



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

Schools Review Unit

Review Report

Safra Primary Intermediate Girls School
Safra - Southern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 2 - 4 April 2012

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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 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		Safra Primary Intermediate Girls School															
School's type		Government															
Year of establishment		1997															
Age range of students		6-15 years															
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High							
		1-6				7-9				-							
Number of students		Boys	-	Girls	673				Total	673							
Students' social background		Most students are from middle-level income families															
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12				
	Classes	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	-	-	-				
Town /Village		Safra															
Governorate		Southern Governorate															
Number of administrative staff		16															
Number of teaching staff		77															
Curriculum		Ministry of Education (MoE)															
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic Language															
Principal's tenure		2 years															
External assessment and examinations		MoE examinations and 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			
		178				12				2				35			
Major recent changes in the school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of the school principal at the beginning of the academic year 2010-11 • Appointment of the school assistant principal at the beginning of the current academic year 2011-12 • The joining of 30 new teachers to the teaching staff in the current academic year. 															

Table of review judgments 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	-	3
Students' personal development	2	2	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	3	-	3
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	2	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	2	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	2	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 effectiveness has changed from being judged 'good' in the previous review, in March 2009, to 'satisfactory' in this one. The students' achievement and the effectiveness of teaching and learning are no better than satisfactory due to inconsistencies in the teaching methods used. The professional development programmes and projects for improving the teachers' performance in lessons are often good, but not effective enough in their impact for low-achieving students. Students' personal development, curriculum enhancement, support and guidance are all good as a result of implementing positive practices. The new senior leadership has provided a motivating school environment and is promoting the development of students' individual characteristics, such as self-confidence and self-discipline, and supporting outstanding students and those with learning difficulties.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school's capacity to improve is good and consistent with the judgement in the previous review. The strategic plan is based on priorities drawn from evaluation, most importantly improving outcomes for students by raising their academic achievement and promoting their personal characteristics. The impact of actions taken is seen, especially in improved discipline and the students' personal development. Projects to improve the performance of the school have resulted in good achievement in some lessons in Grade 1 to 3. Despite the challenges the school faces, mainly represented in the diversity of the students' cultural and social backgrounds and the differences in the teachers' skills, it has stabilised performance and overcome barriers due mainly to the alertness and efforts of the schools' renewed leadership and the support offered by the external improvement team.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Grade 9 students attained levels slightly above average in the national examinations in Arabic and mathematics in 2010 and 2011, average levels in science, and below average in English, significantly in 2010. On the other hand, students in Grade 3 and 6 attain levels that are below average in most core subjects and well below in English 2009 and 2011. These results generally reflect the students' satisfactory achievement in most lessons, but improvements are evident, especially in science from Grades 4 to 9.

The girls achieve high pass rates in the core subjects in the school and MoE examinations. Proficiency rates vary in line with the pass rates in most core subjects, especially English in Grades 7 to 9. Students achieve well in just less than half the lessons, while in the rest the teaching is not as effective, especially in supporting the achievement of the low-achieving students. The majority of students gain good mathematics skills from Grades 1 to 6, but, less so in Grades 7 to 9. Most students have good Arabic skills, except in writing, where they are satisfactory, while their proficiency in basic skills in English and science is adequate.

Pass rates in MoE examinations over three consecutive years from 2008 to 2011 have improved in most core subjects in Grades 1 to 3 and 7 to 9, but remained stable in Grades 4 to 6. The majority of students show good progress in Arabic as a result of effective teaching and the diversity of strategies and activities used. However, their progress in the rest of the routine lessons and in written work is still only satisfactory, because of the variance in teachers' proper consideration of the students' individual differences, apart from the more able.

Outstanding students are progressing well according to their abilities as a result of the activities that challenge their abilities and the effectiveness of the enrichment programmes offered. Their participation in indoor and outdoor contests, such as the popular poetry contest, helps them to achieve well. In addition, students with learning difficulties are also showing good progress for their abilities in the special education programme, due to the effective support they receive. Low-achieving students, however, are not progressing at a similar level in most lessons, because of a lack of differentiated teaching support.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Most students contribute enthusiastically to school life through their effective participation in programmes and extra-curricular activities, competitions and school committees, such as the, 'Safra Coffee Shop' and 'Safra's Friends'. These increase the students' self-confidence and open up so many opportunities to promote their personal characteristics on a basis of mutual respect and care. Students' participation in lessons is good when teaching methods encourage them to assume leadership roles.

Most students are responsible and committed to coming to school on time and abide by the school's regulations. Their admiration for their teachers is based on the attention they receive from them. Almost all students have good relationships with each other, due to the efforts that have been put into promoting good behaviour. Students feel a sense of personal security in school. Unacceptable behaviours such as fighting and uttering inappropriate words are now scarce with just a few students.

The students show a deep understanding of Islamic values and Bahraini culture, through their participation in programmes and activities, such as the morning line-up and the 'Hamad Girls Group'. They take part in national festivals like 'The fourth popular poetry festival', in which the students have shown commitment to these values and given them a greater sense of patriotism.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and study material, especially apparent in the good and excellent lessons. These lessons have effective management, clear instructions, organised planning and diverse teaching strategies. Here teaching ensures the participation of most students and takes their individual differences into consideration and challenging their abilities. However, over half the lessons are not like this. The main focus in these is often based on closed questioning of the class, which does not develop the students' higher level thinking skills or challenge their abilities properly. Such teaching does not raise students' achievement well enough.

