



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 Raja School
Manama – Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 10-12 March 2014

SP049-C1-R049

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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 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 Raja School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		1899											
Age range of students		6-18 Years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary/ Elementary				Middle/ Intermediate				High/ Secondary			
		1-5				6-8				9-12			
Number of students		Boys	322	Girls	287	Total		609					
Students' social background		Mainly middle class backgrounds											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Town /Village		Manama											
Governorate		Capital Governorate											
Number of administrative staff		18											
Number of teaching staff		65											
Curriculum		All English classes use an American curriculum, based on materials from Glencoe, McGraw-Hill, Pearson and Harcourt Mifflin. Arabic classes use the MoE curriculum											
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic and English											
Principal's tenure		One year and a half											
External assessment and examinations		Preminilary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)											
Accreditation (if applicable)													
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties		
		-			-			-			11		

Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2012-2013, the school:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Appointed a new principal and a high school vice principal– constructed a new a building for students in kindergarten to Grade 2.
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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	3	3
Students' personal development	3	3	3	3
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	3	3	3	3
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

Overall effectiveness is satisfactory, with all aspects judged as satisfactory. Students attain high pass rates in internal examinations, though their standards and progress in lessons across all grades is only satisfactory. Teaching and learning practices are inconsistent across the school. In lessons, students learning needs are adequately met but they are not sufficiently challenged. Assessment is not effectively implemented, leading to limited impact on students' overall performance. An adequate range of experiences to meet the needs and interests of the majority of students is offered through the curriculum. Students behave well and show significant awareness of Bahrain's culture and heritage and Islamic values. Self-evaluation is annually conducted, but lacks sufficient rigour to have a real impact on improving the school's provision. Students and parents are satisfied with the school.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The leadership has a clear vision and aims high to provide excellence in education and holistic nurturing of students. This vision is shared with the majority of staff making an adequate impact on the effectiveness of the school's provisions and outcomes. Strategic intentions and planning are not sufficiently underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation. The 'Measurable Accountability Plan', which sets out the school's clear goals, lacks well-defined systems to assess and monitor the progress and success of actions.

Though the professional development programmes for teachers and middle leaders have limited impact in raising the overall quality of performance, teachers feel valued at school and the retention of a significant proportion of staff contributes to school stability.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students have attained high pass rates in their internal examinations over the past three years with a significant proportion attaining 80% or above in core subjects. These results are not reflected in the standards seen in lessons and students' work, which overall show appropriate standards and progress across all grades and subjects. Levels of attainment in the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) for grade 11 students indicates a satisfactory performance overall, though with lower scores in the critical reading section.

Across the school, students' standards and progress in most lessons are age appropriate, with the majority acquiring basic skills in core subjects. In both Arabic and English, students' speaking and reading skills are better than their writing skills with the majority reading a range of texts with fluency and good comprehension. In both languages the range of purposes for which students write extensively is limited and this adversely affects the quality of their writing in all phases. There is a wide range in the quality of students' grasp of grammar and spelling, particularly in middle and high school. Most students have secure oral communication skills in English but need more development in the skills of speaking to a larger audience.

Students have a sound grasp of basic mathematical skills and concepts across the school and their progress in lessons is adequate. For example, in elementary school, students understand fractions and in middle school they can calculate percentages. In the better high school lessons, students can simplify expressions with rational exponents and compute the derivatives of functions. However, students' application of mathematical concepts when solving problems is less well developed across all grades.

In science, most students can recall key scientific facts, making adequate progress in lessons. Elementary school students understand shadow formation and know definitions such as reflection and absorption. High school students develop understanding of types of bonding in atoms, series and parallel electric circuits and the basics of genetics and heredity. However, students' investigative and practical skills are insufficiently developed across all grades, particularly in the elementary and middle school phases where less practical work is undertaken.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' attendance is high and they are punctual to most lessons due to careful monitoring and follow up by the school. Students behave in a mature and respectful way, both in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and secure and have a good knowledge and clear understanding of the culture and heritage of Bahrain, exhibiting great respect for Islamic values.

Students participate with enthusiasm and confidence in most lessons when given opportunity. They respond to teachers' questions, participate in activities and work collaboratively in pairs or small groups. Elementary phase students are keenly involved in a wide range of club activities including the Tuesday activity period and after school clubs. They show self-confidence and the ability to work well together. Although some students in middle and high school participate enthusiastically in sports activities such as football matches, the majority have insufficient opportunities provided outside lessons.

Members of the Students Council and Friends Club have opportunities to develop responsibility and leadership through arranging events such as candy-grams, carnivals and National Day celebrations. However, the majority of students show less personal responsibility and leadership skills both in and outside lessons. They demonstrate limited skills as independent learners as they have few opportunities to organise their own learning during lessons.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most teachers demonstrate secure knowledge of their subjects and the majority provide clear guidance during lessons. Most lessons feature clearly identified objectives for learning, but these are not always shared with enough clarity. Similarly, the degree to which teachers select activities that are varied, relevant and challenging, and which support these objectives, is inconsistent.

There are both strengths and weaknesses within all phases, with little overall variation between subjects. However, the majority of teaching in mathematics and science in the high school is strong, whereas Arabic teaching for older students is less well developed. Most

lessons promote understanding as well as knowledge, such as Grade 7 students being taught various methods to calculate percentages so that they fully understand the numeracy concepts involved. Skills development is more varied, with only a minority of teaching focusing on practical skill development or applying knowledge to real life contexts.

