



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

Review Report

**Alia School
Al Hamriya – Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 17-19 November 2014

SP059-C1-R059

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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 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		Alia School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		2007											
Age range of students		6-15 years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High			
		1-6				7				-			
Number of students		Boys	94	Girls	35	Total			129				
Students' social background		Most students are from average socio-economic backgrounds											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village		Al Hamriya											
Governorate		Capital											
Number of administrative staff		7											
Number of teaching staff		14 teachers, 21 learning supports											
Curriculum		Canadian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and social studies. Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Arabic, Islamic studies, social studies and citizenship											
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic and English											
Principal's tenure		4 years											
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		
		-			-			-			41		
Major recent changes in the		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2013-2014: 											

school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- appointed Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)- established science and IT laboratories• Appointments in 2014-2015:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4 new teachers for Arabic, English, class teaching and a substitution teacher- 6 new learning supports
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Table of review judgements 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	-	2
Students' personal development	2	2	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	2	2	-	2
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	2	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	2	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	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: 2 Good

Overall effectiveness and all review aspects are good. Students make good progress academically, particularly special educational needs students (SEN). Teaching and assessment are effective, except for a few lessons that are inconsistent in challenging students, developing their higher order thinking skills and providing feedback in lessons and written work. Links between subjects can be inconsistent. Students have high levels of confidence, awareness and responsibility and are respectful and cooperative, showing in their personal development. They are well supported academically and personally through the implementation of individual targets and plans, with various activities and programmes that enrich their learning and meet their different needs. Leadership, management and governance is effective, using rigorous comprehensive self-evaluation to continuously plan for overall development and closely monitoring both students' achievement and teaching and learning.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school has a clear ambitious vision based on accurate self-evaluation. The evaluation identifies improvement priorities and the school plan focuses these, with continuous follow-up to insure its effectiveness in practices and performance. Leadership is fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, this being evident in the match between the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and the review team's judgements. The school closely monitors students' academic and personal achievement and plans accordingly in cooperation with parents, which results in students' progress, particularly SEN students. The impact of professional development programmes is closely followed up through continuous monitoring of teaching practices. The school is highly supported by the Board of Trustees in realising its strategic vision, especially in terms of challenges arising from limited resources and facilities.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 2 Good

Students' attainment in core subjects is high across the school in internal examinations. Pass rates for 2013-2014 range from 93% in Grade 5 English to 100% in Arabic and Science across all grades. Students' competency rates are high in all subjects except for English in Grade 3, where the level of students attaining 80% or above is only 25% due to change in examination style and the large proportion of SEN students in that grade. Analysis of the performance of different cohorts of students over the past three years shows consistently high pass rates in core subjects. SEN students, who constitute a third of total pupils, also achieve well and make good progress over time due to the highly effective learning support. A minority of students voluntarily sat the 2013 Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) tests, and in Grades 3 and 4 students performed above average in science compared with other Middle Eastern schools. Grade 6 students performed better in English and mathematics than in science.

Students' standards across all grades are above age and curriculum related expectations. Most students have good communication skills in English and express themselves fluently. They read a range of texts with good comprehension. This is supported well by the school's focus on vocabulary acquisition through reading programmes. In Arabic, students listen well and most of them speak and read with understanding. Grade 1 students develop good phonic skills, Grade 4 students' knowledgeably use words in sentences. However, the writing skills of a few students are less well developed, particularly in the senior grades. Most students make good progress in lessons and homework, evident in their written work which shows the development of free writing skills.

Students' show a good understanding and knowledge of arithmetic and scientific concepts. Grade 4 students can clearly explain different natural and environmental phenomena and Grade 5 students can explain the difference between complex scientific concepts. In mathematics, Grade 2 students can explain different forms of measurement and tools. Grade 5 students can draw and measure different shapes. However, students' problem solving and practical and investigative skills are not as well developed as they should be.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Most students adhere to school regulations, attend regularly and are punctual, keep the school clean and maintain the fabric. They behave well in lessons and around the school in a remarkably harmonious atmosphere reflected in their mutual support and guidance despite their different groups and abilities. Good relationships prevail throughout the school and students welcome visitors. This positive behaviour is the result of the careful care and guidance, and is enhanced through continuous promotion of positive behaviour, attitudes, and values, through morning assembly and programmes such as 'Respect and Cooperation', and 'My School's Cleanness is Mine'. All this contributes to students' strong feeling of safety and security.

Students are highly confident and enjoy responsibility. They are independent learners, which shows in and out of lessons. They take leadership roles, for example in 'Little Scouts'. Students show great awareness of the importance of learning, reflected in their enthusiasm. Most students participate keenly in lessons and in various activities such as 'Sports Day' in Al Ahli Club and the 'Spelling Bee' in which the school came top.

Most students show clear understanding of Islamic values and Bahrain's culture, with heavy involvement in festivals such as National day and 'Heya Beya' and field trips to heritage sites like Bahrain Fort and the museum. Islamic values show in their conduct through cooperation, respect, greetings and their participation in 'International Peace Day'.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 2 Good

Teachers have secure subject knowledge as well as the ability to teach SEN students. This shows in their ability to handle different groups of students and in their enthusiasm for teaching, with clear instructions and enrichment of the content using various examples. Teachers utilise a variety of effective teaching and learning student-centred strategies, for example questions for learning, simulation, brain storming, and collaborative learning. Resources used effectively in lessons include smart boards, flash cards, document cameras, and models, resulting in students' engagement, participation and enjoyment of lessons. This leads to students' good acquisition of basic skills in most lessons, particularly in English,

Arabic and some science lessons.. However, in a few mathematics lessons resources' are used less effectively, adversely impacting the achievement of learning objectives.

Most teachers manage lessons effectively in a calm, conducive learning environment. Varied activities are logically presented at different learning levels and instructions are clear, at a pace that results in productive lessons and achievement of objectives. Students are rewarded and encouraged to participate, thereby developing their confidence and motivation for learning. However, in a few satisfactory lessons, an ineffective pace impacts negatively on students' interest and acquisition of skills, for example shifting between different activities quickly or taking too long. Careful support is provided to SEN students from Learning Support staff, leading to good academic and personal progress, but support to other students is less in a few lessons.

In most lessons, especially English and Arabic, students of different abilities are challenged through questions and various activities such as reasoning, analysing, comparing and concluding, which results in development of their skills and broader understanding. However, development of higher order thinking skills is less in some lessons.

Students' learning is assessed through different effective methods including formative, individual, collective, verbal and written. Results are used to plan and ensure students' achievement of objectives. A good variety of homework is assigned to students in most subjects and is followed-up and marked regularly, with motivating comments and feedback. However, homework is not consistently differentiated and followed up to ensure completion and students' development.

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

Grade: 2 Good

A wide range of learning experiences is provided, based on the Canadian Curriculum for subjects taught in English and the MoE Curriculum for subjects taught in Arabic. Systematic curriculum reviews based on thorough evaluation result in appropriate modifications, being particularly well adapted to meet the needs of SEN students. There are some links between subjects, such as between the school's 'Water and Electricity Rationalism Campaign' and science, but these are limited. Participation in school events and programmes enables students to develop community spirit, tolerance and an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Students undertake responsible roles in classrooms, the student council and different committees. A good range of extracurricular activities includes science fairs, spelling-bees, different clubs, sports activities and field trips.

The school provides an attractive learning environment and students take good care of it. Classroom displays celebrate students' work. Although resources in the science laboratory are rather limited, there is a well-equipped computer laboratory and Learning Centre which are well used. Strong links with local schools and the wider community enrich the curriculum, such as links with Khawla and Al Ma'arifa Secondary girls' schools for voluntary work. Students contribute well to national and international activities such as National day, world health day and National peace day. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education as the school offers tailor-made support, particularly for students with special education needs.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

New students are effectively inducted through a programme which takes place during the first week. Strong links with the Early Intervention Centre ensure that SEN students are prepared well for a successful start.

Academic progress is carefully tracked and interventions such as a reading group are available for students who are identified as underachieving. However, documenting the progress of different groups of students is not regular. SEN students have academic targets in the Individual Education Plans (IEPs); these are carefully and regularly checked and the Learning Supports keep detailed records to demonstrate each student's progress. Students' personal development is well promoted and monitored. Students with behavioural difficulties have very detailed individual behaviour plans and their behaviour is logged daily.

Trained and supervised Learning Supports provide good care and assistance to SEN students. Staff are highly sensitive to students' individual needs and provide outstanding care. There is a good emphasis on students developing independence, to equip them for society and for the next stage of their education. Parents receive comprehensive reports about students' progress through reports and emails, and are involved in reviewing the IEPs for students with SEN. A safe and healthy environment is provided for staff and students, with a high level of monitoring to ensure the safety of all.

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's strategic and action plans stem from its shared and ambitious vision. They focus well on improvement priorities which are regularly monitored and updated according to the results of close monitoring of performance. The school's leaders carefully monitor students' academic and personal achievement and progress. Teaching and learning is carefully monitored to identify areas that need improvement and support teachers accordingly through micro-teaching and professional discussion. Professional development programmes are also provided by local and external partners from Cambridge and Canada, including workshops on 'Collaborative Learning' and 'Effective Teaching Strategies'. All teachers and Learning Supports are trained on how to teach SEN students. This is demonstrated well by the effective teaching strategies and support provided to students of different needs and abilities.

A culture of harmony and belonging prevails around the school as a result of the good relationships between the school community and the inspiring and motivating leadership. Teachers are rewarded through certificates, award ceremonies and incentives when handling extra duties, which motivate them to improve and innovate. Although resources and facilities are limited, they are well utilised to facilitate learning, including visual aids, the IT laboratory, and the Study Centre for supporting low achievers and SEN students. However, the science laboratory is used less as there is limited equipment.

Parents' and students' views are sought through questionnaires, a suggestions box, Parents' Council and direct meetings. Suggestions are responded to whenever possible, for example shading the playground and creating a pedestrian pathway from the main gate to the buildings to ensure students' safety. The school communicates well with the local community, including links with the Ministry of Water and Electricity, for awareness lectures which are linked to science lessons, and with the Traffic Directorate for health and safety issues.

The roles of the school's leadership and the Board of Directors are clear and respected. The Board of Directors provides effective direction for the school's continuous development through taking part in setting school plans, monitoring performance and students' academic and personal progress. It also supports the school in providing professional development programmes to equip teachers with the necessary teaching strategies that meet students' different learning needs, particularly SEN students.

The school's main strengths

- Continuous planning for the school's development, based on rigorous self-evaluation of all aspects of school work
- the harmonious ethos of respect and teamwork that prevails throughout the school community, and students' high confidence, sense of responsibility and awareness
- the academic and personal progress that students make, especially SEN students
- the various programmes and activities that enrich and meet the learning needs of students of different abilities and interests.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- develop teaching and learning further, including:
 - developing students' practical and mathematical skills
 - developing students' higher order thinking skills
 - using assessment results to improve students' performance and meet their different learning needs
 - linking between subjects so that students experience a coherent curriculum.
- invest in additional learning facilities and resources.