

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



Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Al Naseem International School
West Riffa – Southern Governance
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 17 – 19 September 2012

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The Schools Review Unit

The Schools Review Unit (SRU) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (NAQQAET) 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 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 twelve 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 Naseem International School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		1982											
Age range of students		6 – 18 Years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Elementary				Middle				High			
		1-6				7-10				11-12			
Number of students		Boys	503	Girls	305	Total		808					
Students' social background		Average to above socio-economic backgrounds											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Town /Village		West Riffa											
Governorate		Southern											
Number of administrative staff		33											
Number of teaching staff		70 + 11 support teachers											
Curriculum		1- International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) framework & approach: Primary Year Program (PYP), Middle Year Program (MYP), Diploma Program (DP) 2- Naseem International School Diploma.											
Main language(s) of instruction		English											
Principal's tenure		31 years											
External assessment and examinations		International Baccalaureate Diploma, Scholastic Assessment Tests (SATs), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), Ministry of Education (MoE)											
Accreditation (if applicable)		Middle State Association (MSA) International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) Evaluation self-studies and visits:											

	PYP: January 2008, and December 2011, renewed December 2012 MYP January 2012 DP 1998 renewed 2008			
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	Outstanding	Gifted & Talented	Physical Disabilities	Learning Difficulties
	-	-	-	9
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased student numbers • IBO World School (MYP authorization in 2012) • New teaching block for single subject teaching in the elementary school (art, music/drama, information technology, library studies and 2 new nursery classrooms). • 16 newly recruited teachers. 			

Table of review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	3: Satisfactory			
The school's capacity to improve	2: Good			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	2	3	3	3
Students' personal development	2	2	2	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	2	3	3	3
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	2	2	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	2	2	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	2	2	2	2

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

Although the overall effectiveness of Al Naseem International School is satisfactory due to the adequate academic achievement and teaching and learning, the students' personal development is strong as most of the students have good self-confidence portrayed in group discussions and when presenting work to classmates. This is mainly because of the effective support and guidance provided. In addition, the delivery of the curriculum and its enrichment are good as students are very well versed in their community responsibilities and promote the value of charity and service to others. The school's leadership, management and governance are good as members' are committed to team work throughout the school and focus on raising students' achievement both academically and personally. This focus is particularly evident in the elementary school.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school has good capacity to improve because it has a highly committed steering committee that ensures appropriate support and provides continuous well-focused professional development. Most aspects of its provision are good. Besides, the school is successful in ensuring students' good personal development and high attainment in English and physics. The school's family atmosphere, encouraged by the President, is highly appreciated by all members of the community. Careful attention is given to evaluating performance in all aspects of provision and outcomes. Internal and external examination data are accurately analysed and the leadership are realistic about the impact of aspects of provision which need development, particularly in the upper year groups. The accreditation process and evaluation of the IB programmes have provided well-organised formats for continuous evaluation.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' performance in the IB Diploma (IBDP) and in SATs is satisfactory. Results show that IBDP average grades in most subjects for May 2012 are slightly below the world-wide averages the school adopts an inclusive policy for students wishing to inter the IBDP. However, students demonstrate good attainment in English A2 and physics. Throughout the school, significant numbers of students reach the highest grades in the internal assessments, particularly in mathematics and science in the elementary school.

In lessons and in scrutiny of students' work, standards in the middle and high schools are satisfactory. In the majority of lessons in almost all core subjects, the progress students make in relation to their starting points and abilities is satisfactory. However, the performance of elementary school students against the standards set by the curriculum and their progress is good.

In Arabic, students' attainment in listening, speaking and reading aloud meets age-related standards. These skills are better than their writing skills across the school. However, in the middle school, a majority of students have confident speaking skills and make good use of vocabulary.

In English schoolwide, standards meet age-related expectations. Students' listening and speaking skills are well-developed. Students confidently use good vocabulary and demonstrate their excellent self-assessment skills when reflecting on their work. Their speaking and reading skills are better than their writing skills.

