



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 – Samaheej Branch
Samaheej – Muharraaq Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date of Review: 7 – 9 October 2013
SP038-C1-R038**

Table of Contents

The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews	1
Introduction	2
Characteristics of the school	2
Table of review judgements awarded	4
Review judgements	5
Overall effectiveness	5
Students' achievement.....	5
The quality of provision	7
Leadership, management and governance	10
The school's main strengths	11
Recommendations	12

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 nine 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 – Samaheej												
School's type	Private												
Year of establishment	2007												
Age range of students	6-14 Years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	Primary				Middle				High				
	1-3				4-8				-				
Number of students	Boys	315	Girls	222	Total			537					
Students' social background	Most students come from lower to middle class families												
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	6	5	4	4	3	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Town /Village	Samaheej												
Governorate	Muharraq												
Number of administrative staff	7												
Number of teaching staff	39												
Curriculum	Cambridge International Primary and Secondary Curriculum, Ministry of Education in Arabic, Islamic studies and Citizenship												
Main language(s) of instruction	English												
Principal's tenure	1 month												
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			
	57			9			None			None			
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new principal started in September 2013 • around three-quarters of teaching staff are new • a change in the academic coordinators at the 												

	<p>beginning of academic year 2012-13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• recently introduced a library, a science laboratory and an audio-video room.
--	--

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	-	4
Students' personal development	3	3	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	4	4	-	4
The quality of the curriculum implementation	4	4	-	4
The quality of support and guidance for students	3	3	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	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

Students behave well and show high levels of respect to both their colleagues and teachers. The school provides sensitive support to students' personal problems and manages discipline in terms of the school's ethos. Parents are able to discuss their children's performance with teachers monthly. However, in too many lessons teaching is highly focused on factual repetition. Teachers consistently fail to show a clear understanding of how different students learn. Consequently, their progress is limited.

Self-evaluation is not rigorous enough and does not involve all stakeholders. The quality of teaching and learning is insufficiently monitored. Curriculum implementation does not promote students' life-long skills effectively. Some parents are critical of the school but the majority of them, and students, are satisfied because of what the curriculum is promising.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The school has undergone a number of changes. Lower grades are now taught by separate subject teachers. Some diagnostic tests and the 'teaching steps' have been introduced, though both are yet to have an effective impact. Although self-evaluation identifies areas for improvement it does not involve all stakeholders and is not well linked to strategic planning. This in turn has no clear key success criteria and monitoring procedures lack rigour. Consequently, both have limited impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Main challenges are the inexperienced teaching staff, who in a few cases are not qualified, poor resources, some regulatory restrictions and social issues such as the 'class' system. All of these limit the school's capacity to improve without effective external support.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Throughout the school, most students attain high pass rates in internal examinations in 2012 and 2013, ranging from 63% to 100%. The competency rate is also high in core subjects throughout the school. However, it declines in Grade 7 where, for example, only 7% of students scored more than 80% in science. These results are based on internally marked tests as the school does not have any external benchmarking.

Across the whole school, lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work show that most students' standards in mathematics, science and English are below age-related expectations. Nevertheless, in Arabic, students demonstrate satisfactory listening, reading and comprehension skills. They make adequate use of vocabulary and appropriately comprehend a variety of texts. However, Arabic writing skills are not sufficiently well-developed throughout the school.

In mathematics, in all grades, students' acquisition of basic skills and concepts are not well developed. The majority of students rely on memory recall and have difficulty when applying their knowledge and understanding to solving problems. For example, the majority of students in Grade 6 couldn't apply addition in solving exercises, and the majority of Grade 8 students couldn't identify quadrilaterals. In science, students do not make sufficient progress in understanding scientific concepts and lack enquiry skills. For example, students in Grade 7 were unable to explain the function of vacuole and chloroplast in plant cells. In English, reading and writing skills are under-developed throughout the school. For example, most students in Grade 2 are unable to understand and identify verbs in simple sentences.

Throughout the school, examination results show largely adequate progress over the past three years in core subjects with a decline in Grade 4 Arabic and mathematics. In relation to their starting points, students are making inadequate progress in core subjects both in lessons and in their written work. Moreover, the slow progress of both low and high ability students is particularly marked. This is due in part to teaching which does not sufficiently meet their different learning needs.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and respectful to their peers and teachers. Most students respond positively to teachers' instructions and form strong bonds with their colleagues. All of these factors contribute well to their sense of security and comfort at school.

The majority of students show appropriate understanding of Bahraini heritage and citizenship values. They sing the national anthem and participate in the 'National Day', enjoying dressing in traditional clothes. Values of Islam are also developed through morning prayers and competing in the recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

Most students participate enthusiastically in school life through enrichment days, events such as custom day, sports day in cooperation with local sports clubs, and science exhibitions. The same enthusiasm is shown in the majority of lessons observed. However, because too few opportunities are provided, students are not able to work together and take on responsibility or leadership roles. This limits their self-confidence and independent learning skills.

Most students attend regularly, lateness is recorded and they are provided with advice and guidance in the morning homeroom. They are keen to attend on time after breaks, reflecting their level of awareness and good behavior across the school.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Most lessons begin with warm-up sessions and almost all teachers share the lesson objectives with students. However, in all subjects, teachers' planning for lessons is brief, with insufficient attention being given to specific objectives. Planning is not focussed enough on different ability groups. Most teachers lack an understanding of appropriate teaching techniques to be used in accommodating students of different abilities in lessons. Too often, learning is done by constant repetition, reinforcement and practice. This might be because the majority of teachers are new to the profession and their induction programme does not have a deep impact in lessons.

