



# **Schools Review Unit**

## **Review Report**

**Al-Safa Primary Girls School**  
**A'ali - Central Governorate**  
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date of Review: 1-3 October 2012**

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## The Schools Review Unit

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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 five 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-Safa Primary Girls												
School's type		Government												
Year of establishment		1993												
Age range of students		6-12 years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High				
		1-6				-				-				
Number of students		Boys		-		Girls		445			Total		445	
Students' social background		Most students are from middle-class families												
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	Classes	3	3	2	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Town /Village		A'ali												
Governorate		Central Governorate												
Number of administrative staff		6												
Number of teaching staff		36												
Curriculum		Ministry of Education (MoE)												
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic												
Principal's tenure		One Year												
External assessment and examinations		NAQQAET's national examinations												
Accreditation (if applicable)		-												
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding				Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties		
		26				57			3			25		
Major recent changes in the school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appointing a new principal in the academic year 2011-12</li><li>• Appointing a specialist for 'excellent and talented' students</li><li>• Appointing a social counsellor for the first cycle in the academic year 2011-12</li><li>• Appointing a learning resources specialist in the current academic year 2012-13.</li></ul>												

## Table of review judgments awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	2: Good			
The school's capacity to improve	2: Good			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	2	-	-	2
Students' personal development	1	-	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	2	-	-	2
The quality of curriculum implementation and enrichment	2	-	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	1	-	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	2	-	-	2

### Key:

- 1: Outstanding
- 2: Good
- 3: Satisfactory
- 4: Inadequate

## Review judgements

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### Overall effectiveness

- ☐ **How effective is the school in meeting the needs of students and their parents?**

#### Grade: 2 Good

The school has maintained its good performance in students' academic achievement and most aspects of provision as judged in its previous review in April 2009, while it is judged to have improved from good to outstanding in students' personal development and their support and guidance. It offers remarkable support programmes to different students groups, particularly those with learning difficulties. These help develop all students' self-confidence and increase their sense of responsibility, especially when participating in extra-curricular activities. Islamic values and positive attitudes are reinforced. Strategic development goals are achieved, being based on sound analysis of the school's self-evaluation results and the recommendations from the previous review and consequent actions. The environment motivates learning and various teaching strategies help students acquire essential basic skills, especially for students in Grades 1 and 6.

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

#### Grade: 2 Good

The school has good capacity to improve as judged in the previous review. Its administration is aware of strengths and weaknesses and seeks to improve overall performance according to its strategic plan. Regardless of the challenges the school has faced in the absence of a principal, information technology specialist and senior teachers for science, mathematics and English, the school has exerted productive effort in reaching a good level of performance through a willing and all-inclusive team, such as the subject coordinators who effectively perform as senior teachers. The school has dedicated facilities for arts, family education and a science laboratory. It has resumed physical education lessons in the shaded areas as an additional alternative to the gymnasium. The school is well placed to achieve further improvement.

## Students' achievement

### □ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

#### Grade: 2 Good

Grade 3 students attained levels slightly below the national average in Arabic in 2010 and above in 2011 and 2012. As for mathematics, they achieved above the national average in 2010, within the average range in 2011 and slightly above the average in 2012.

Grade 6 students attained levels above the national average in 2010 and 2011. The highest performance was in Arabic and English. They attained levels above average in 2012 except English, which were within the national average. These results reflect the performance level of most students in lessons.

Students in Cycle 1 attained high pass rates in school examinations in 2011-12 ranging between 90% and 100%; the lowest was in Arabic in Grade 3. Cycle 2 students attained pass rates between 84% and 100%, the highest being in Arabic and English, with the lowest in science. Most of these rates correspond with the high proficiency rates and reflect the good levels of students in most lessons in both cycles, although their performance was not as good in science in the fourth and fifth grades and in mathematics in the fifth grade, where the learning opportunities for students were inadequate. Most girls in the first cycle show good levels in reading, writing and speaking in both Arabic and English, and in Scientific and Mathematical skills. Most of the scientific and mathematical skills in the sixth grade were good, in comparison with the scientific skills in Grades 4 and 5, and mathematical skills in Grades 5.

