



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews Review Report

Confidential

**Sacred Heart School
Isa Town – Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 18 - 20 March 2013

SP029-C1-R029

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The 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 ten 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		Sacred Heart											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		1948											
Age range of students		6-16 Years											
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Junior						Senior					
		1-6						7-10					
Number of students		Boys	555	Girls	674	Total		1229					
Students' social background		Students come from multi nationalities and cultures and mostly limited income families											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	-	-
Town /Village		Isa Town											
Governorate		Central											
Number of administrative staff		7											
Number of teaching staff		69											
Curriculum		English National											
Main language(s) of instruction		English											
Principal's tenure		11 years											
External assessment and examinations		International General Certificate for Secondary Education (IGCSE), Edexcel London Board Examinations Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) International Benchmark Test (IBT).											
Accreditation (if applicable)		-											
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties		
		55			80			-			47		
Major recent changes in the school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting to IGCSE. • Changes in facilities for junior section. • Increasing extra-curricular activities on Saturdays 											

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	2	2	2	2
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

The school's leadership is successful in nurturing a sense of commitment from staff and in achieving its strategic goal related to students' personal development. Most students have exemplary behaviour and moral values. Those who participate in external benchmark tests such as IGCSE and ACER IBTs attain above average results, particularly in English. However, students' achievement is too varied because teaching methods are inconsistent and too narrow in the range of strategies adopted. Although a wealth of assessment information is available for a significant number of students, the school does not use this to provide sufficiently differentiated programmes to meet their identified needs. The leadership is effective in involving staff in shaping the school's priorities. However, links between strategic planning and self-evaluation is not effective enough in bringing improvements to teaching and learning.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school's main changes in recent years are the extension to the junior-section building and the installation of sun-shades. Other changes include the increase of extra-curricular activities, the involvement of staff in decision-making and acceptance of multi-national students. Although the school's leadership is highly effective in managing students' personal development, leading teaching and learning is less effective. Most staff are involved in self-evaluation through different meetings, but consequent actions are not sufficiently rigorous. The short-term strategic planning is not effective enough in identifying how the strategic goals will be developed and actions measured. Despite being successful in collecting funds and a loan from the previous proprietor for the junior building extension, the challenges that limit the school's capacity to improve include the lack of some resources, particularly technical ones.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' attainment in 2012 IGCSE examinations in core subjects is above average. Additionally, the average performance of the Grades 3 to 10 students who took the 2012 ACER tests was strong overall and in English was well above average when compared with schools in the Middle East. However, standards in lessons and in students' written work do not reflect that attained in external examinations and benchmark tests. In internal examinations, most students attain pass rates above 60% although fewer students pass in Grades 6 and 9. Competency rates are low in senior grades, particularly in Arabic. Over the past three years, the proportion of students exceeding 80% has fluctuated between subjects and grades and shows decreasing levels in both senior English and junior mathematics and science.

Standards for the majority of students are satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, but lower in Arabic for most students who follow this course. While senior students achieve high standards in English, their standards are low in Arabic. Standards and progress in Arabic throughout the school is below expected levels in all aspects of the language. In all subjects and grades, students give close attention to handwriting and work is extremely well presented. In English, students confidently express themselves using a good range of vocabulary and senior students read aloud with fluency and expression. Although students' writing is accurate and demonstrates correct spelling and grammar usage, their creative writing is less well-developed. In mathematics, students show satisfactory basic skills and confidently use arithmetic operations to solve equations, as was seen in Grade 4 where students accurately measured and calculated the perimeters of rectangles. Students' understanding and knowledge of scientific concepts is appropriate for their age. However, their practical and investigative skills are not developed as well as they should.

Students' progress in lessons and written work, while satisfactory overall, is inconsistent across grades and subjects. It ranges from good in senior English, satisfactory in the majority of subjects, to inadequate in senior Arabic. This inconsistency reflects the varied quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. Progress is particularly limited for high achievers, mainly due to insufficient levels of challenge for these students.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Students' behaviour around the school is exemplary. They form caring friendships and their interactions demonstrate a mature respect for the views, feelings and beliefs of others. Students say they feel safe. They value and respect everyone as part of a very supportive and cohesive community. Most students are strongly committed to their school and participate actively and enthusiastically in a range of extra-curricular activities, such as clay-modelling, debates and a science exhibition. Senior students, who are appointed as captains and prefects, conscientiously monitor discipline across the school. They also contribute responsibly in the students' council, in which they confidently discuss ideas and present sketches and speeches, effectively passing valuable messages to their peers.

When given the opportunity, students work enthusiastically together. However, in less effective lessons they are given insufficient opportunities to develop their independent and collaborative working skills. Most students show a good understanding of Bahrain's heritage and culture including the values of Islam. The school enhances their knowledge through a structured curriculum, by visiting heritage sites including the museum and Aali pottery, and by celebrating special events. Students' high attendance and keenness to arrive punctually to lessons is carefully monitored and reinforced by the school's firm procedures.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most teaching engages, motivates and encourages students in their lessons. Teachers show secure knowledge of their subjects and courses, particularly in English, mathematics and science. In most lessons, teachers place sufficient emphasis on the development of understanding and basic skills as well as imparting knowledge. However, in senior Arabic lessons, this is not the case. Higher quality lessons provide opportunities for students to think critically, justify their views and develop their skills of reasoning, but these features are not widespread. Additionally, opportunities for students to discuss ideas, frame hypotheses and develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics, writing skills in languages, and practical skills in science, are limited.

