Schools Review Unit
Review Report

Al Noor Secondary Girls School
Isa Town - Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 31 October – 2 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 11 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 Noor Secondary Girls													
School's type	Government													
Year of establishment	1995													
Age range of students	16-18 years													
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	**Primary**			**Middle**				**High**						
	-			-				10-12						
Number of Students	**Boys**	-	**Girls**		786		**Total**		786					
Students' social background	Most students are from middle income families													
Classes per grade	**Grade**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	
	Classes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	8	
Town /Village	Isa Town													
Governorate	Central Governorate													
Number of administrative staff	12													
Number of teaching staff	76													
Curriculum	Ministry of Education													
Main language(s) of instruction	Arabic													
Principal's tenure	3 years													
External assessment and examination	Ministry of Education Examinations													
Accreditation (if applicable)	-													
Number of students in the following categories	**Outstanding**		**Gifted & Talented**		**Physical Disabilities**		**Learning Difficulties**							
	142		-		-		-							
Major recent changes in the school	• The transfer of a high proportion of teaching staff in the academic year 2009-10 • Implementing the Bahraini distinguished school project in the academic year 2009-10													

Table of 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	-	-	2	2
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 has made significant progress in its performance compared to its inadequate performance in its previous review, particularly in students' academic achievement and teaching and learning. The school now shows good progress in these aspects whereas in the previous review these were judged as inadequate. This is a direct result of effective leadership and management, which are characterised by the school's accurate self-assessment and continuous follow up of actions to improve teachers' performance in lessons. In addition there has been strong support for students. The students' personal development and the quality of curriculum provision and enrichment are now good after being satisfactory in the previous review. Most students and their parents feel satisfied with the services provided by the school.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school's capacity to improve is outstanding. This is attributed to the awareness of its leadership of the school's strengths and areas for development. The principal believes in shared decision-making and has managed to take the school forward and make significant progress since the previous review. Importantly, these improvements have been made in the students' academic achievement and in teaching and learning with consequent impact on the school's overall performance. The school continues to make accurate self-assessments of all aspects and has developed a strategic plan and programmes based on the recommendations of its previous review. This culture of self-assessment has motivated staff to embrace change and take responsibility for their own professional development and the implementation of improved teaching strategies. This is set to continue.

Students' achievement

☐ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 2 Good

The students attain high pass rates in the school and Ministry of Education examinations in most of the core subjects, except in mathematics which had slightly lower rates. The proficiency levels shown in class are in line with the pass rates in Arabic, science and commerce subjects. However, levels are slightly lower in mathematics and English. High pass rates reflected students' good level of understanding and knowledge and skills observed in most commerce lessons, while they were seen less in Arabic.

Students' acquisition of reading and listening skills in Arabic and English is good. However, English speaking skills and basic skills of grammar in Arabic vary too much due to the differing quality of opportunities students are given. Most students have the mathematic skills and abilities to solve appropriate algebraic equations and knowledge of key scientific concepts. In the commerce track students are familiarised with the required terms and processes related to the commercial sector.

The students have made significant progress over the three past years in English examinations and steady progress in Arabic, mathematics, science and commerce subjects. This good progress in lessons is due to the teachers' efforts in catering for students' individual differences. Students with learning difficulties make good progress in line with their abilities as a result of the effective support they receive, such as carefully considered teaching which matches students' differences in remedial lessons. Outstanding and talented students participate in local and external competitions in which they achieve high places. The abilities of this group are challenged well in outstanding and good lessons. However, the academic achievement of lower-achieving students varies too much due to the inconsistent quality of support provided for this group, especially in lessons which are only satisfactory. The students make progress in written work and homework because their levels of achievement are carefully considered when work is set, especially where the teaching is outstanding or good in lessons such as commerce subjects and some mathematics lessons.

☐ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Most students attend regularly and punctually because of the effective monitoring and action by the social guidance department. Students participate well in the best lessons. They are enthusiastic and many take part in different committee activities and events. This is seen in their participation in the 'Al Noor Advisors Team' which gives them the skills to achieve well in various activities. The school received the Ministry of Education award for achieving second place in the cultural and artistic activities in June 2011. However in some instances, teachers are too much at the core of the educational process, which limits students' participation. Otherwise, students are self-confident, able to take responsibility and can express their opinions well. This is apparent in discussions, exercises and roles given to them in lessons and various extra-curricular activities, such as 'students' self-monitoring'

Students feel safe and free of any intimidating behaviour, because of their good relations with each other and with their teachers, which is based on mutual respect and through working together. Behaviour inside and outside classrooms is good and most students carefully preserve the school environment and property. They show a good understanding of Bahraini culture and heritage through opportunities to develop values by participating in different events such as the 'Grandparents, Our Identity' project and making use of popular culture classes.

The quality of provision

☐ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 2 Good

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching strategies appropriately, such as interesting presentation of ideas, clear explanations and effective use of introductory and ending activities. Such teaching contributes to attracting students' attention and increasing their participation throughout lessons. The outstanding and good lessons utilise methods such as 'the student teacher', brain-storming, and discussion and dialogue between students and teachers. These methods effectively help to contribute to increasing students' attention and create an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment in lessons.

Add to this the good use of educational resources, such as educational flashcards and information technology equipment and the impact to motivate students to learn and encourage them to participate in discussions freely to achieve the lesson objective.

Effective class and time management is reflected in the teachers' good sequencing of ideas to meet the lesson goals. However, students' participation and self-confidence are sometimes limited where the teacher is too much at the centre of the educational process, rather than the students.