It is clear that the high pass rates from Grade 1 to 3 are constant in core subjects from 2010 to 2012; the same is evident in Cycle 2, especially so in Arabic. This reflects students' good development in most subjects and in their written work. This is mainly as a result of the variety of activities that are organised to meet students' different needs.

Students with learning difficulties make significant progress inside and outside classrooms, as a result of activities and support that meets their needs. Outstanding and talented students advance well in most lessons as a result of the enrichment activities and special programmes that challenge their abilities.

## **□ How good is the students' personal development?**

### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

The vast majority of students show great enthusiasm through their effective participation in school activities and extra-curricular activities. These include acting and theatre committees, where students demonstrate high self-confidence and an ability to work effectively as a team. Students undertake responsibilities outside classrooms more than inside, where the role of 'order-maintaining' students is highly apparent. Support from Grade 5 students for other students, as well as from members of the Students' Council representing their peers in conversation with the school administration is evident. Students demonstrate lessons to their classmates through interesting learning strategies and practices. They take occasional opportunities to express their views publicly, both in Arabic and English, which helps develop their language and self-confidence.

The vast majority of students are awareness of being punctual and the importance of caring about the cleanliness of the school and its facilities. Projects such as 'the amiable ant' encourage students to adhere to Islamic values, such as tolerance and etiquette. Students enjoy good relations with teachers and each other, which is reflected in their feeling of security and psychological well-being.

The vast majority of students show clear understanding of Bahraini heritage, traditions and customs by participating in national festivals, such as the folklore costumes, like 'A Week of Love for Bahrain', in addition to field trips to national landmarks.

## **The quality of provision**

## **□ How effective are teaching and learning?**

### **Grade: 2 Good**

Most teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and syllabus content, which is evident in their performance and enthusiasm when presenting introductory activities. They structure lessons logically, sequencing their presentations by using various teaching and learning strategies, such as learning through play, scientific research, story-telling, and by using class learning aids such as smart-boards, visual cards and PowerPoint presentations. They provide students with opportunities for cooperative learning in the best lessons. Most teachers motivate students towards learning through giving them gifts, verbal encouragement and 'stars' when they interact positively. This encourages students to participate actively and enthusiastically in lessons. Most students acquire knowledge,



concepts and skills well in Cycles 1 and 2, especially in Arabic and English, but less in Grade 5 in mathematics and Grades 4 and 5 in science, contrary to their good competence in these skills in Grade 6.

The majority of teachers provide students with opportunities to develop their thinking skills and challenge their abilities in the most active lessons through open-ended questioning, and requiring deduction, discovery, analysis and synthesis from the students. In the less active lessons, the questions used tend to measure limited cognitive skills, such as knowledge and memory recall.

Most teachers run their lessons well, in terms of their sequential presenting of activities, maintaining a motivating learning climate and providing students with guidance and support to ensure their attention in lessons. This results in creating a suitable setting for organised experiential and directed learning. At the same time, time management in a small number of lessons is not effective because the learning activities take more time than needed.

Students are assigned a good amount of homework that is usually indicated in most lesson plans. Homework is marked regularly and students are provided with feedback with reinforcing phrases and encouragement cards. These help students make good progress.

In most lessons in Cycles 1 and 2, teachers adopt various assessment techniques, such as verbal questioning and written evaluative activities, both for individuals and groups, which significantly help in identifying and meeting students' learning needs. Most students receive help and support in such a way that improves students' progress in the good lessons, but is inconsistent in the other less frequent lessons.

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

#### **Grade: 2 Good**

The school is concerned about implementing a curriculum which develops students' understanding of their rights, duties and responsibilities. It implants Islamic principles and positive attitudes through guidance panels. Students participate in school committees, such as the 'belonging and citizenship committee', national celebrations, festivals and competitions, such as 'A country and a citizen'. The school presents national landmarks and traditional photos and costumes of Bahrain. It organizes field visits to historic places, such as 'Bahrain Fort', which helps in reinforcing students' feeling of citizenship and belonging.

The school is concerned with improving its environment, trying to make it more encouraging for learning. Classrooms are rich with educational aids, drawings and students' work. Students participate in extra-curricular activities and the morning assembly, such as 'Good Morning My Homeland' in addition to reading poems and taking part in various activities in the recess, such as 'the benefits of milk', all of which enrich the curriculum.