Teachers employ different educational methods, for example the electronic projector, the personal blackboard, educational cards and models that enrich the lessons and motivate students towards learning. Where teaching is good, students gain different skills such as analysis, interpretation, criticism and an understanding of the concepts and knowledge, particularly in English and Arabic. Cooperative learning is implemented in most lessons; however its effect is no better than satisfactory because planning and implementation are inconsistent in terms of assigning appropriate roles and responsibilities.

Most teachers manage their lessons in an organised manner, where the majority of students are motivated and encouraged to contribute effectively through different reinforcement methods, such as the gift box, which has helped increase their enthusiasm and excitement. On the other hand, time management in some lessons is not good enough, because too much time is spent on conducting introductory activities, at the expense of time for students to perform different activities that ensure the accomplishment of their learning goals.

Students are assigned homework, which is followed up with semi- regular marking and feedback. However, the same homework is often given to the whole class, without any consideration of the students' different levels of ability and understanding. Different assessment methods such as oral questions and written activities are implemented in most lessons, although the main emphasis is on using oral questions that do not accurately diagnose the students' levels of understanding and grasp of concepts. Results of assessments are not used in supporting low-achieving students, which has led to inconsistent improvement in students' achievement.

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

Grade: 2 Satisfactory

The school analyses text books, and presents suggestions to teachers about how to develop their use, for example the mathematics books for Grades 4 to 9. It enriches the curriculum through offering several programmes and extra-curricular activities, such as 'Future Pioneers' that nurtures outstanding and talented students, and the special education programme that targets students with learning difficulties. Links between subjects are clear in Grades 1 to 3, but less evident in Grades 4 to 9. Here, subject content is linked to real life situations by showing that basic skills are crucial for the next educational stages, especially in lessons in Grade 9.

The school promotes a sense of patriotism and develops students' understanding of their duties and rights through engaging them in the morning line-up programmes, organising

events such as 'My School is Always Clean' and participating in competitions and festivals such as 'Love Poems for Busalman'. Heritage and cultural corners contain ancient artefacts, such as 'The Millstone', and the 'Eco Friends' signboards encourage maintaining the environment. Different school committees such as the 'Young Counsellor' and the 'Student Teacher' have been set up and made students more disciplined and committed to their values. They are incredibly devoted to doing their homework. The environment is enriched by displaying students' work and their achievements, which has motivated most of them to learn more.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

The school inducts students well by showing them around and introducing them to expectations in a celebration at the beginning of the year. This makes them feel welcome and stable. The school prepares students for the next stage of education by familiarising them with requirements and through the 'Steps towards the Future Programme' that helps them choose the right path. It assesses students' personal needs and meets them by providing basic requirements such as school uniform.

Students with physical disabilities have an environment that suits their needs, creating a positive impact on their learning and comfort. Intensive lessons and special programmes for students with learning difficulties and for those who are talented are effective. These bring about improvements in students' achievement and personal development. However, meeting the educational needs of low-achieving students, especially during lessons, is not as good, due to the inconsistent quality of teaching in lessons.

Guidance programmes, such as 'Good behaviour for better learning', and opportunities for students to discuss their problems and express their opinions in counselling sessions and the 'Dear' programme are good. These have had a positive effect in eliminating some unacceptable behaviour.

The school regularly communicates with parents who, like their children, are well satisfied with the school. Safety and security assessments are in place, but improvements are needed in the transport arrangements.

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's vision is based on improving achievement and behaviour and recent efforts are bringing results. This vision has been drafted in a participatory manner and has been translated into many educational practices in lessons. The strategic plan includes goals and procedures and its impact is evident in the achieved improvements, most prominently in the students' personal development. The school's management is fully aware of strengths and areas where the school needs to improve and is active in driving change. The self-assessment committee spreads awareness about development needs and actions based on clear assessment mechanisms. However, taking advantage of the results of these assessments and ensuring their impact in some lessons is insufficient.

Senior staff inspire people through encouraging their initiatives and honouring the teachers who work well. The middle management continuously follows up on the practices in lessons and helps teachers to organise different workshops, which has motivated most of them towards development. However, there is much to do and the rate at which change can be expected has to be moderated. Several professional development programmes, such as 'Outstanding Teaching Strategies' have helped improve performance levels.

The school deploys its financial resources and facilities to support students well. The use made of the electronic classroom, the educational resource rooms and the science laboratories is good. Opinions of students and parents are heard, through the students' and parents' council, where the school tries to implement their suggestions as much as possible, for example the weekly publication by the more senior students. The school communicates with different authorities in the local community such as the Municipality of the Southern Governorate in order to organise various events and the "Dear" project in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior. The aim of this is to increase the students' behavioural awareness. The school, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, also implements several programmes to enhance performance, such as the school performance improvement programme which includes a number of projects. Their impact on improving the educational processes is so far satisfactory.

The school's main strengths

- Strategic planning and leadership that is based on accurate school self-evaluation and focused on professional development programmes to raise the achievement levels and improve the personal characteristics of students
- Students' personal development and providing a safe and secure environment for them
- Offering support to different groups of students out of lessons, through programmes that target outstanding and talented students as well as students with learning difficulties
- Providing a school environment that motivates students to learn, in addition to extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum and the experiences of students.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- develop teaching and learning strategies, so as to accelerate:
 - raising the students' achievement in the core subjects to a greater degree, taking students' individual differences into consideration in lessons and homework
 - developing the students' higher level thinking skills and challenging their abilities
 - linking subjects, especially in Grades 4 to 9
 - the use of results of evaluation in meeting the different educational needs of students in lessons
- offer help and support to low-achieving students in lessons and school programmes
- monitor the influence of the professional development programmes on teachers' performance in lessons to a greater degree and particularly the impact on students' learning.