



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

Review Report

**Al Mahd Day Boarding School – Riffa Branch
Riffa – Southern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 13–15 October 2014

SP056-C1-R056

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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 six 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 Mahd Day Boarding School – Riffa Branch												
School's type	Private												
Year of establishment	2011												
Age range of students	6-11 years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	Primary				Middle				High				
	1-6				-				-				
	Key Stage (KS) 1: Grades 1&2; KS 2: Grades 3-6												
Number of students	Boys	195	Girls	170	Total								365
Students' social background	Most students come from middle class families												
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	5	4	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village	Riffa												
Governorate	Southern												
Number of administrative staff	11												
Number of teaching staff	25												
Curriculum	British												
Main language(s) of instruction	English												
Principal's tenure	3 years												
External assessment and examinations	QQA National Examinations for Grade 3 students and progression tests from Cambridge												
Accreditation (if applicable)	-												
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	Outstanding				Gifted & Talented				Physical Disabilities				Learning Difficulties
	4				-				-				-
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 new teachers have joined the staff • implementation of an electronic student information system in 2014- 2015 • a new building was constructed in 2013-2014. 												

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a new large playground for students• in 2013-2014, introduction of the National Examinations for Grade 3 students and progression tests from Cambridge
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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	4: Inadequate			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	4	-	-	4
Students' personal development	4	-	-	4
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 inadequate, with all aspects needing improvement. Students' standards and progress are generally below age related expectations. Teaching and learning use too limited range of strategies and resources and lack effective assessment and support for students of different abilities.

Though the curriculum is adequately reviewed, it is not sufficiently modified and enriched to ensure that students are suitably prepared for their next stage of education. A healthy and safe environment is provided and parents are regularly informed about their children's progress. Self-evaluation lacks rigour and coherence, with the school's areas for improvement effectively being to implement strategic and action planning. Monitoring of the teaching by the leadership is not sufficiently robust to ensure that all students are provided with high quality education. Students and parents are generally satisfied with the school.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Recent improvements have concentrated on infrastructure and external benchmarking. However, there are major weaknesses in all the key areas of school function, which indicates the limited potential of school to improve in current circumstances. Despite efforts, key procedures such as self-evaluation are not sufficiently rigorous. Strategic priorities are not successfully translated into effective practices to have a significant impact. The school lacks robust monitoring of the impact of teaching and learning on students' performance. Budgeting and resource allocation fail to provide high quality learning. The implementation of planning has too limited impact on outcomes. There are critical weaknesses in teaching and learning which adversely affect students' progress in their understanding and skills, and eventually their standards.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Based on internal assessments, students attain high pass rates in core subjects across the school. The tracking of students' performance shows that, while competency rates are consistently high in Arabic, they have been gradually declining since 2011-2012. There is also a marked decline in students' performance in other core subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.

The standards demonstrated by students in lessons and in their academic work are inconsistent and significantly lower than their attainment in internal examinations. In Arabic, a significant cohort of students across the school lack an age-related grasp of the language but comfortably use local dialect and English words in Arabic lessons, thereby adversely affecting their progress in basic language skills. In Key Stage 1 English, though the majority of students can spell simple words, they cannot differentiate between nouns and verbs. The majority of students in Key Stage 2 have age related understanding of parts of a paragraph and can write simple paragraphs using appropriate vocabulary. In mathematics, standards are weak across the school as students lack sufficient understanding of place values and cannot add numbers to 1000. In Key Stage 1 science, students can identify the parts of a plant. In Key Stage 2, students' knowledge about weather is age-appropriate. However, it is noteworthy that, even where the students demonstrate standards in line with their age-related expectations, their progress in understanding and skills is limited in the majority of lessons across the school and in all core subjects.. Additionally, oral and written skills in English are underdeveloped across the school, acting as a barrier to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in other subjects. Scrutiny of students' written work also shows limited progress.

Across the Key Stages, students' basic mathematical skills, inquiry and investigative skills, writing skills in languages and practical skills in science are under-developed. Students also lack sufficient grasp of ICT skills.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Students attend school regularly and the majority of them arrive on time. They participate in events like Children's Day, Environment Day, and World Peace Day, as well as in inter-

house competitions like quiz and spelling bee and sports activities. However, students' involvement in these events has limited impact on their personal development, particularly on their self-confidence, ability to work independently and take responsibility, that are limited during lessons. In the minority of lessons, when given the opportunity students work enthusiastically. Members of the student council and house representatives in Key Stage 2 take leadership roles in voicing students' concerns. Additionally, students' collaborative working skills are evident when they are involved in activities such as project work on 'save energy and water'.

On the other hand, Key Stage 1 students show limited interest and participation in school programmes such as the weekly activities and morning assembly. In most lessons across the school, the extent of their involvement and enthusiasm is too limited. Students lack willingness to respond to questions and volunteer ideas, due to ineffective teaching. Students behave well, feel safe and care for the fabric of the school. They show adequate understanding of Bahrain's culture and heritage and Islamic values when they participate in national and religious festivals.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The quality of teaching and learning is adversely affected by the ineffective use of subject and pedagogical knowledge displayed by a vast majority of the teachers. Particularly, teaching in Arabic is significantly poor due to spelling mistakes in writing and the use of local dialect and English words in explanations. Teaching lacks problem-setting and framing hypothesis and fails to promote discussions, thereby restricting the opportunities for students to develop sufficient understanding and skills. Additionally, the whole-class teaching provides limited challenge and support to students' different abilities, restricting the development of higher order thinking skills and the progress of student groups of all abilities. Although lessons start on time, in a significant number of lessons the low expectations, excessive repetition of facts and weak time management slow down the pace of lesson. At times, significant amounts of learning time is lost in controlling the class, copying material from the board, activities which are poorly timed, and excessive talking by teachers, all of which impede the progress of students.

In the few better lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, teaching adequately supports students by providing clear instructions and individual attention. Through the use of stars, applause and verbal feedback teachers motivate and encourage students to contribute in lessons.

However, in most lessons students of different abilities are insufficiently supported, particularly the low achievers, which negatively influence their learning. Didactic teaching with mostly closed questions is the predominant strategy in most teaching across the school. Along with ineffective use of available resources such as pictures and white boards, weak teaching minimises the productive and enthusiastic engagement of students. Very limited homework is assigned and, if assigned, is common to all abilities. Although regularly followed up by teachers, the accuracy of correction and constructive feedback are too limited.

In the vast majority of lessons, assessment lacks rigour and is mostly oral with closed ended questions, without much consideration of the individual differences and abilities of students. Additionally, assessment results are not sufficiently used to modify teaching to support students, particularly the low achievers.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The school provides an adequate range of subjects based on the English National Curriculum and the Ministry of Education Curriculum. However, their implementation and enrichment with tasks fails to satisfy the different students' needs, particularly those who are high achieving and those who have difficulties with learning. The two-stage curriculum review process gives sufficient attention to modifications in core subjects, yet the links between subjects, even in Key Stage 1 where there is class teaching, are too limited. Although a range of extracurricular activities is provided, including inter-house competitions and school events which encourage students to work collaboratively, the impact of these activities on students' personal development is not significant and they contribute too little toward developing self-confidence and language skills. The school has established links with the local community involving parents and community representatives providing health and career talks as well as workshops on road safety. Adequate opportunities are provided for students to contribute to national activities and community service programmes, particularly in Key Stage 2. Nonetheless, the curriculum delivery does not sufficiently equip students with the creative, enquiring and independent working skills they need to succeed in the next stage of their education.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The induction procedures to help new students to settle easily are adequate. Students are provided with guidelines through diaries, circulars and introductions to their peers and staff. The school records students' punctuality and behaviour, and their attainment through terminal tests. However, it lacks a systematic procedure for rigorously monitoring students' academic progress and to recognise and satisfy their different learning needs. Monitoring of students' personal development is insufficient. The effectiveness of reinforcement periods is limited, and there are insufficient links to assessment results and information to support different learning difficulties so that all students' educational needs can be met. Support during regular lessons is not sufficient to meet the varying learning needs. Students are sensitively supported and helped by their teachers when they have problems. They receive adequate guidance about the next stage of education and choice of schools. Parents are well informed about their children's performance through a helpful range of communication approaches such as monthly open day, diaries and phone calls. The school provides a healthy, safe and hygienic environment and the entry and exit of students is sufficiently monitored. Risk assessment procedures are in place and fire drill is conducted annually. The school's nurse monitors health related cases and provides significant support when needed.

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 clear vision statement, focused on producing model citizens who know how to use their knowledge for the benefit of their country, community and humanity. However, effective sharing of this with and by the staff is limited which is apparent from weak provisions and meagre outcomes. Although the leadership tries to inspire and motivate the staff by delivering model lessons and offering incentives like middle leadership roles to deserving staff, these are not effective enough. The school conducts surveys involving parents, students and staff, yet the self-evaluation lacks rigour. The procedures for monitoring the quality of provisions and outcomes to assure improvement are unsuccessful. Though the SWOT analysis links with strategic priorities, implementation of strategic and action planning to have a solid impact on school outcomes is limited. Priorities are not successfully translated into effective practices to have a noteworthy impact. The annual

professional development programmes are insufficient and their usefulness is limited, with no observable improvement to the quality of teaching and learning. The deployment of teaching staff, particularly in the Arabic department, shows a significant mismatch between their qualifications and the subjects they teach. This incompatibility significantly reduces the effectiveness of teaching and learning, markedly and negatively impacting on students' competence. Attempts by leadership to evaluate the impact of professional development programmes are inadequate. The available resources are insufficient and the effectiveness of their use to ensure quality learning is also limited, impeding the progress of students in their understanding and skills. The school is adequately responsive to parents' and students' views, and has satisfactory links with the local community such as inviting professionals, visits to cultural and heritage sites, visiting retirement homes and the school for the blind; these adequately contribute to students' understanding of Bahrain's heritage and culture, as well as to behaviour. The roles and responsibilities of the school's professional and strategic leadership are sufficiently separate and respected. However, the effective contribution of the Board of Management, particularly in budgeting, resource management and ensuring that the school successfully delivers on its promise to parents, is limited.

The school's main strengths

- Provision of a healthy and safe environment.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- improve students' progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills by:
 - effective use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies
 - effective use of assessment and its results to support students of different abilities
 - effective class management that ensures productive and enthusiastic engagement by all students.
- ensure that extra-curricular activities provide significant experience to students to improve their enthusiasm, self-confidence and ability to take responsibility
- provide extensive professional development programmes to meet teachers' needs, and effectively monitor the impact of teaching and learning processes on students' performance
- improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - developing a rigorous self-evaluation system
 - effectively implementing the strategic and action planning to have an impact on school outcomes
 - maximizing the effectiveness of teaching staff through their effective deployment.