Although the majority of lessons involve students in demonstrating work on the board or discussions with partners, some lessons are dominated by teachers and students have insufficient opportunity to show what they know. Questioning strategies are effective in checking what students know or understand. They are less successful in challenging higher order thinking skills. This is inadequate in elementary and middle phases, but better in high school classes.

In many lessons students undertake the same central task, despite high achievers finding some of it lacking in challenge. Conversely, students who struggle do not always get the support they need, particularly in larger classes or when the pace of learning is too fast for them. Only a minority of lessons are planned effectively to meet the full range of students' needs.

Most teachers' class management skills enable them to conduct orderly lessons. They demonstrate positive control strategies and enjoy respectful relationships with students, who consequently show the confidence to ask questions.

Teachers frequently assess students' progress in lessons and students sometimes self-assess their work against rubrics, but the use of assessment results is frequently not apparent in the way lessons are planned to meet different students' needs. Homework is often given and teachers sometimes mark students' work but seldom offer sufficient guidance to support improvement.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school successfully develops students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities, including developing mutual respect and contributing to school and community life through the Students Council and Friends Club. The curriculum is constantly reviewed, focusing mainly on the way syllabus content is distributed. Logical links between subjects are planned, such as with Arabic, Islamic studies and art to enable students to make connections and apply knowledge and learning across subjects or, sometimes, with real-life experiences. Most students are sufficiently prepared academically for the next grade but there are limited choices of scientific courses in Grade 12. Curriculum implementation and

delivery is less effective in meeting the needs of low and high achievers than those of average ability students.

An adequate range of extra-curricular activities is provided for lower grades, giving students opportunities to extend their skills and enhance their experiences through activities such as drama and dance or contributing to the British Council's "International School Award". However, less enrichment activities are offered for high school students. Classrooms and corridors celebrate students' work. The science laboratories and art rooms are used adequately and frequently enough to develop students' basic skills. The spacious school library does not sufficiently support the higher grades' curriculum, as priority for use is given to students of up to Grade 3.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

New students are inducted through guidance programmes, though with less support for students joining from other schools, or transitional support as they move to the next phase. Senior students are prepared for the next stage of their education with career guidance programmes.

There is limited emphasis on students acquiring life skills or becoming acquainted with university admission tests. Students' personal development is monitored and supported by social workers and supervisors, tracking behaviour and providing activities such as the Behaviour Improvement Programmes (BIP) and Social Councillor Friends (SCF). Other than supporting particular students from Grade 3 to Grade 5 in basic Arabic and English skills, there is little support for students with special educational needs.

The school offers sensitive support to students through individual and group counselling sessions and by addressing individual issues such as depression or underachievement. The academic progress of low achieving students is monitored through teachers' continuous observations and tracking of examination results. Appropriate remedial plans are drawn up for them. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to outstanding and gifted students to excel.

Parents are informed about their children's academic and personal progress through regular open days and report cards. The school provides a full time nurse, conducts risk assessments and maintains the facilities to ensure students' health and safety within the school.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Leadership has a clear vision for the school featuring realistic aspirations to provide excellence in education and holistic development of students. This vision is shared by the majority of staff and is effective. Most staff feel valued and are motivated, resulting in a significant proportion with a tenure of 5 years or more and contributing to school stability.

Though self-evaluation is embedded in all school functions, it lacks rigour and is not systematic. It does not involve all stakeholders, though informally involving parents and teachers through parent-teacher meetings and staff gatherings.

Strategic planning is not sufficiently underpinned by stringent self-evaluation. The 'Measurable Accountability Plan' sets out the school's clear goals and includes specific accountability criteria. However, well-defined systems to assess and monitor the progress and success of actions are lacking.

Professional development programmes are provided for teachers and middle leaders on topics such as 'formative assessment' and 'student-centred learning'. These do not have enough impact to significantly raise the overall quality of teaching. Teachers are evaluated against agreed criteria, but this does not clearly identify teachers' individual strengths or development needs, making it difficult to raise the quality of teaching and learning.

Budgeting and resource allocation are adequately linked. Key resources such as the science laboratory are sufficiently used to promote understanding and skills, but more so in the high school.

Although the school currently lacks systematic procedures to seek the views of all parents and students, it makes efforts to engage them through initiatives such as the 'Parent portal', establishing the high school, and involving students in the selection of their canteen menu.

The school has well developed links with the local and wider community, having a positive impact on the professional development of staff and on students' experiences through excursions. Participation in the British Council's International School Award supports the embedding of international learning into the curriculum.

Responsibilities of the school's professional leadership and the governing body are kept separate and are respected. The Board makes a satisfactory contribution to school development through strategic and financial planning and the Principal is held accountable for all key functions of the school, including student performance.

The school's main strengths

- Students' mature and respectful behaviour, both in lessons and around the school
- Students' understanding of Bahraini heritage and culture.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- improve the consistency of teaching and learning through:
 - developing strategies for differentiated lessons that cater for mixed abilities
 - challenging the high achievers more in lessons
 - using assessment as a tool for improving learning.

- improve leadership and management through:
 - drawing up a rigorous self-evaluation programme which focuses upon the key priorities of achievement and teaching quality, with clear success criteria
 - matching professional development with teacher evaluation results.