In mathematics, standards are good, particularly in the elementary and high schools. Elementary school students perform basic arithmetic operations with assurance and demonstrate good arithmetical skills. They show good understanding of place value of digits and accurately write the numbers in standard form. High school students show good understanding, for example of matrices and sets while dealing with problems. However, although standards in middle school are at age-related expectations, student do not make enough progress in relation to their capabilities.

In science, standards are in line with age-related expectations. In the middle school the majority of students have satisfactory research skills. The majority of high school students show age-appropriate knowledge, but they lack sufficient understanding of concepts. The majority of students confidently handle scientific apparatus, take observations accurately

and critically comment on their own work. Students' practical and enquiry skills are satisfactory, particularly in the elementary school, for example when investigating magnetic forces.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Students participate enthusiastically in lessons, individually and in group work, and particularly in school life through contributing to different student committees including Creativity, Action and Service (CAS). This participation positively impacts on their commitment to regular and punctual attendance.

Students show good self-confidence in class activities by joining in group discussions and presenting work to classmates. They take on various responsibilities, working independently to support their colleagues in peer mediation and enthusiastically organising the renovation of old homes in the community, which includes fund-raising. However, students throughout the school show limited independence during lessons because of insufficient opportunities provided for them. They form strong relationships, work harmoniously together and show deep respect for the diversity within the school community. They provide support to each other through the buddy system and during orientation for new students. Students are well-behaved, which is clear in their friendly interactions in lessons, during recess and other activities.

An outstanding understanding of Bahrain's heritage and culture is evident amongst students, which is well supported through field visits to historical sites such as Bahrain Fort and to the commemoration of cultural events such as Hiya Biya and Qurgaoon. Strong Islamic values are also supported through participation in charity events such as gathering donations for Syria Kids and visiting the grand mosque.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Teachers in all phases demonstrate good subject knowledge and manage students well, so that lessons are orderly and students well behaved. In the better lessons, teachers actively drive students' learning with enthusiasm and a considerable amount of work is covered.

However, in a significant number of lessons the learning pace is slower and lessons lack urgency which makes them less productive.

Across the school, teachers' success in developing students' higher order thinking skills is too varied. Many teachers tend to focus heavily upon ensuring that knowledge is transmitted to students before testing their understanding through questioning. It is only in the better lessons that students are expected to think more creatively and tackle more challenging concepts as they pose their own questions and test their hypotheses. In the elementary school, much of the teaching enables students to acquire understanding and knowledge through a good range of strategies that engage their interest. Moreover, elementary students receive good support from teaching assistants who help to encourage and motivate them, whereas in the middle and high schools less support is available.

The most effective lessons across the school feature a variety of learning methods that give students the opportunity to learn skills of enquiry through research. They also promote collaboration and cooperation through discussion and group tasks, and skills of communication through presenting findings to their peers. This involvement of the students in their own learning is a key factor in making these lessons the most productive. Homework is a regular feature of students' learning, and teachers make good use of students' out of school efforts to practise and reinforce understanding and to develop their project work.

Whilst teaching usually offers adequate challenge to most students, the most able frequently do not have to work hard enough, as all students are given the same work for much of the lesson. Extension activities are sometimes offered, but there is frequently insufficient time to get full benefit from these. A good amount of assessment information is gathered from teachers' observations, as well as from tests and examinations, but this is not used sufficiently in planning lessons to meet the needs of students of differing abilities. Teachers regularly mark students' written work, but do not always take the opportunity to point out how it could be improved.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school curriculum covers a wide range of skills and knowledge for the majority of students. Units of study are arranged so that students face gradually harder work, with little repetition or overlap as they progress through the school. The level of challenge is appropriate for the majority of students. It is less well suited to the few who find the work too difficult or too easy, especially so for the very able students. The units of study are

regularly reviewed as a result of staff discussion including, notably, the reflections of students in their journals. Across the school, effective links are made between subjects such as mathematics and science to enable students to use skills learned in one subject as they study another. Students are very well versed in their community responsibilities and interesting programmes such as the CAS initiative teach the value of charity and service to others. Additional activities, notably in sport and foreign study visits, enhance students' school experience. The school's well-resourced environment is effectively used to promote learning, such as the library and media centre. The environment is well maintained and conducive to learning. A feature of the curriculum is the skilful use made of the cultural, educational and commercial environment of Bahrain to promote students' learning.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