In the few better lessons, particularly in Arabic, teachers use questioning to provoke students' thinking and promote understanding. However, in almost all lessons teachers do not adequately develop students' higher order thinking skills or promote independent learning. Lessons are predominantly teacher-centred, focusing on content coverage and limited to whole-class, undifferentiated teaching. This results in the individual needs of a significant proportion of students not being adequately met, compounded by over-crowding in classrooms.

Behaviour management is generally appropriate in higher grades, where teachers have good rapport with students and lessons are orderly. However, low expectations overall, along with the narrow range of teaching strategies used, limits students' involvement in lessons. This leads to ineffective use of time and low productivity.

In almost all lessons teaching provides limited challenge, particularly for high ability students, with insufficient learning support being given for students of all abilities. For instance, students are asked to merely copy work; more able students who complete work quickly are not provided with appropriate extension activities. Nevertheless, in the most effective lessons, specifically in English reinforcement and grade 4 Arabic, teachers provide adequate support and encouragement to students.

The school provides a limited variety of resources, which in most cases are not effectively used to attract students' interest or enhance learning. There is an effective homework schedule for all grades and teachers provide regular assignments to practice work completed in lessons. Students' work is not consistently marked and lacks sufficient feedback to facilitate improvement. Assessment is both oral and written, more often focussing on factual recall and not used effectively to diagnose and meet students' differing learning needs.

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Students enjoy a wide range of planned enrichment days. These both enhance provision and provide valuable opportunities for the school to work together as a community. There are appropriate strategies to develop the students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities; the house system, with its allied inter-house competitions, is a good example of this.

Curriculum implementation is limited by a lack of resources particularly in science, mathematics and information technology. Additionally, although an audio-video room and a new library have recently been established, book resources are exceptionally poor. Teachers in the higher grades, particularly in grades 7 and 8, are unable to deliver the stated curriculum due to lack of access to specialised resources.

Timetables are not sufficiently robust. Too much time is wasted. In particular, the weekly reinforcement, activity and library lessons do not make a sufficiently strong contribution to provision. Planned opportunities to enliven learning by linking subjects are infrequent. In consequence students, particularly those in lower grades, receive a curriculum consisting of individual subjects rather than themes and topics which provide real-life meaning to activities. Despite a few attempts such as public speech and debate contests, too little emphasis is placed on developing students' life-long skills such as problem solving and working with others to prepare them for the next stage of their education.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students are inducted into the school through a well-founded orientation day. This enables them to be familiarised with the school's policies, staff and facilities, ensuring that they settle successfully into the school. The school monitors students' academic performance through recording assessments. Progress reports of what students need to do to improve both in terms of academic and personal progress are maintained. As a result, the school offers reinforcement lessons in all subjects. However, the tracking of academic progress is not sufficiently rigorous in identifying and meeting specific learning needs. This limits teachers' opportunity to ensure that appropriate challenges and support can be provided in and outside lessons.

Students who face personal problems are given sensitive support. They feel secure and confident in approaching their teachers and counsellors who delicately and promptly help them to resolve any issue. Parents are well-informed about their children's progress through an open day each month as well as progress reports, circulars and students' diaries. Students' discipline and good behaviour helps to ensure a safe, secure and healthy environment. There is close follow-up of students entering and leaving the school and maintenance is in place, however evacuation drills are not yet conducted.

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's leadership has a vision which focuses appropriately on improving the quality of education and students' personal development. This challenging vision is adequately shared with the staff in the induction programme.

Self-evaluation is based on individual experience but lacks rigour. It is not sufficiently systematic, does not involve all stakeholders and is not well-embedded in all aspects of the school. Mechanisms to monitor provision and measure outcomes are ineffective. Although students' performance over time in examinations is recorded, the analysis of results is not used well enough. Furthermore, these analyses are not firmly linked to planning for improvement. Although strategic planning is appropriately focussed on further improvement, it lacks specific priorities and is not sufficiently rigorous. Explicit action planning and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the success of the plans are limited. Consequently, plans to improve teaching and learning are not impacting sufficiently well on either teaching and learning or students' progress.

Despite introducing a library and a science laboratory with portable experiments, budgeting is not firmly linked with planning and resource allocation. This affects the deployment of staff and targeted professional development. While resources are scarce, they are not always used effectively to enhance students' learning experiences, examples being the science and computer laboratories.

Senior and middle leaders provide an induction programme and evaluate teachers' performance against organisational expectations. However, this does not clearly identify school-wide training needs and insufficiently supports teachers' individual professional development.

Parents' and students' views are sought through the parents' council, student body and monthly parent-teacher meetings. Although the school is responsive to feedback from many students and parents, it lacks systems to ensure input by all. The school has developed limited links with the local community, predominantly through involvement in celebrations and field trips.

The Board of Management understands its separate governance responsibilities alongside those of the school's professional leaders. It has aspirations for school improvement, such as the hiring of a new principal and planning for a model school. However, as yet, strategic planning, support and accountability by the board are not sufficiently explicit to impact on the quality of provision and outcomes.

The school's main strengths

- Students are well behaved and show high respect for each other and their teachers
- Parents are well informed about their children's academic and personal development.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise students' academic achievement across the school by improving teaching and learning processes through:
 - increasing the range of teaching and learning strategies in order to motivate, support and meet the needs of all students
 - using effective assessment to inform planning and impact learning.
- develop and implement rigorous self-evaluation procedures that include monitoring the quality of teaching and learning inside classrooms
- provide more effective induction and continuous professional development programmes for teaching staff
- ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided to secure students' life-long skills, to better prepare them for their next stage of education.