



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

Review Report

**Riffa Views International School
Riffa – Southern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 3-5 March 2014

SP048-C1-R048

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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 six 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	Riffa Views International School														
School's type	Private														
Year of establishment	2008														
Age range of students	6-16 Years														
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	Primary				Middle				High						
	1-5				6-8				9-10						
Number of students	Boys	122	Girls	118	Total	240									
Students' social background	Most students are from high Socio-economic backgrounds														
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
	Classes	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-		
Town /Village	Riffa														
Governorate	Southern														
Number of administrative staff	11														
Number of teaching staff	48														
Curriculum	American curriculum based on American Education Reaches Out (AERO) standards for Elementary, Common Core Standards for Secondary														
Main language(s) of instruction	English														
Principal's tenure	2 years														
External assessment and examinations	Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), Measures of Academic Performance (MAP), Fountas & Pinnell														
Accreditation (if applicable)	Council of International Schools (CIS) Middle States Association (MSA)														
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	Outstanding	27			Gifted & Talented	-			Physical Disabilities	-			Learning Difficulties	8	
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a new school-wide Principal in 2012-2013. • Appointment of a new Principal in 2013-2014, giving 														

	an Elementary and a Secondary Principal.
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Table of review judgements awarded

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

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: 1 Outstanding

The school's performance is excellent in all aspects, with highly effective teaching strategies that continuously challenge and develop students' higher order thinking skills. The use of resources is excellent, including the seamless integration of IT. This results in remarkably high performance with most students achieving above age expectations. Students show exemplary behaviour, confidence, leadership and impressive independent learning skills. High quality academic support and sensitive personal guidance enables them to develop and thrive. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed to best cater for students' different needs, having a broad range of purposeful activities, trips and community links. Everything is underpinned with a high quality leadership and management structure which ensures accountability, supported by an ambitious Board of Trustees. There is a very high level of satisfaction amongst parents and students.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school's capacity to sustain performance is very strong. This is due to high quality development planning, based on comprehensive self-evaluation combined with a rigorous monitoring and accountability structure. Professional development programmes focus heavily on sharing the wealth of best practice and create a continuous learning community with teaching and learning at its heart. The Board of Trustees shares its clear and ambitious vision with all stakeholders. This gives everyone a clear sense of direction, continuity, and a high level of commitment to excellence. High targets are continuously set for both teachers and students, while providing the necessary support to help them perform above expectations. Impressive results in different examinations and regular coursework demonstrate the success of this formula.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Across the school, students' performance in Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) is exceptionally high, with most students achieving standards above their age related expectations. In English, mathematics and science a significant proportion of students are achieving above the Near East South Asia (NESAs) averages and also above the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) norms for the next grade levels. Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark assessment for reading suggests that, across the school, the performance of a significant proportion of students is exceeding their grade-level expectations. Internal assessments indicate that students' attainment is high across the school, with a significant proportion of students scoring above the expected pass rates and achieving high standards. Students' attainment in the PSAT tests and voluntarily taken International Baccalaureate (IB) Arabic Language A and B examinations is high, well above age-related curriculum expectations. This is evident when for the first time in 2012/2013, Grades 8 and 9 sat PSAT examinations, scoring above international averages in reading, writing and mathematics, and Grade 9 students sat IB Arabic, achieving levels similar to those of high performing Grade 12 students.

In their lessons, students in all grades achieve exceptionally well and work to a high standard. They consistently show a clear understanding of key scientific and mathematical concepts and an excellent grasp of Arabic and English skills. Students' clear understanding is evident from features such as their discussions, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, characterisation and enactments, as well as their application and replies to teachers' probing questions. The school uses a 'three tier teaching approach' for students in Arabic, namely 'Native', 'Non-native' and 'Heritage', where they demonstrate excellent standards. However, the standards shown by a small minority of 'Native' Arabic language students in the intermediate section are good rather than outstanding.

In lessons and in academic work, the majority of students across the school make outstanding progress. The school's records of tracking achievement over time show that a growing proportion of students are making increasingly strong progress in core subjects.

Throughout the school, students' mathematical, scientific and investigative skills are very well developed. Their Arabic and English knowledge and skills are similarly well established, supporting their rapid progress across other subjects.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Students are highly motivated and driven to succeed. They participate fully and enthusiastically in all aspects of school life, with a strong commitment to attendance and punctuality.

Students across the school demonstrate high self-confidence and readiness to take responsibility. They work together exceptionally well in lessons, and in extracurricular activities such as caring for the school garden, overseas tours and participating in Model United Nations Conferences which helps to build their skills and personal qualities. Students are expected to reflect critically upon their learning and engage in goal setting. Leadership opportunities include the student council and the Grade 5 'Red Hat Programme' which involves students in leading assemblies and offering friendship to their peers.

Students feel extremely safe and secure, reflected in exemplary behaviour and the unity shown in this diverse school community. They are empathetic and compassionate to others. Older students are sensitive to the needs of younger ones; for example, Grade 7 students routinely read to Pre-K students.

Students demonstrate an outstanding appreciation of Islamic values and Bahrain's culture, developed through citizenship lessons celebrating National events and religious festivals and trips to heritage sites. Charity fund raising and community service activities include the Terry Fox Run for Cancer Research and the Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA) to promote care for animals and making bears for special needs students at well-known special needs centres.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Teachers display very strong subject knowledge, giving clear instructions supported by well-chosen examples which facilitate learning. Incisive and challenging questioning also enables students to further their understanding and better develop their investigative, critical and analytical skills.

