Schools Review Unit
Review Report

International School of Choueifat - Manama
Amwaj Islands - Muharraq
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 24 – 26 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 3 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	International School of Choueifat											
School's type	Private											
Year of establishment	2005											
Age range of students	3-18 Years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	**Primary**				**Middle**				**High**			
	1-3				4-7				8-12			
Number of students	**Boys**	507	**Girls**		383			**Total**		890		
Students' social background	Middle to high background											
Classes per grade	**Grade**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
	Classes	7	5	5	4	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	0
Town /Village	Amwaj Islands											
Governorate	Muharraq											
Number of administrative staff	33											
Number of teaching staff	69											
Curriculum	SABIS®											
Main language(s) of instruction	English - Arabic											
Principal's tenure	One year											
External assessment and examinations	College Board Advanced Placement (AP), Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary Level (AS Level) and Advanced Level (A Level), Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)											
Accreditation (if applicable)												
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	**Outstanding**		**Gifted & Talented**			**Physical Disabilities**			**Learning Difficulties**			
	NA		NA			NA			NA			
Major recent changes in the school	• Change of school director in December 2011 • Election of a new parents' council in December 2011											

Table of review judgements awarded

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

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

Attainment in external examinations by the small cohort of older students is high. However, across the school, students' achievement in internal tests and their progress in lessons are satisfactory. Students are well-behaved, but in lessons they generally lack enthusiasm and have limited opportunities to develop independence. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, using SABIS structures and methodology consistently. Teaching and curriculum implementation emphasise repetition to build students' basic knowledge effectively, but without sufficiently promoting their understanding and skills. Review of the curriculum firmly assures consistency, allowing limited modification in response to students' needs. Support and guidance are satisfactory, but have too little impact in responding to students' changing needs in lessons. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement planning targets students' achievement. Parents and students are generally satisfied with the school.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The leadership and teaching structures promote teamwork and the school is committed to improvement. The director has a good understanding of the strengths and areas needing development. The SABIS organisation holds the school accountable and assures clear priorities with a strong focus on improving students' attainment. Strategic planning in many aspects is controlled by the central organisation and responds to the development needs of the entire SABIS network with limited opportunities for planning focused on school-specific improvements. The director encourages self-evaluation to guide the school-focused improvement priorities that are permitted within the limits of organisational consistency. However, self-evaluation, overall, does not yet sufficiently seek and take into account the views of parents and students.

Students' achievement

☐ **How well do students achieve in their academic work?**

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Attainment in the IGCSE, A level, AS level and AP examinations is high, although this involves a significantly small cohort of students. In almost all key subjects, students' performance is broadly in line with the regional and network averages from similar schools. However, Grade 10 English, mathematics and physics averages are higher. In primary school, mathematics and science averages are slightly lower than regional and network averages. Internal analysis of examination results shows that students' attainment is good in primary school and satisfactory in the older grades. In lessons and in scrutiny of students' work, most students' standards across the school are satisfactory. In most lessons students make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and abilities.

In Arabic, students' attainment, in listening, speaking and in reading aloud, meets age-related standards across the school. However, in the high school, students' writing, comprehension and critical thinking skills are insufficiently developed, with limited use of vocabulary.

In English school-wide, the standards students attain meet expectations. Across the school students' have strong reading skills. Students' speaking skills are good in Grades 10 and 11 and satisfactory in all other grades. Students' writing is rather formulaic; they write for an appropriate range of purposes, but within this there is too little personal and creative writing. Students across the school write with accuracy and have an age-appropriate grasp of syntax, grammar and spelling.

In mathematics, most students meet age-related standards. Primary school students show an understanding of the place value of digits, with sound arithmetical skills. Middle school students show understanding of key mathematical concepts, such as union and intersection of sets and Venn diagrams. High school students demonstrate age-related standards in their understanding of, for example, chain rule in differentiation. However, throughout the school, students' problem solving and enquiry skills are insufficiently developed.

In science, most students' standards are in line with expectations. In the primary school they have an understanding of how their bodies work and gaining a grasp of basic scientific knowledge. In the middle school, the majority of students can describe concepts related to ecosystems and the gravitational field of earth. The majority of high school students show appropriate knowledge, for example, of the periodic table and molecular concepts.

However, students less confidently solve problems, due to limited understanding. Students' practical and investigative skills are not developed well enough.

☐ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most students are punctual and attend school regularly, and are well supported by an effective system for recording and monitoring absence and late students. The majority of students participate enthusiastically in activities outside lessons. They are eager to ensure participation in, and enjoy attending, activities during the Student Life Organisation (SLO) periods, for example the music, jewel, and football clubs. When given opportunities, they show confidence and enjoy leadership roles and responsibilities, such as upper grade students who organise events for lower grades and high achievers who support their peers academically through study sessions.

In lessons, students cooperate appropriately and work well in pairs when given opportunities. Higher achievers, who are prefects, demonstrate responsibility by helping teachers to manage the classes. However, students show a lack of enthusiastic participation and limited leadership, independence and collaborative skills in their learning due to having too few opportunities to develop these in lessons. Students generally behave in a mature and respectful way in lessons and around school, and they have good relations with both their teachers and peers. Students feel safe and secure on campus. They show satisfactory understanding of Bahrain's heritage and culture, which is promoted through civic and religious education classes.

The quality of provision

☐ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Teaching and learning are structured through the use of the SABIS system. This provides clear 'points', which ensure lessons contain specific elements and enable most students to build basic knowledge and key concepts. However, many lessons have a narrow range of learning experiences which, whilst effectively reinforcing knowledge and methods of working, do not promote understanding and skills well enough. Almost all lessons are orderly with respectful relations between students and teachers. Teachers show strong

commitment to implementing the key processes of the point system, but too few manage to enhance this approach with references to material not included in the text book.