The school develops the educational experiences for all groups, especially for students with learning difficulties, through remedial programmes and for outstanding students through enrichment programmes, such as 'golden minds'. Most students acquire the basic skills in Cycles 1 and 2, and the ability to make links between knowledge and understanding.

### **□ How well are students guided and supported?**

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

New students settle quickly, due to the effectiveness of the educational and entertaining induction programmes the school provides. Constant and intensive guidance helps prepare students outstandingly well for their next educational stage.

The school meets students' personal needs, such as providing aids for them through 'The School Charitable Box'. It helps students who face problems with constant guidance either individually or in groups, such as through the 'How to deal with people' and 'Internet addiction' programmes, which have a positive impact on providing students with solutions.

The school identifies students' educational needs partly through diagnostic test results. The special groups receive special care through supportive programmes, such as 'private tutoring' for students with learning difficulties and the 'golden minds' programme for the outstanding and talented. Students actively participate in extra-curricular activities, which clearly lead to their development according to their abilities. Students with physical disabilities are supported through special preparation of the school environment for them and effectively cooperating with the Saudi-Bahraini Centre for the visually disabled.

The school has a clear policy to regularly communicate with parents and inform them about their daughters' progress, through educational meetings, correspondence notebooks, weekly brochures and open days. It assesses risks, follows a regular maintenance programme, trains students on evacuation drills and cooperates with the Middle Governorate Municipality to provide a healthy school environment.

## 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 school has a clear vision that is shared. It focuses on performance quality in its educational practices, particularly on students' personal development and its support.

The school has a strategic plan that is based on clear priorities based on the previous review recommendations and the results of the school's self-evaluation and "SWOT" analyses. This has made the school's new administration aware of the school's strengths and its areas for development. Planning has been effective in guiding action.

The school administration inspires and encourages its members through embracing educational initiatives and projects, such as 'The Literary Forum', which motivates staff to develop and work as a team. The school reinforces the concept of delegation by assigning some teachers to undertake the responsibilities of senior teachers and by asking, for example, the Arabic teachers to use learning resources centre creatively to compensate for the absence of specialist staff.

The school identifies the training needs of its members and meets them by getting them to participate in workshop, such as the 'analytical thinking' and 'distinctive learning' workshops. It checks the performance of teachers, through regular classroom visits and discussion sessions such as in the 'cooperative learning' sessions. The roles of the consultation boards, such as the board of directors and the technical committee, and the role of the improvement partner in supporting and monitoring the school programmes are effective in helping to execute the operational plans. They are also helpful in discussing students' achievements and how this is reflected in teachers' performance.

The school uses its resources and facilities appropriately, such as the e-classroom and benefits from the shaded areas in providing physical exercises as an alternative to the gymnasium. The school seeks parents' and students' opinions through the Parents' Council and Students' Council meetings and using polls, such as 'identifying students' attitudes towards the school' and responding to their needs as much as possible. Re-arranging procedures for the open day is an example. Students' opinions are considered while setting the examination schedule and designing the educational panels, which has appealed well to both parents and students. The school communicates with the local community to enhance

students' educational experiences, such as its communication with the General Traffic Administration in preparation for the 'Traffic Competition' for the Gulf Region, the local health centres and the A'ali Municipality when cleaning the school.

## **The school's main strengths**

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- Effective support provided for students of various groups, especially those with learning difficulties
- Students good behaviour and confidence, their outstandingly ability in taking responsibility and their enthusiastic participation in school life
- Optimum use of resources and educational facilities to serve the teaching and learning processes well through a conducive learning environment
- The inspiration, encouragement and support from the school administration for the school staff and adopting initiatives and projects effectively so as to achieve a harmonious working atmosphere.

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, the school should:**

- share its outstanding practices across the school to raise the quality of teaching and learning to include:
  - the development of higher-order thinking skills and challenge for all students according to their abilities
  - provide adequate opportunities for students to assume leadership roles in their lessons
  - development of scientific and mathematical skills, particularly in Grades 4 and 5.
- fill the shortages in human resources, particularly senior teachers of core subjects in English, science and mathematics.