In the better lessons, particularly in English, teachers demonstrate effective class management skills. However, while lessons are orderly, productivity is often less than it could be. This is because of low expectations, particularly in science, junior school mathematics and senior school Arabic and weak use of assessment information in pitching the teaching appropriately. In most lessons, teachers do not routinely use assessment of students' progress and understanding to diagnose and meet their different needs, through adjustments to their teaching. Marking of students' work is mostly cursory with limited

constructive feedback. In the majority of lessons, teachers offer sufficient challenge and support to most students to enable them make acceptable progress. However, in a significant number of lessons low expectations result in some students, notably the higher achievers, not making as much progress as they should. Too often, teachers set tasks which are focused mainly on factual recall and offered at one level for all abilities.

In general, teachers make adequate use of the limited resources such as white boards and textbooks and a few lessons are enlivened by resources such as hand-made charts, PowerPoint presentations and food ingredients. However, teachers' questions are mostly closed and not sufficient to invite extended responses from students, especially the high achieving students. In better science lessons, teachers give project work in Grades 5 and 6, and in the senior school, which meets the students' needs well. In general, homework is assigned mainly for consolidation of class learning, with little extension work and limited opportunities to develop research skills.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school provides an appropriate range of subjects and experiences to students which are based on the English National Curriculum. It offers a choice of science and commerce streams in Grades 9 and 10. However, the curriculum implementation is not sufficiently structured in order to provide effective programmes that adequately challenge high achievers and students who have difficulties. The school has systems and procedures to regularly review and modify the curriculum. However, these mainly focus on changes in text books and are not rigorous enough in improving the range and quality of students' experiences. Moreover, curriculum implementation does not sufficiently ensure that meaningful links are made between subjects in order to provide a more coherent curriculum experience for students.

Curriculum enrichment provides a good range of opportunities for students to demonstrate a strong understanding of their rights and responsibilities as members of a community, for example through the students' council and in social awareness activities, such as visiting the elderly. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities which caters for the interests of most students. This variety includes aesthetic, literary and sports activities and field trips. The curriculum is further enriched by good use of community resources and prepares students adequately for the next stage of education.

How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students are inducted well into school which helps them settle quickly and easily. The principal and class teachers carefully maintain individual logs of students' personal behaviour and overall performance, but they do not monitor students' academic progress with sufficient effect so that their learning needs can be met to a good standard. The school is not making effective use of the analysis of external examination results to provide sufficient support for students. Students are well supported and sensitively helped if they have problems. This includes counselling to resolve personal concerns, and financial support such as paying a full year fees for some students. Students also receive helpful information that enables them to make well-informed personal and educational decisions.

Pastoral support is caringly provided for students with special cases, and their personal and academic learning needs are effectively met. Parents are well informed about their children's progress, through regular parent-teacher meetings, diaries, report cards and meetings with individual teachers. Rare incidents of misbehaviour are supportively handled and cultural harmony is well promoted. A healthy and safe campus is a priority for the school and a specialist company undertakes risk assessments to ensure that students and staff are safe and secure. However, the school lacks some procedures such as an evacuation training and regular fire drills.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The leadership has established a clear vision for the school, which is shared by staff and students. The elements concerned with developing strong moral and spiritual values and responsible citizenship are promoted to great effect, but there is less emphasis placed upon academic achievement. This imbalance is reflected in the relative strength of students' personal development as opposed to their academic performance.

The school's self-evaluation is not as rigorous as it needs to be in order to have significant impact upon raising both the quality of teaching and students' performance. Senior leaders regularly monitor teaching quality and offer advice to staff, but this activity has limited impact, because subsequent professional development is not tailored to match the individual or group needs identified. 'Micro teaching', involving short demonstrations of techniques and ideas for all staff has brought about improvement, but in-house expertise is not well-utilised.

Senior staff and middle tier managers analyse students' academic performance and highlight concerns, but the actions taken to remedy weaknesses vary in effectiveness. Progress made by different cohorts of students in both internal and external tests is tracked and recorded. However, the school leadership does not give enough weight to this information as it sets its priorities for development and improvement.

Short-term strategic planning is in place and this sets out ideas for improving provision in a range of subjects and resources. The level of detail needed to provide good support for staff in implementing them and the criteria by which their impact might be measured is lacking. Leadership inspires and motivates staff to have commitment and loyalty to the school. Teachers are involved and effectively deployed to match their strengths wherever possible and, although the school is not richly resourced, there are clear links between development plans and budgeting. Staff find leadership responsive to their reasonable resource requests.

The school has few formal mechanisms for canvassing the views of parents and students on its provision, but home-school diaries and teachers themselves often act as conduits of information. A good number of links with the local community, including charity projects and business sponsorship, enhance students' learning experience.

Although the school has a management committee, which includes parent representation, arrangements for governance do not provide sufficient oversight, challenge or strategic guidance to fully support school improvement.

The school's main strengths

- Students' strong personal development, particularly their exemplary behaviour, courtesy and self-discipline
- The senior management's nurturing of a strong sense of loyalty and commitment from staff
- The support and commitment from parents which the school fosters.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise academic achievement for all groups of students
- improve teaching and learning by
 - using a wider range of teaching strategies to engage students' interest and involvement in lessons
 - using information about students' performance to help plan and deliver lessons that meet all groups' needs
 - raising teachers' expectations, particularly of higher achieving students.
- improve strategic planning by:
 - linking plans more closely to the results of rigorous self-evaluation
 - establishing how future developments will be addressed to achieve strategic goals
 - establishing clear criteria by which the impact of actions will be measured.