



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

Schools Review Unit

Review Report

Um Salama Intermediate Girls School
Al-Manama - Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of Review: 8-10 October 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 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		Um Salama Intermediate Girls School															
School's type		Government															
Year of establishment		1982															
Age range of students		13-15 years															
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High							
		-				7-9				-							
Number of students		Boys	-	Girls	397				Total	397							
Students' social background		Most students come from average income families															
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12				
	Classes	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	4	-	-	-				
Town /Village		AL-Manama															
Governorate		Capital															
Number of administrative staff		7 administrative and 5 technicians															
Number of teaching staff		51															
Curriculum		Ministry of Education (MoE)															
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic															
Principal's tenure		One year															
External assessment and examinations		NAQQAET and MoE															
Accreditation (if applicable)		-															
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding				Gifted & Talented				Physical Disabilities				Learning Difficulties			
		90				38				-				33			

Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New appointments in the past academic year 2011-12:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a school principal- a principal assistant- two coordinators for departments of Arabic and religious education- 11 teachers and 3 technicians- a social worker- teaching French for Grade 8, from the academic year 2011-12.
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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
Students' personal development	-	1	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	-	1	-	1
The quality of the curriculum implementation	-	1	-	1
The quality of support and guidance for students	-	1	-	1
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	-	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 overall performance has changed from good in the previous review in 2009 to outstanding in this one. Students and their parents appreciate the efforts of the senior leadership in implementing planning according to the school's priorities. The training and development team has contributed to effective teaching and learning that has made optimal use of the available educational resources. Students' individual differences are well considered with excellent development of their higher order thinking skills. The school environment is attractive and enhances the students' experiences and interests such as those in information technology. All of this had a positive impact on the students' academic achievement, their mastery of basic skills, and their ability to learn individually and take on responsibility and leadership roles.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school's capacity to improve has changed from good to outstanding in the current review. This is attributed to the school's leadership and determination to improve in order to achieve the school's vision. The strategic plan is based on an accurate and comprehensive self-assessment with goals set according to improvement priorities. The plan includes accurate performance indicators which enable close monitoring of practices and improvements. It contributes to a distinguished curriculum enhancement programme, excellent support for the students' different needs and to projects that promote good values, leadership skills and high rates of progress and academic success. Notably, the school achieved first place among the intermediate schools in the Ministry of Education examinations in 2011-12 and high results in the national examinations. Continuous improvement and the effective management of changes are established.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school has achieved significant progress in the national examinations during the three years from 2010 to 2012. Grade 9 students attained high performance levels well above the national average in English over the three years, in Arabic in 2011 and 2012, and in mathematics in 2012. Their levels were above the national average in science and in mathematics in 2010 and 2011. These high results reflect the students' achievement and clear progress in lessons.

The students achieved high pass rates in the Ministry of Education examinations that reached 99.4% in the academic year 2011-12. These rates are commensurate with proficiency rates in most of core subjects, especially those of Grade 9 in English, however, these rates slightly decreased in mathematics. Achievement is high in outstanding and good lessons, which account for most of the lessons. This is due to effective teaching and to the variety of learning methods used. The students' high levels of knowledge and their competent basic skills help them to learn more, especially in acquiring speaking and writing skills in both Arabic and English. Furthermore, students acquire good skills in mathematics, such as those related to whole numbers and scientific skills of enquiry and design modules.

Students achieved well as shown in the pass rates in all the core subjects in the three consecutive years from 2010 to 2012. Most students make good progress in line with their abilities in lessons and written work, which is observed in their achievement of the lesson goals. This is a result of the great care shown towards them and represented in the various activities that challenge their abilities and develop their higher order thinking skills. Students use activity notebooks and the summary notes well.

Outstanding and talented students make considerable progress because of the effective enrichment activities in lessons and extra-curricular activities, such as 'Um Salama' competition for distinctive work in science and mathematics. Additionally, the students came in second place in an English competition using 'Active Voting' in the academic year 2011-12. Students with learning difficulties, especially non-Arabic speakers and low achieving students make outstanding progress due to the school's effective programmes in and out of lessons.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Most students take part in school life and show high levels of self-confidence, awareness and independence. This is due to the effectiveness of the support students receive, the opportunities they have to freely express their opinions and take responsibility. They take many leadership roles in different school committees and events such as the students' council, the 'Together to Develop Talent' committee and the 'electronic learning team'. Additionally, students do voluntary work such as helping the school workers. They participate in the 'Girls' Scout Team' and in the morning assembly, which positively reflects on their outstanding development.