Lesson planning usually considers ways to challenge students' abilities and developing their higher order thinking skills through various class activities. This includes varying the pitch of teaching to suit the students' different academic levels and using questioning skills that stimulate their thinking, such as analytical thinking, especially in mathematics, English and commerce subjects. This contributes to improving students' progress whatever their different academic levels. However, the support provided for low achieving students varies too much and in a minority of lessons is barely satisfactory.

Most teachers provide support in lessons by encouraging students to participate using specific strategies, such as coloured cards known to students, which raise participation for all across the group. Similarly, different assessment methods are used, such as verbal and, written tests and continuous assessment. These ensure students have understood the lesson and provide them with feedback. These techniques help students at different stages of learning to deal with the difficulties they face, such as when responding to written questions in mathematics and offering informed opinions about what they have learned. Teachers encourage students to summarise the lesson and assess their understanding. This contributes to students measuring their achievement of lesson goals and sharing responsibility for their learning. Homework considers students' different levels of ability, however, the quality of marking and feedback varies too much across the different departments.

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

Grade: 2 Good

Plans show how the curriculum is to be implemented well. These are reviewed, adjusted and improved to suit students' different levels and needs. Summaries and notes help in simplifying the curriculum content for students, such as books to complement some commerce subjects and notes for English for students in the literary track.

Students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities is developed. This is reflected in their participation in various events and committees where students are given leading roles to maintain order and keep the school clean. Events promote a spirit of citizenship, such as the National Day celebrations.

The curriculum provides students with various opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as the school 'Stock Exchange' and 'Globe Programme', and different educational and sporting competitions. Advanced positions have been achieved such as the 3rd place in the 'German Photographic Design', results in 'Virginia Commonwealth University Technical Design' and Prince Hamdan Bin Rashed Al Maktoom's prize in the GCC competitions for the distinguished student. These reflect positively on developing students' skills and in preparing them well for their next educational stage or employment.

Building and facilities are well maintained to create a stimulating environment for learning by using teaching aids, guidelines and by celebrating students' work in the school hall and in classrooms. In addition, links between different subjects are well made but better across some than others.

☐ **How well are students guided and supported?**

Grade: 1 Outstanding

New students and parents are welcomed through excellent induction programmes. These help students settle quickly. Students of the second and third levels have orientation programmes such as 'Create Your Professional Future' and visits to universities and companies to prepare them to the next educational stage and employment.

Students' personal and educational needs are effectively met by performing diagnostic tests and analysing findings to identify the reasons behind students' poor academic performance. Plans are prepared for remedial programmes and lessons. Outstanding and talented students are supported by enhancing their participation in the different school committees and competitions where they have done well in 'Short Story' and 'Distinctness in Syntax Analysis' competitions in Arabic. The students' overall progress is checked and compared with their semester results. It is clear that students' levels of academic achievement increased in the second and third levels. However, the support provided for lower achieving students is less effective.

The school regularly provides students with guidance and advice in complementary lessons to morning assembly about problematic issues that students face. Discipline and cooperative

values are promoted through society service, which has a considerable impact on influencinging students' discipline and personal development.

The school contacts students' parents to inform them of their daughters' progress through educational group meetings and sending them monthly reports. It ensures that a healthy and safe environment is maintained, which is reflected in the students' approval and feeling safe and secure.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Leadership and management are areas of strength. The school management has developed a vision and mission that are clear and focus on academic achievement and improving the teaching and learning processes. They were developed and achieved through the participation of all the school staff. The school leadership is aware of the areas of strength and those that need to be improved and has made excellent use of the previous review recommendations in developing a comprehensive strategic plan that included clear performance indicators. The plan has been implemented and achievement is being monitored and assessed through an active work and school self-evaluation team. Based on the findings of the assessment, action plans and remedial programmes are implemented such as addressing the 'skipping lessons' problems. The school leadership inspires and motivate staff to adopt change through embracing different initiatives such as 'Each One Teach One', which develops students' self-confidence and promotes cooperation among students. The school has a clear system for incentives and rewards which contribute to increasing the teachers' motivation and enthusiasm and reflects positively on the school's overall performance.

The clear roles and responsibilities of the school work councils and committees and following up with their initiatives had a considerable impact on the school's overall performance. The external improvement team also had an effective role in giving advice and suggestions such as merging the school board and technical committee.

An internal improvement team evaluates teachers' performance, identifies their training needs and enrols them in the different workshops, in addition to regularly monitoring the impact of these workshops on their performance. Such workshops include cooperative work and brain-storming. This contributed to increasing students' motivation to learn. The school effectively uses its various educational resources and facilities such as laboratoriess, the learning resources centre and the e-classroom.

The school introduced the 'Share your opinion' project to explore students' views and responds to them in an organised manner regarding several areas, such as choosing the school graduation costume and arranging students at the graduation party. The Students' Council and Parents' Council have been recently formed; their impact is yet to be seen.

The school's main strengths

- The accurate and comprehensive self-assessment and strategic planning for all areas at school, which have a significant impact on improving its overall performance

- Identifying teachers' training needs and enrolling them in different workshops, which have an impact on improving the teaching and learning processes

- The effective external support provided for students, which contributes to raising their level of academic achievement

- Students' self-confidence and ability to take responsibility as a result of the opportunities to take leading roles inside and outside of lessons

- Creating an attractive classroom and school environment that stimulates learning, in addition to celebrating students' work in the halls and different school corners.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- continue to develop the teaching and learning processes through:
    - spreading good and outstanding practices found at the school
    - providing more support for low-achieving students in lessons
    - focusing on students' English speaking skills and Arabic grammatical skills
    - using homework and marking to enrich the curriculum, taking into consideration individual differences in those classes where this is weak.

- use the students' and parents councils to a greater extent.