons, particularly in middle and high school, monotonous teaching, with too great a focus on the teacher and limited interaction and opportunities for students' participation, leads to bored students.

Although lesson plans identify differentiation, teaching and learning activities are mostly directed at one level. There is insufficient challenge, especially for the high achievers, and insufficient support is given to students who are having difficulties.

Teachers use a limited range of strategies and activities in the majority of lessons, especially with older students; this insufficiently engages them in their learning. Teachers frequently dominate lessons and almost always direct teaching to the whole class. Students are given insufficient opportunities to work independently or in collaborative groups.

Homework is regularly assigned in all subjects and is mostly limited to consolidation or preparation for lessons. Correction of students' work is inconsistent and lacks sufficient feedback to help students improve their work. Teachers make limited use of the results of assessment of students' progress during lessons to adjust their teaching to better meet the needs of all students.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

An adequate range of subjects includes electives offered in the high school. Although, the curriculum is kept under review, it is not sufficiently developing students' academic skills, nor is it effectively challenging them in higher grades. The school adequately promotes students' spirit of community and their good relationships. It encourages them to care for each other by training older students to be peer tutors and through celebrating friendship day. It also provides students with occasional opportunities to work together, through

research projects such as 'recycling' in science. The school provides students with appropriate real life experiences through activities such as JAC, Model United Nations and YLC. However, the way in which the curriculum is implemented in the high school is not effectively equipping students with the essential academic skills for the next stage of their education and employment. There are few links made between subjects to enable students to experience a coherent curriculum. Extra-curricular activities enhance students' experiences effectively and include a range of sporting, aesthetic and literary activities. Students' reflections are sought on all these activities to promote further improvement. The curriculum is enriched by the use of learning resources, such as new white board technology as well as by local community involvement. Celebrations of national and international events enhance the development of citizenship and cultural harmony.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

An informal induction system involving teachers and other staff helps new students to settle successfully into the school. Parents are promptly updated about their children's performance and notified of all activities through a variety of communication channels such as the secure 'agenda' link to the school's website, monthly newsletters, phone calls and e-mails. However the school does not monitor students' academic progress in a way which enables support to be provided in lessons. This limits its impact on raising their academic achievement, especially in the middle and high school.

The school follows appropriate measures to identify students with special educational needs and the provision of individual education plans is developing well. Although there are some enrichment opportunities for talented students, the school's procedures for tracking progress in students' personal development is better than the procedures followed in order to identify their different learning needs.

Teachers and counselors sensitively support students when they face problems and provide adequate advice and guidance regarding the next stage of their education. Students are appropriately and consistently supervised in all areas of the school and effective arrangements are in place for maintaining the health and safety of students and staff. Routine fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures take place and the school environment is clean, hygienic and secure.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Leadership of the school operates through a complex structure, involving several departments. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) share strong and mutually respectful relationships, but their separate areas of operation results in leadership's view of key priorities becoming fragmented. There is a beneficial relationship between the leadership team and the school's Advisory Body, which offers guidance on strategy and capacity for improvement.

A strong vision statement guides staff and students. It is not yet underpinned by widely understood criteria to help all staff to put it into action. Teachers are efficiently deployed, and have clear basic job descriptions. Leaders offer good support to teachers through professional development opportunities. However, monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior and middle managers is not sufficiently insightful to create an appropriate agenda for development. Lessons are modelled by subject co-ordinators and there is some peer teaching, but this has not had widespread impact.

The school generates a lot of data from self-evaluation. Some of this has a positive impact, as it does on the personal development and the curriculum enrichment across the school. Improvement planning covers all aspects of the school's work, but is sometimes vague and frequently does not feature sufficient practical strategies to bring about improvement, such as in the older students' achievement. Students' performance is tracked and statistically analysed. However these activities in themselves do not enable subject coordinators or teachers to adjust teaching to remedy shortcomings, such as the dips in some high school scores. When checking standards, work of very modest quality is too often considered good and expectations by leadership are sometimes too low.

Administration of the school is efficient and budgeting and resource allocation is thoroughly researched and aimed at improving the learning environment. New facilities are currently under construction and the school is investing wisely in technology. Views of parents and students are frequently sought, and the school is responsive to these, such as when middle school students requested their own assembly. There are useful links with the local community with initiatives such as sponsorships, business and entrepreneurial events which enhance students' experiences.

The school's main strengths

- Students' personal development and the safe and secure environment
- The use of the school's environment in enriching the curriculum
- Parents being well informed about their children's progress.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise students' academic achievement especially those in the middle and high schools
- develop leadership and management by:
 - re-focusing self-evaluation and resulting activities on raising students' achievement and teaching quality
 - ensuring that planning includes improving practical pedagogy and measures of success
 - focusing professional development activities upon the weaknesses identified through the monitoring of teaching.
- make teaching and learning effective through:
 - planning and use of a range of strategies and activities to better meet the learning needs of all students
 - continuous assessment during lessons to inform planning and teaching
 - rigorous monitoring and tracking of students' academic progress on an individual basis
 - consistent class management that ensures more productive lessons.