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

Schools Review Unit
Review Report

Barbar Primary Boys School
Barbar - Northern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 14 - 16 November 2011

Table of Contents

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 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	Barbar Primary Boys School											
School's type	Government											
Year of establishment	1970											
Age range of students	6 - 12 years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	**Primary**				**Middle**				**High**			
	1-6				-				-			
Number of Students	**Boys**	398		**Girls**		-		**Total**		398		
Students' social background	Majority of students belong to middle income families											
Classes per grade	**Grade**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
	Classes	3	2	2	2	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village	Barbar											
Governorate	Northern											
Number of administrative staff	6											
Number of teaching staff	34											
Curriculum	Ministry of Education (MoE)											
Main language(s) of instruction	Arabic											
Principal's tenure	One year											
External assessment and examination	QAAET 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**					
	30		-		-		47					

| Major recent changes in the school | • Promoting a senior class teacher to an assistant principal, and transferring him to another school for the current school year 2011-12. |
| | • Two teachers of primary subjects joined the school in the current year 2011-12. |

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	3	–	–	3
Students' personal development	2	–	–	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	–	–	3
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: 3 Satisfactory

The school's overall performance has remained satisfactory since its first review in November 2008. The school is satisfactory in the academic achievement of students and the progress they make, and in teaching and learning. Leadership and management, students' personal development and support, and curriculum provision and enrichment are good. The school's efforts to improve are evident in strategic planning based on accurate self-evaluation of most areas of the work. Staff are providing an atmosphere conducive to learning. Their efforts have also contributed to providing students with enough opportunities to take leading roles, which have developed students' self-confidence and facilitated their personal development. This shows in the high approval ratings by students and their parents.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school's capacity to improve and develop has increased from satisfactory in the previous review to good. This is attributed to various factors, most importantly the presence of a leadership that believes in change, development, and shared decision-making. The leadership works according to the school's requirements and priorities using a strategic plan based on the findings of accurate school self-evaluation. In addition, the school has made improvements to the environment to make it more conducive to learning, used its facilities and encouraged student participation in committees and developed various new activities. These actions reflect in the students' personal development and have a positive impact on improving the overall performance of the school, despite the challenges it faces, particularly in the shortage of some senior teachers.

Students' achievement

☐ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students achieve high pass rates in most of the school tests and MoE examinations. Their rates are commensurate with the proficiency levels of the first and second grades. This is also true for mathematics and science for the fourth and fifth grades. However, the rates vary more widely in the primary subjects for the third grade, and in Arabic and English for the fifth grade. These results with students' progress and achievement are satisfactory and reflect the students' performance in lessons. Teaching methods used are of varied quality but secure satisfactory achievement. The first grade students acquire reading skill in Arabic to a good level because of effective teaching and learning and the focused support provided. The students' skills in mathematics are adequate in both cycles. However, basic skills in English and science are not consistently at a similar level. This is the case in reading and speaking in English for the first cycle and in practical skills in science for the second cycle.

Students' pass rates are steady over the past consecutive three years. However, there was a slight decrease in students' rates in English and Arabic for the second and fifth grades respectively. The students' progress varies in lessons due to the suitability of the teaching methods chosen and types of assessments used. Where students' individual differences are not taken into account, as in most lessons, then achievement overall is rarely better than satisfactory. Students' progress in their written work is satisfactory, although it is good in the first cycle. The school performs diagnostic tests, analyses the results and sometimes uses them to prepare programmes and activities for different groups of students. However, students' progress based on their levels is inadequate in some lessons. Students with learning difficulties make good progress due to the support they received from the learning difficulties specialist.

The trend in national examination results confirms average attainment. Results in 2009 show that students attained within the national average range, for both cycles in most study subjects. The 2010 results show that third grade students were very close to the national average and slightly above in mathematics. Sixth grade students attained above the average in all subjects. The 2011 results showed that the students' progress from both cycles was close to the national average in Arabic and slightly above in mathematics. The second cycle students' attainment in science was within the average range and close to the average in English.

☐ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Most students participate well in lessons and the various school activities, such as the students' council, which contributes to enriching their experiences, interests and personal development. They come to school regularly and on time, due in part to the school's effective attendance procedures. They develop self-confidence, self-expression and take leading roles in extra-curricular activities such as the participation by student council members in discussions with the school board on various issues and in the 'The young teacher' activities.

Students' sense of awareness and responsibility is demonstrated by the care they show in looking after school property. This comes as a result of continued guidance and opportunities to participate in relevant programmes and competitions such as 'My clean school. They feel safe in their harmonious environment, where they show respect and appreciation for each other and staff. They express their views with little hesitation, mainly because of the good guidance they receive.

Students have a good understanding about Bahrain's heritage, culture and Islamic values because of their participation in many programmes. These include cultural competitions such as 'Education in Bahrain: Now and Then' and field visits to ancient sights, forts, the museum and pottery factory. Students receive good direction which promotes Islamic values and behaviour. The positive messages in morning assembly and guidance boards about good manners and ethics reflect in their good conduct.

The quality of provision

☐ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The majority of teachers are familiar with their study material, which is reflected to varying extents in their performance and enthusiasm in lessons. Most teachers use various strategies which focus on students' acquisition of knowledge, concepts and skills, such as reading in Arabic, identifying language patterns and establishing rules in mathematics, all of which positively reflect on students' achievement.

Most lessons are properly managed in terms of student participation and ensuring the lesson goals are achieved. Activities are well sequenced and students' motivation is

apparent, reflected in their enthusiasm. However, class management in a significant number of lessons is not at a similar level to this. In these lessons students are not given enough support and the lesson time is not efficiently used. This affects the achievement of students in these lessons and many do not progress as well as they might.

