



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

Schools Review Unit

Review Report

St Christopher's School
Infant and Junior School
Muqabah – Northern Governorate
Senior School - Isa Town - Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 26 February - 1 March 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 five 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	St Christopher's School												
School's type	Private												
Year of establishment	1961												
Age range of students	5-18 years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	Primary				Middle				High				
	1-6				7-11				12-13				
	Key Stage (KS) 1: Years 1&2; KS2: Years 3-6; KS3: Years 7-9; KS4: Years 10&11; KS5: Years 12&13.												
Number of students	Boys	918	Girls	892	Total	1810							
Students' social background	Middle to upper socio-economic backgrounds.												
Classes per grade	School	Primary						Senior					
	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12+
	Classes	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	17
Town / Village	Muqabah - Isa Town												
Governorate	Northern - Central												
Number of administrative staff	55												
Number of teaching staff	158												
Curriculum	English National Curriculum / International Baccalaureate (IB) / Ministry of Education (MoE) for Arabic, Islamic studies & citizenship.												
Main language(s) of instruction	English - Arabic (For native speakers)												
Principal's tenure	16 years												
External assessment and examination	QCA KS1, QCA KS2, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Science Education (IGCSE), GCE A level, International Baccalaureate (IB).												
Accreditation (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSME Accreditation (November 2011) • The school received a British Schools Overseas 												

	(BSO) inspection report in November 2011 (UK/Ofsted Quality Assured inspection programme).			
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	Outstanding	Gifted & Talented	Physical Disabilities	Learning Difficulties
	-	-	-	1
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the IB Diploma programme. 			

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 overall effectiveness of St Christopher's School is outstanding as its performance is exceptional across its work. Students' achievement is significantly high as a result of teaching and learning of outstanding quality. The students' outstanding personal development is demonstrated through their confidence, maturity and capacity to operate as autonomous learners, although they need to extend further their understanding of Bahraini culture and heritage. Extremely high quality academic and personal guidance is provided. The curriculum is enriched to meet the different needs and interests of students in lessons and with a remarkably wide range of extra-curricular activities. Leadership, management and governance are outstanding because of the great commitment, teamwork and excellent systematic arrangements for distributed leadership which focuses on improvement. Almost all students and their parents are highly satisfied with the school.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The exceptionally effective school leaders and staff have a well-informed and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their rigorous implementation of comprehensive self-evaluation structures, together with thorough strategic and operational action planning at all levels, very accurately identify areas for development and guide prioritised school improvement. The school successfully strives to enhance its outstanding record of consistently high standards of student performance with close monitoring and analysis of students' progress and achievement through group target setting. The staff appraisal process is closely linked to continuous professional development and is well monitored to assess its impact. The significant contribution made by the Board of Governors to strategic planning further increases the school's capacity to sustain and improve its outstanding performance.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The progress made by students at all levels is outstanding. Levels of attainment in the English National Curriculum assessments and external examinations, including the GCSE and GCE Advanced levels are consistently high compared with UK averages. Students' performance in the IB Diploma is well above the worldwide average. Significant proportions of students reach the highest levels in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and the school outperforms comparable schools in the number of students attaining the top grades at GCSE, GCE Advanced level and in the IB. Using standardised external measures, the school is able to show positive value-added at all key stages. Many students exceed their predicted scores in standardised assessments and examinations. However, in the senior school, attainment in chemistry falls below the very high levels in physics and biology.

In lessons and in their work, students make outstanding progress and take great pride in what they produce. They are developing higher order thinking skills due to the expectations they have about reflecting on their work and probing ideas. In Arabic, students are making good progress in listening, speaking and reading skills; however, their writing skills are less well developed. In English, students' comprehension skills are exceptional and their command of critical analysis and interpretation is well defined. They are able to analyse and infer from poems and novels using outstanding communication skills.

In mathematics, students skilfully apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in challenging open-ended problem solving and in enquiry-based activities. Primary students perform basic arithmetic operations with a high degree of confidence. Senior school students are very secure when dealing with mathematical and statistical data analysis and presentation. They work very confidently on more difficult concepts, such as with third degree equations and cumulative frequency tables, with good understanding of various graphical forms.

In science, students' scientific enquiry skills are exceptionally well developed. Primary students work confidently with apparatus and use scientific concepts to create simple structures like parachutes and loud speakers. They draw precise conclusions from information, make accurate predictions, frame simple hypotheses and design simple experiments. Senior school students show a high degree of practical skills with sound understanding of validity, reliability, accuracy and precision in experimentation. Their excellent research skills enable them to gain a good understanding of key scientific concepts.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Students have a strong commitment to attending school and lessons on time, as well as completing their tasks within deadlines. They participate eagerly in all aspects of school life. They are confident learners who handle responsibility well, for example, when safely conducting experiments, or enthusiastically organising community service and other extra-curricular activities.

Students are highly self-motivated and work well independently, confidently selecting activities and showing initiative in lessons. Their strong leadership skills are evident as members of the student councils, where members responsibly communicate students' ideas and concerns to the school's management.

Behaviour and students' manners are exceptionally good. Students enjoy excellent relations with each others and with their teachers. They demonstrate an exemplary code of conduct that is strongly emphasised by the school. This is reflected in how effectively they work together in cooperative groups and listen respectfully to each other's ideas and points of view. Students feel extremely safe and secure at school, due both to their good nature and the school's highly effective policy for handling rare incidents of misbehaviour.

Knowledge and understanding of Bahrain's heritage and Islamic values is developing well. Students wholeheartedly participate in many national events and festivals and study Bahrain within the curriculum. However, there is a desire to extend their learning of Arabic language and increase their contribution to otherwise excellent community cohesion.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Teachers' mastery of their subjects is well-reflected in their enthusiasm and dedication to broaden students' understanding and knowledge, using clear instructions and different examples. In addition, teachers use a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies that motivate and encourage students to be active learners in lessons. The impact is considerable on students' abilities to develop understanding and gain skills from the different sources of knowledge they access.

Teachers' careful analysis of students' achievement leads to a perceptive understanding of students' learning needs and to comprehensive planning to meet those needs by using a range of activities. These effectively challenge students to stretch their abilities while also providing support to help them make continuous progress. Teachers effectively support students as they design science experiments and ensure fair tests. They also bring out students' reasoning, critical and analytical skills through rich, open and probing questions that are posed in many English and mathematics lessons.

Time is used effectively to engage students in the variety of activities that are introduced during lessons, ensuring excellent student involvement and development of independent learning skills. The confident use of different strategies, such as paired and group work, brain storming, and motivating games including crosswords for vocabulary and floating fractions in mathematics, facilitate students' learning. Resources are also very effectively used in lessons as teachers strive to use the interactive whiteboards effectively, as well as presenting their materials using video clips and models, for example creating a clay model of the heart in science. However, students' IT skills are not consistently promoted during lessons within all subjects.

A clear homework policy ensures primary students are given highly appropriate activities in reading, mathematics and spelling with careful monitoring through homework journals. For senior students, homework is challenging and frequently utilises research-based tasks. Students are continuously encouraged to reflect on the quality of their work with a strong emphasis on them becoming confident autonomous learners; this is successfully developed through assessment methods that focus on peer and self-assessment using checklists and rubrics to measure their progress towards set targets. Assessment for learning techniques utilise oral and written activities that are levelled according to students' different abilities. Teachers regularly mark students' written work and, with encouraging and constructive feedback, this helps students to improve their work considerably.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school's broad curriculum is very well organised. All subjects follow structured schemes of work which progressively build students' knowledge and skills. Those students requiring additional help are given the support they need and the most able have extension work available to provide further challenges.

The school effectively revises and improves curriculum content in response to staff discussions, analyses of performance and most recently, the excellent 'Student Voice' initiative. Work from different subjects is sometimes combined to add coherence to students' learning, but these links are not fully exploited in all teachers' planning.