Students are effectively inducted in a way that helps them settle quickly and easily. The 'buddy system' helps them to feel part of their new community. Their academic progress and personal development are monitored closely and they are provided with detailed feedback. As a result, students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Staff are alert to students' needs. When serious gaps or concerns are identified through initiatives such as student-teacher conferences, immediate action is taken, for example students join the extra reading programme or Saturday classes. Concerns or disagreements are often solved through the excellent Peer Mediation Programme. However, the school does not deploy staffing and resources sufficiently well to support students with special educational needs.

Through individual advice from their academic supervisors, students are able to make well-informed decisions about their educational future. For those interested in business, the school provides speakers who offer advice and good support is available through the Trade Quest initiative. Parents are well informed about their children's progress through a variety of approaches such as the Quarterly Progress Reports and parent-teacher meetings. The school provides an outstandingly healthy and safe environment. Risks are well managed, there is a healthy diet available and students' well-being is stressed in physical education lessons. Rare incidents of misbehaviour are quickly handled and cultural harmony is well promoted across the school.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 2 Good

The enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership team share clear priorities with staff members to strive for the school's vision and mission. Commitment to team work throughout the school supports the sharpening focus on raising students' achievement. The impact of this on personal development and in the elementary school on academic performance is particularly evident. Teachers feel valued and appreciate the strong commitment of the steering committee to ensure appropriate support and provide continuous well-focused professional development. The school's family atmosphere, encouraged by the school president, is highly appreciated by all members of the community.

The accreditation process and evaluation of the IB programmes have provided well-organised structures for continuous evaluation. The school gives careful attention to evaluating performance in all aspects of provision and outcomes. Careful analysis of internal and external examination data is conducted and the leadership are realistic about aspects of provision which need development, particularly in the upper year groups. The comprehensive implementation of a constructive appraisal system focuses professional development opportunities on developing quality teaching practices and includes careful monitoring of progress towards goals. The continuous professional development programme includes weekly in-school training as well as opportunities overseas. Action plans, in response to continuous evaluation and assessed needs, are well structured and detailed, particularly in the elementary school. As a document, the strategic plan does not sufficiently set clear and detailed targets for school-wide improvement in order to unify, prioritise and drive the action planning within the three IB programmes.

The school provides a well-maintained learning environment with spacious classrooms, and the teaching and learning resources effectively support implementation of the programmes. A wide range of communication strategies encourage feedback from parents and students, including student councils involved in decision-making, regular information newsletters, meetings and an open-door policy. School responses include changes in the school calendar schedule and positive input by parents into the language policy.

Excellent links with the local and wider community enhance students' learning and active involvement in community service and educational field trips. Links include informative visits by parents and other professionals.

The President and Advisory Board have a clear understanding of their separate roles and responsibilities. The school is held accountable for its performance through written reports and discussions at meetings. The supportive and widely-experienced Advisory Board wholeheartedly contribute to the school's development, particularly with strategic and financial planning.

The school's main strengths

- Excellent links with the local and wider community and the very good use of the local environment and resources to enrich the curriculum
- Good self-confidence exhibited by the students as they work together and in taking responsibilities as part of the community
- Effective support for students and well-informed advice and guidance for their next stage of education.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise students' academic achievement particularly in Arabic and in science
- improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - increasing the challenge on more able students
 - meeting the different needs of students of different abilities and especially those with special educational needs
 - lifting the pace of lessons and ensuring its appropriateness for all
 - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons.