



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Bait Al Hikma Primary Girls School
Isa Town - Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 31 October - 2 November 2011

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The Schools Review Unit

The Schools Review Unit (SRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent national authority, attached to the Cabinet and set up under Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008, amended by the Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. 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 eight 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		Bait Al Hikma Primary Girls School													
School's type		Government													
Year of establishment		1989													
Age range of students		6 – 12 years													
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary			Middle				High						
		1 - 6			-				-						
Number of students		Boys	-	Girls	573				Total	573					
Students' social background		Most students come from middle-level income and social families													
Classes per grade		Grade		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		Classes		3	3	4	3	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village		Isa Town													
Governorate		Central Governorate													
Number of administrative staff		31													
Number of teaching staff		53													
Curriculum		Ministry of Education (MoE)													
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic													
Principal's tenure		7 years													
External assessment and examination		QAAET's national examinations													
Accreditation (if applicable)		-													
Number of students in the following categories according		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties				

to the School's classification	26	14	4	31
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Arabic language teachers and one mathematics teacher were transferred without appointing substitutes in the school year 2010 –11 • A learning difficulties specialist has been appointed for the current school year 2011 –12 • Five new teachers for certain subjects such as Arabic, mathematics and citizenship have been appointed for the current school year • An assistant principal was appointed in the school year 2010 –11 • Three new social workers have been appointed for the current school year. 			

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	2	-	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	2	-	-	2
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	-	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	-	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	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

The school's performance is showing improvement when compared to a satisfactory performance as judged in the previous review in December 2008. The school received judgements of good in all the areas reviewed and has capacity to improve with its comprehensive strategic plan that sets clear objectives based on accurate analysis, the impact of which is evident in teachers' implementation of a variety of effective teaching and learning strategies that have helped provide students with various skills in most core subjects and improve their achievement. In addition, students demonstrate awareness and self-confidence and take responsibility both in curricular and extra-curricular activities. All this has helped improve the school's overall performance and make students and parents well-satisfied with its provision.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school has good capacity to improve. The leadership team knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement and works in an atmosphere that is characterised by good relationships. A strategic plan focuses on improvement and is based on the results of self-evaluation and an accurate diagnosis of the school's situation. It includes operational plans for the various departments to improve overall performance based on the recommendations provided in the previous review and in line with the important priorities of raising students' academic and personal levels of achievement and improving teachers' professional competency. Despite some challenges, namely the lack of substitute teachers for transferred teachers and the absence of a dedicated learning difficulties specialist, the school's efforts in delegating some teachers to undertake necessary duties to fill these gaps are effective.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 2 Good

Students achieved high pass rates in school examinations in the school year 2010 – 2011; ranging between 91% and 100% in core subjects. Proficiency rates are more in line with pass rates in the first cycle, particularly in Grades 1 and 2 in mathematics and science, and vary in the second cycle, particularly in Grade 6 in mathematics.

High pass rates reflect the good levels achieved by most students in the outstanding and good lessons, which account for more than half the lessons. These lessons are distinguished by effective teaching which caters, in a planned manner, for individual differences in curricular activities and written work. Most students demonstrate good skills in Arabic such as 'reading aloud and writing' in first and second cycles, although writing skills in English are less well developed. Students also acquire good skills in scientific research arithmetic and IT.

Reviewing students' results for three consecutive years shows that they have steadily progressed in core subjects in Grades 1 and 2, with a slight decrease in pass rates in Grade 3 in English. Second cycle students make good progress in mathematics, Arabic and English, with stable pass rates in science. Most students' progress well with time upon moving from the first cycle to the second. They also progress well in lessons and in their written work due to diversified activities which cater for students' individual differences which appropriately challenge their abilities.

Students with learning difficulties progress well in line with their abilities through special education programmes and as a result of effective support. Yet, the progress of the lower achieving students' was not as good. Most outstanding and talented students progress well and in line with their abilities in lessons, written work and enrichment activities.

National examination results for three consecutive years (2009 to 2011) indicate that students are achieving above average levels in Arabic and mathematics in Grade 3 in 2009 and 2010 and slightly below the national average in 2011. Grade 6 students achieved above the national average levels in all core subjects in all three years (2009, 2010 and 2011).

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

The school takes necessary action to address cases of absence and late arrivals, which is reflected in most students' regular and punctual attendance, and good discipline. Most students take part enthusiastically in school life by participating in extra-curricular activities, internal and external competitions such as the 'Best Photograph' of a Bahraini monument and committees such as the 'Young Artist' and 'Young Cook'. These provide opportunities for students to develop self-confidence, assume leadership roles and the ability to take responsibility and work independently. They do this with great enthusiasm because of the diverse teaching strategies used by many teachers, particularly in the outstanding and good lessons.

Students' relationships with their colleagues and teachers are characterised by harmony and mutual respect both in and out of class. Most students demonstrate caring attitudes, preserve school property and help keep the school clean and tidy. Programmes such as, the 'Young Girl Scout' minimise behavioural problems. A loving family atmosphere has been created. Most students demonstrate keen interest in Bahrain's heritage and culture, observe Islamic values and ethics and have a good sense of citizenship and loyalty. They participate in the school's Code of Loyalty, the 'You Are in My Heart, Bahrain' activity and 'With my Utmost Love and Appreciation' competition. These have a positive impact on students' personal development.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 2 Good

Most teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects, which is evident in the good utilization of several effective teaching and learning strategies such as 'brainstorming', 'questions and answers', 'cooperative learning', 'role play' and 'learning through play'. Good use is made of various teaching aids, such as 'attractive images', 'models' and modern technology is well applied, particularly 'smart boards' and 'electronic presentations'. These help students to participate and motivate them to learn. Teachers strive to expand the knowledge of students and provide them with concepts and skills, particularly reading skills in Arabic, mathematical skills and practical skills in science. Yet, student's acquisition of writing skills in English is less developed. Teachers challenge students' abilities in most lessons and develop their higher thinking skills by asking them to apply deduction, analysis and abstraction. Nevertheless, critical and analytical thinking skills are not developed as

much as they might be. Most groups of students are supported well in terms of the teaching provision and the delivery of study material through curricular activities which attempt to make learning easy. Teachers help deliver textbook content in interesting ways which cater for individual differences in most lessons. There are exceptions to this for a few categories of students which are not well supported in lessons.

Most lessons are effectively managed in terms of controlling students' behaviour and investing time effectively in performing curricular activities and learning tasks. Yet, time utilization in a number of satisfactory lessons is not well managed. Students are assigned plenty of homework and enrichment activities which are followed up through accurate marking and feedback to students, which in turn help identify strengths and areas for improvement. Homework raises achievement and the school has followed the recommendation about this in the previous review, however, in a few cases homework does not cater for individual differences well enough. Assessment methods varied in most lessons from verbal questions to written assessment activities, both individually and collectively. These assessments contribute to the achievement of learning objectives in accordance with the teaching plans.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school enhances students' understanding of rights, duties and responsibilities by providing guidance that focuses on values, positive behaviour and students' participation in school committees. Activities such as the 'Young Nurse' committee and internal and external competitions, such as 'Instant Calculation' and 'Guinness World Records' help students achieve understanding and advanced places. Students participate in extra-curricular activities such as 'planting' and 'recycling' are programmes where students take on clear responsibilities.

The school environment is enriched with aids and boards that promote citizenship and establish Bahraini identity and a sense of belonging. Most students are encouraged to take part in national activities and tournaments, such as in creating the biggest painting on the theme 'Love of My Country'. Celebrations and field trips are organised, for example the visit to 'Bait Al-Qur'an – The House of Qur'an'. Students are taught Hajj rituals during breaks, which is reflected in students' good personal development.

Opportunities to study the curriculum by linking subjects, based on the recommendation in the previous review, are provided, but links between subjects are better in the second cycle

than the first. Students acquire basic skills; however English writing skills are less developed than others. The curriculum is enriched by providing various writing activities such as 'dictation line' in Arabic and display corners, such as the 'Heritage Corner' to celebrate students' work.

How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

New students receive a helpful induction through various programmes. Meetings are arranged for parents. Similarly, students are prepared for the next stages of their education by organising visits to second cycle classes and intermediate schools and through programmes such as 'My Future Career'. Where necessary, some financial support is provided. Students' educational needs are identified by using the results of diagnostic tests, Various ability groups are helped through programmes such as the 'Court Programme' which helps students develop creative thinking skills and the 'Future Package' for outstanding and talented students. External competitions, such as the 'Holy Qur'an and Sunnah' tournament, support able students, while weaker students are supported through teachers' individual efforts. The Social Guidance Office provides good advice and guidance to help students solve day-to-day problems through individual and group programmes such as 'Students' Awareness Raising' and 'high values and ethics'. The school communicates effectively with parents regarding their daughters' academic achievement through weekly newsletters, educational meetings and the Open Day. It also pays attention to health and safety related risks assessments, implementing health measures and continuous maintenance. The Health and Safety Committee, provide the 'Students and Teachers Fitness Programme' and meetings with the Ministry of Health, about healthy eating. A safe and healthy environment is created for the school's students and staff.

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 vision that focuses on raising students' achievement drafted in a participatory manner. The strategic plan is based on accurate analysis drawn from the

recommendations in the previous review report, self-evaluation using questionnaires such as the Technical Committee's work on assessment and monitoring the impact of this assessment on educational practices and development projects. The school administration is aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvements. This knowledge has helped staff to set priorities and develop the operational plan for overall improvement. Students' academic achievement has been raised and good behaviour is the norm. Teachers' professionalism and competence has been enhanced, though there is room for more, particularly in some English lessons.

Senior and middle management encourage and motivate the administrative and teaching staff. They provide them with the enthusiasm and desire to develop by taking part in internal and external training workshops, such as the 'Let us All Be Creative with Homework', 'Cooperative Learning' and 'Learning through Investigation' workshops, as well as exchange visits and discussion sessions between teachers, which provide them with various experiences. Advisory bodies, such as the Board of Directors and Technical Committee, help support school programmes, as in monitoring the implementation of the operational plan and discussing students' results and proficiency rates. This helps raise academic achievement. The role of external improvement teams in supporting the school is yet to be seen since this work has only started recently.

The school building is utilised well. Programmes such as 'Preparing the science laboratory' and 'Activating the e-classrooms are good examples, but the Learning Resources Centre could be used better. The school seeks the views of some parents and students through the parents and students councils. Educational meetings and questionnaires are used and the school responds to suggestions within available resources. Examples of this include the holding of an open day and considering students' opinions about the quality of food offered in the canteen. The school communicates with the local community by organising awareness raising programmes, such as the students' 'Guidance Program' offered by the Community Service Police and some visits to the Elderly Home and Bait Al-Amal.

The school's main strengths

- Strategic planning incorporating the school's vision and based on accurate analysis which identifies strengths and areas for improvement
- Realistic self-evaluation of most aspects of school work, and using the results from it to monitor the impact of provision on educational practices at school
- Use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies and their impact on motivating students to learn and acquire skills, knowledge and concepts in most core subjects.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- utilise good practices at the school more to raise achievement and develop teaching and learning strategies by:
 - developing students' basic skills in English
 - developing better students' critical and analytical thinking skills
 - linking subjects in the first cycle in a manner which helps students use their basic skills.
- monitor the impact of professional development programmes on the performance in teaching English.