Although teachers use young 'shadow' teachers, group leaders and prefects to allow students to take some personal responsibility in class, methods focus too heavily on teacher instruction. These are often effective in transmitting knowledge, but do not fully engage students' involvement and enthusiasm. Teaching resources are mostly limited to board work and textbook, with little use of technology to bring relevance. In the better lessons, the good subject knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers are key to making lessons productive and enjoyable for students, particularly in English and mathematics. The majority of teachers encourage students to ask for clarification and to contribute during question and answer sessions.

In the most effective lessons, teachers recognise students' problems well and offer additional advice, but others maintain the planned pace requiring these students to catch up later. The majority of teachers focus on lower achievers effectively by repeating the teaching point. In too many lessons higher achievers are not challenged enough and students are not required to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. Homework is used well to reinforce students' class learning, but it often does not extend their knowledge or understanding effectively enough.

The school effectively monitors students' progress in acquiring knowledge and basic skills. Assessment through the Academic Monitoring System (AMS) with periodic tests is continuous, systematic and clearly identifies the gaps in students' mastery of the learning points. However, teachers have little scope to use this information to adjust their lessons to meet the needs of different students. Marking of students' work in lessons is not as productive as it might be because this is limited to group leaders checking for correct answers but not for full understanding.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The curriculum is successful in meeting its aim of building students' basic skills in English and mathematics and preparing them for a range of examinations. The way it is implemented does not offer students a sufficiently broad learning experience, as it does not provide enough creative, practical or investigative activity. The curriculum is largely undifferentiated and in standard lessons the needs of the most able are seldom fully met. Students needing help however are given an effective range of support options. The curriculum is reviewed by the SABIS organisation, but limited opportunities are apparent in

the school to influence its key content to meet the differing and changing needs of students. Links between subjects are not systematically planned which limits the coherence of the curriculum.

Students' understanding of what it means to be part of a community is promoted effectively through regular explanation of school rules and procedures. For those who are 'prefects' or 'peer tutors', there is good scope for learning through undertaking community responsibilities. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education through extensive guidance, particularly as they plan their further education experiences. There is adequate enrichment of the curriculum for those who participate fully in extra-curricular activities, but the use of local community resources to enhance learning is too limited. Library provision is limited mainly to catch-up reading support without easy access to research facilities or internet.

☐ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Effective induction helps new students to settle quickly and easily. Prefects assist in helping them understand school rules and older students take on mentoring roles to guide their younger peers. Students' academic progress is very closely and regularly monitored. Students are made aware of gaps in their performance on assessments and can revisit areas of difficulty, although in doing so, they sometimes miss other activities. However, less attention is given to high achievers to ensure their learning needs are met. Parents are well-informed about their children's academic progress, through web-links and reports. However, the school does not as effectively monitor and communicate students' personal development, with the exception of disciplinary infractions.

Students have good access to well-informed advice and guidance as they move from grade to grade. Useful transition meetings are organised to help them adapt to changing requirements. As older students prepare for further education or employment, they receive good individual advice on options and programmes to follow from their academic quality controller (AQC) and other key staff. This helps them to make well-informed decisions about their future. The school ensures a healthy and safe environment, with good basic medical provision. Risk assessments are carried out and staff report safety issues that are then promptly addressed. Rare incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly handled.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

School leaders and staff work to a clear set of aims and priorities. This vision focuses on high student attainment and successful examination preparation, but this heavy emphasis does not meet the aspirations and needs of all students in the school. The director is inspiring and motivating staff to work with openness to establish a sense of community to serve these wider needs of students. High staff turnover is a continuing challenge for the school in maintaining a consistently understood and common vision.

The school largely evaluates its performance against both internal and international examination results, and comparative analysis is mostly made against results within the regional and international SABIS school network. The school leadership identifies and follows up improvement priorities, but this process is not comprehensive and focuses mostly on academic achievement with less attention to other areas of students' performance.

New teachers are intensively inducted into the SABIS educational system and trained specifically in how to implement this in school. However, the impact of such training is inconsistent as levels of pedagogical skill vary widely amongst staff. Heads of departments and senior leaders regularly evaluate teachers' performance against organisational expectations as well as students' performance in tests and examinations. Training needs are identified and met within the prescribed organisational structure. Strategic planning for major academic and curricular development is undertaken at a central or regional level, and takes account of the school's submissions. This reduces the degree to which the school can respond quickly or fully to the identified needs of its students and staff. In areas such as enrichment activities however, more autonomy is used well.

The available school resources, for example the science laboratories, are appropriate but not used to the full. In classrooms there is insufficient allocation of resources, particularly information technology, to enrich students' learning experiences. The views of students and all parents are not systematically sought. Feedback received is not considered if it involves changes to the central educational system in place. There are very limited links with the local community. The director and governing body have clear roles and responsibilities mandated by the central organisation. The school is firmly held accountable for its overall performance and particularly its students' academic results.

The school's main strengths

- The grounding given to students in basic skills of English and mathematics

- The high attainment by the oldest students

- The well-behaved and cooperative students in lessons who relate well to each other around school

- The support provided for students who need extra help, through the efficient assessment and tracking systems which identify gaps in learning

- The good levels of attendance and punctuality.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- increase the range of teaching and learning strategies to:

  - challenge the most able students to make maximum progress during lessons
  - promote students' enquiry, practical and independent learning skills
  - develop students' higher order thinking skills
  - use assessment more effectively during lessons in order to promote efficient learning and better progress for students of different abilities.

- improve the impact of self-evaluation on planning through taking into account the views of parents and students

- enhance students' learning experiences through better use of:
  - school facilities
  - resources within the local community
  - information technology.

- provide opportunities for all students to develop responsibility.