In the good lessons, teaching strategies are used that include discussion, dialogue, and learning through play. However, this is not the case in other lessons where the range of strategies is too narrow. Learning resources are used in the first cycle, such as data projectors, interactive smart boards, flashcards and pictures. These contribute to attracting students' attention and motivating them towards learning. Furthermore, these resources give them the opportunity to work together and learn from each other, enabling them to develop skills of creativity, criticism and problem solving. The daily lesson plans include activities that consider different levels of students' abilities. However, the ways in which these activities are conducted varies considerably from lesson to lessons and in students' written work, which is reflected in the variations in their achievement levels.

Most teachers use a variety of assessment methods in lessons. These include observation, verbal questions, and written activities, such as matching pictures with correct sentences. However, the extent to which such methods are used in meeting students' educational needs is too varied. The amount of homework assigned to students is suitable and is marked and followed up regularly by teachers and student. However, individual differences between students are not considered enough when providing students with support, feedback, both verbal and written.

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

Grade: 2 Good

Through curriculum implementation, the school develops students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Students are provided with directions and lectures about 'proper conduct and sexual harassment' and through committees such as the cleanliness and order, school supervision and discipline, and the school environment committees. These contribute to raising students' awareness and their sense of responsibility, in addition to strengthening the relationships among them. Students' sense of citizenship is developed by having them participate in the morning assembly, 'Bahrain First Festival' and by going on field visits, such as to the museum. The school environment is enhanced with curriculum materials.

The school provides several extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum and develop students' experiences and interests. Most students enthusiastically participate in

these activities, which have a positive impact on their personal development. The school analyses and plans for curriculum implementation on a quarterly and daily basis. Provision focuses on students' acquisition of the basic skills. Links between subjects are used to develop students' educational experiences through applied and real life situations in most of the first cycle lessons. However, this is not enough in the second cycle lessons.

The school has made efforts to improve its environment by decorating the walls and enriching classrooms with students' work so that it becomes part of the motivating educational process. This is especially evident in the first cycle classrooms, but it was not at the same level in the second.

☐ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

The induction of new students provides them with effective guidance. The school holds educational meetings for students and parents, which greatly contributes to them feeling confident about school. Students of the third and sixth grades are given inductions into their next stages of education through advice about lessons, educational lectures and transition to other intermediate schools.

The school supports students' personal needs by providing financial aid. It works with parents to help students who have problems. This is achieved through giving lectures such as 'General safety at home' and keeping parents updated on their children's progress by regular communication. This has had a positive impact on the acknowledgement by students and parents of the care which the school provides. The students' educational needs are identified by conducting diagnostic tests to measure their levels of performance and development. Students with learning difficulties received good support through the special education programme, which results in their improvement from their different starting points and on their abilities. However, the support provided for outstanding and lower achieving students is not as good, which limits their progress.

The school provides a safe and healthy environment because of cooperative efforts, including those of the student discipline committee. Students are periodically given evacuation drills which add to their confidence about safety.

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 shared vision that focuses on students' achievement. Most of the school's practices are successful in promoting students' personal development. Stakeholders express their satisfaction with the school's consideration of their opinions, which is reflected in their enthusiasm for the school's work.

The self-assessment committee diagnoses the school's situation through assessing educational practices and exploring the opinions of its affiliates. This enables the senior leadership to identify areas of strengths and development priorities. It also contributes to the three-year strategic plan to July 2012. The plan objectives are based on the recommendations of the previous school review and the findings of the school's self-evaluation. Most of the objectives are linked with clear performance indicators. The action plans for the different departments are based on the strategic plan using a standard system. This has resulted in promoting a positive and practical culture of change towards achieving school improvement and development.

The school has assigned duties to some teachers to carry out the tasks normally performed by senior teachers who are in shortage. School staff are given the opportunity to take part in professional development programmes on e-learning and strategic planning. Impact on teachers' performance is varied. The school uses the financial and educational resources available to serve the educational process well. Such resources include the science laboratory and the learning resources centre, which are used to enrich the curriculum and organise workshops and presentations.

The school explores the opinions of students and their parents through the students' and parents' councils and responds to them as appropriate, such as organising the examination schedule and making an additional class for the sixth grade students. Additionally, the school communicates with the civil society institutes to provide financial support for the school in order to meet students' personal needs. This meets with the approval of students and their parents.

The school committees and teams, such as the self-evaluation committee, regularly follow up on and discuss the key issues related to the school's work. However, the role of the technical committee has not improved the programmes for raising professional competency and academic achievement enough. The school has contacted the Ministry of Education improvement team, but more time is needed to ascertain its impact.

The school's main strengths

- Strategic planning based on the accurate self-evaluation of the different areas of performance according to the improvement priorities of the school

- Effective use of school resources and facilities to support the educational process

- The students' self-confidence in taking responsibility and leading roles during extra-curricular activities

- Keeping parents updated on students' academic progress and personal development.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise the academic achievement of students in line with their personal development

- develop teaching and learning strategies to include:
    - effective use of evaluation in lessons
    - better development of basic skills in primary subjects, especially in English for the first cycle and practical skills in science for the second cycle
    - developing skills of creativity, criticism and problem solving in all study subjects
    - giving students the opportunity to work together
    - adding variety to homework, taking into consideration individual differences.

- provide students with support based on their levels of need, both inside and outside of lessons

- address the staffing shortage, specifically that of a senior class teachers and senior teachers for those primary subjects other than mathematics, to ensure continued improvement and development.