A wide variety of teaching strategies and resources are used to cater for students' needs and support them in achieving well in most lessons. Teachers frequently use pair and group work within practical and inquiry-based learning, which encourages and motivates students to share opinions and justify their answers. Teachers make excellent use of resources such as interactive whiteboards, presenting video clips and models to support students' learning. For example, in mathematics students use a 'math rocket' experiment to understand the concepts of a tangent. Highly effective integration of ICT enhances the quality of students' work in many subjects, for example when they create shape projects by using 'sketch-up' and 'scratch' programmes. Almost all lessons are well-planned, productive and enthusiastically delivered, producing high levels of student motivation and engagement.

Students receive high academic support throughout the school. They are provided with a variety of activities that are selected to meet their individual needs and learning styles. Achievable targets are set which offer the right levels of challenge to ensure best progress. Teachers give great attention to improving students' higher order thinking. For example, Grade 2 students successfully solve mixed multiplication and division stories in different ways, and in science students design experiments, analyse and interpreted data and present it in a suitable form.

The excellent monitoring of students' progress within lessons, including student self and pair assessment using rubrics, enables both teachers and students to fully understand the progress made in lessons. Teachers provide excellent oral and written feedback to students, outlining their next steps in learning. The use of on-going assessment results to guide planning toward providing sufficient challenge to meet all students' needs is effective. Homework tasks are skilfully used to both extend and complement class work and develop students' independent learning skills.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Curriculum delivery provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to progress to the next level of their education. The requirement for self-reflection in its implementation helps students to become resilient and thoughtful participants in their own education. For older students in particular, the adoption of IB principles prepares them well for future demands. The emphasis placed upon both Arabic, with its effective three tier approach, and upon developing strong English skills is very successful in enhancing students' access their other studies.

Frequent curriculum reviews utilising the Atlas Rubicon system enables the school to fine-tune its programmes. Analysis of standards data has led to re-mapping of some units in order to incorporate more explicit assessments and a wider range of challenges to meet students' differing needs. Recent attention has been given to enhancing the planning of links between subjects, such as Grade 2 students using a mathematical diagram to illustrate the common features of fiction and non-fiction genres. Students' understanding of rights and responsibilities is consistently promoted by activities that encourage them to demonstrate respect for themselves, others and their environment.

A wide range of sporting and creative extra-curricular activities enhances students' experiences and the wide variety of field trips, charity initiatives and educational visits makes excellent use of the local community to promote learning.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school has highly successful induction and transition programmes that enable students to both settle in quickly and progress smoothly from phase to phase. Students' academic progress and personal development are rigorously monitored, recorded, tracked and systematically analysed to set targets for each student. Individual action plans are developed for those needing specific attention or support and teachers involve all students in the goal-setting process and in completing their learner profiles. Counsellors, learning support teachers and a literacy coach help ensure that the needs of all students are successfully monitored and addressed.

The school provides extensive guidance programme to prepare students for future educational choices and career options within a global perspective. Students' concerns are dealt with confidentially and sensitively. Parents are frequently updated about their children's progress through a wide variety of regular and detailed approaches such as quarterly meetings, emails, phone calls and the very effective student-led conferences.

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students are both thorough and comprehensive. This includes promoting healthy lifestyles and eating habits, excellent levels of supervision and regular drills for evacuation. Systematic procedures are exceptionally well implemented to ensure a high quality, safe school environment conducive to optimal learning and emotional growth.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The senior leadership and staff share a common vision that provides a strong sense of direction. They vigorously pursue a philosophy of providing a quality learning experience to meet the needs of all students. Roles, responsibilities and expectations are well defined, with clear job descriptions based on the school's needs. Staff are extremely motivated in assuming their delegated responsibilities and sharing their thoughts and initiatives.

There is a comprehensive and realistic self-evaluation, referred to by the school as 'self-study', to assess its performance and identify key strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring mechanisms are highly rigorous and systematic and involve all stakeholders including the Board of Trustees. The school also enjoys a productive partnership with the International School Services (ISS) in monitoring its quality. Results of the school's self-evaluation drive the content of the well-structured and detailed strategic action plan which focuses on developing the key priority areas of standards, teaching and curriculum.

Teachers' professional development needs are identified through a combination of self-assessment and recommendations from lesson observations by school leaders. An intensive and effective programme of in-service training is offered, with strong emphasis on sharing best practices to create a continuous learning community within the school. Teachers are being effectively prepared in advance to facilitate the delivery of an IB curriculum to further challenge students. The impact of professional development programmes is closely monitored and rigorously measured.

Budgeting and resources allocation is firmly linked to priorities, with the school providing the necessary facilities to enrich students' learning and further develop their personalities. Parents' and students' views are sought through both their councils and the school's open-door policy. The school is very responsive to suggestions such as changing the food caterer and providing new afterschool activities. However, the approach to gathering the views of students and parents is mostly informal and not always systematic.

The school has varied and purposeful links with the local community, including inviting guest speakers, arranging annual field-trips and organising charitable and national events with various organisations such as the Royal Charity Association. The School's Board of Trustees is highly effective and rigorously holds the school leadership accountable for its performance. They make a valuable contribution to strategic planning and supporting the overall performance of the school.

The school's main strengths

- The excellent academic progress made by most students, supported by varied and effective teaching strategies and high quality resources
- students' exceptional behaviour, confidence and maturity combined with their well-developed independent learning and leadership skills
- the careful attention given to reviewing, developing and enriching the curriculum through purposeful activities and community links
- the highly effective and sensitive support given to students to enable them to develop and thrive both academically and personally
- the ethos of collaboration and accountability, underpinned by efficient management and effective leadership supported by a highly effective Board of Trustees which has a very clear vision for the school's development.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- spread outstanding practice amongst other schools and assume a leading role in related professional learning community.