Students are successfully encouraged to be useful members of both the school and the global community. They undertake responsibilities with maturity and develop their own links with a wide range of charities such as 'The Migrant Workers Protection Society' as part of their impressive community service work. The curriculum is significantly enriched by a skilfully planned programme of special events and the broad range of international educational visits raises students' sporting and foreign language skills, and heightens their awareness of the lives and needs of others. The school environment is conducive to effective learning; notably the attractive entrance areas and flowers, which set the tone for students on arrival.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Students are guided and supported very well. The school runs highly successful induction procedures by providing opportunities for students and their parents to meet teachers and become familiar with the school so that they settle in quickly.

Outstanding use of data is made within the well-structured, rigorous monitoring and analysis of students' academic progress and personal development. This has a significant impact on achievement overall. It also provides sensitive support to students with special educational needs, successfully helping them to progress. Pastoral staff have weekly sessions with these students to agree and monitor clear individual targets. However, sharing academic targets with all students by subject teachers is less consistent.

The school's 'open-door' policy ensures that students are given excellent opportunities to seek support at any time. Heads of year, teachers and tutors help students solve any problems. Staff ensure that they carry out this work with great friendliness and concern for privacy, including parents when appropriate. Extensive guidance is given to students applying to university. Consultation meetings are held together with parents. Assistance in preparing personal resumes is provided and several universities visit the school to give information and advice about applications.

Parents are very well informed about their children's progress through a wide variety of links, including reports, email and portal. Comprehensive procedures are well implemented

and ensure high quality, efficiently-maintained, carefully-supervised healthy and safe environments.

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 far-sighted vision of the principal and inspiring leadership at all levels most successfully cultivate a shared sense of direction, enthusiasm and dedication amongst the staff, within this thriving 'Learning 2 Learn' community. The well-embedded teamwork throughout the school ensures sharply-focussed attention on enhancing students' outstanding personal development and academic achievement.

Policies and procedures are comprehensive, well-developed and ensure a high degree of consistency across phases, subjects and year levels. Through exceptionally rigorous self-evaluation systems, staff are involved in monitoring and analysing both the school's provision and students' achievement and in successfully planning continuous improvement across the school. The comprehensive strategic planning and exceedingly thorough school-wide operational action planning provide guidance, structure and well-monitored opportunities for trialling innovative practices, such as student feedback to teachers on lessons and teaching. The appraisal process is extremely thorough, involving leaders at all levels. The wide range of monitoring activities includes lesson observations as well as work scrutiny, learning environment overviews and interviews with students. Appraisal is linked closely with targeted and continuous professional development, with close monitoring of its impact on improving teaching and learning. This leads to clearly identified areas for development and frequent sharing of good practice by the well-qualified and experienced staff, for example in finding effective ways to include self and peer assessment by students in lessons.

Highly effective budget planning and resource allocation provide a well-maintained and very stimulating learning environment, which is used most effectively by staff and students. A wide range of methods are used to seek students' and parents' feedback. The school responds exceptionally well to concerns and suggestions. Parents respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities to be involved in school life. They assist and present content in lessons, join field trips and attend functions. The school has developed exceedingly effective

community links to enhance students' learning, not only through motivating educational visits and visitors, but also by student-initiated community service at all year levels.

The Board of Governors has a wide range of professional expertise and includes elected parent representatives. It makes a significant contribution to strategic guidance, financial planning and policy approval. Regular Board meetings and reports provide informed support and ensure a high level of accountability by the leadership team for students' continuing exceptional standards of personal and academic achievement.

The school's main strengths

- The ethos of care and respect which is clearly reflected in the commitment to, enthusiasm and dedication for, St. Christopher's School, by members of the school community
- The excellent arrangements for leadership, management and governance, which ensure accountability and strategic planning linked to highly effective implementation of policies, which are firmly focused on improvement
- The students' high achievement as a result of teaching and learning of outstanding quality
- The students' outstanding personal development, notably their confidence, maturity and capacity to operate as independent, autonomous learners
- The high quality of academic and personal guidance and support for students throughout the school and especially for those with identified learning needs
- The careful attention given to review and enrichment of the curriculum to meet the different needs and interests of students, both in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- continue to endeavour to improve and extend understanding of Bahraini culture and heritage
- enhance effective use of IT by all students to further their autonomous learning in all subjects
- adopt a more structured approach to planning links between subjects to enhance the coherence of students' learning experiences.