Most students work well together on both the academic and social levels and show an excellent understanding of each other feelings and beliefs. They show mutual respect to their teachers. They demonstrate good behaviour, enabling them to effectively participate in various projects, such as 'You are Modern' and 'My Decorum'. Additionally, the students feel safe, follow rules and regulations and regularly attend school and lessons on time.

Most students show good understanding of Islamic values and of Bahraini traditions and culture because of their effective participation in religious occasions, national celebrations and projects. Furthermore, field trips to the Bahraini Museum and participation in preparing cultural corners at school positively reflect on the students' behaviour and in asserting the Bahraini identity.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Teaching and learning in most lessons are highly effective. This is reflected in the teachers' familiarity with the study materials. The teachers use effective strategies such as brain storming and learning by reading to help students acquire knowledge, concepts and skills at high levels in all core subjects. Most teachers used various educational materials in a productive way, such as the PowerPoint presentations, educational cards and websites. This strongly contributes to increasing the students' motivation to participate and learn. Cooperative learning methods provide students with opportunities to take different roles, where the students are at the core of the educational process, thus enhancing their motivation towards self-learning.

Lessons are effectively managed to ensure the achievement of the lessons' objectives. Additionally, the teachers effectively use introductory and 'ice-breaker' activities, and provide various curricular activities based on students' levels of understanding and their prior learning experience. These contribute to increasing the students' opportunities to participate and engage effectively in the learning situations. Furthermore, students receive support through various methods such as receiving the 'I'm creative today' cards and being placed on 'The Tree of Distinction'. Good support is invariably provided for most students during individual and group activities.

Most teachers develop students' higher order thinking skills by providing them with different opportunities to use analytical and critical thinking, justifying answers, explaining results and deducing the rules and lessons' objectives. The students' abilities are challenged through verbal questions and differential written individual and group activities, which effectively contribute to enhancing students' mental capacities.

Student learning is enriched by assigning them with tasks, homework, research and reports, in addition to following up through regular marking. Additionally, encouragement of good performance and providing constructive critical feedback, improves the quality of learning. In addition, Um Salama's electronic blog is effectively used, which has a good impact on improving students' performance.

Teachers make sure students learn and achieve the lesson goals through using effective various evaluation techniques by observation, verbal questions, differentiated individual activities and the practical implementation of knowledge. The findings of evaluation as well as those from diagnostic testing are effectively used in lesson planning to meet students' educational needs.

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

Grade: 1 Outstanding

Special experiences that suit the students' different educational needs and meet their interests are regularly provided. 'French Club', 'English Club', 'Globe' and the 'Computer Club', as well as cultural weeks and enrichment programmes for talented and outstanding students, such as the 'Mathematics Genius' and the 'Treasure Challenge', enrich learning. Furthermore, the school organises field trips, to certain educational places such as a fish farm, which enhance the students' experiences and facilitate their acquisition of life skills and information technology. These have contributed to their achievement of first place ranking in the 'Best Scientific Experiment' in the year 2011-12 and 'The Most Beautiful Garden' competitions for three consecutive years 2010 to 2012.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and analysed. Links between subjects are made to develop the students' learning of the basic skills. Moreover, the curriculum is simplified by providing an 'educational package' for science and social studies. Special enrichment and remedial activities are provided for the basic subjects, including scientific experiments.

The school promotes students' citizenship and improves their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. This is seen in the students' participation in morning assembly and in the 'My Country Evolves Through My Education' festival. The 'Class Agreement' between the teachers and students is an enhancing feature.

The school provides a stimulating and attractive environment through explanatory boards, by dedicating school corners for self-learning and by celebrating students' achievements.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 1 Outstanding

The school inducts new students by organising a meeting for students and their parents and familiarising them with the school. This contributes to their feeling safe and stable at school. Grade 9 students are well prepared for the next educational stage through educational lectures, brochures, vocational guidance programmes and visits to nearby schools.

The school prepares remedial programmes for students with learning difficulties such as 'My notes are the secret of my success' project, intensive lessons for low achieving students and enrichment programmes for outstanding students such as 'Treasures of my country'. Special attention is given to talented students who participate in competitions such as 'Bahrain in the eyes of talented students' and 'Talent Formula'. The school provides care for non-native Arabic speakers, which contributes to their progress at all levels.

Parents are informed of their children's progress through open days, extended office hours and educational meetings, thus enabling parents to be aware of their children's personal and academic progress. It promotes health education by preparing materials, assessing risks and maintaining safety facilities. The school has received a silver medal for its very good performance in health and safety.

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 school has a shared vision that students recite in the morning line up. The vision aims at distinction, creativity, and loyalty to achieve high quality through effective community work. This is reflected in the determination of all the school members to achieve the desired goals. The schools' strategic plan focuses on the improvement priorities which are accurately identified, being based on the findings of the comprehensive self-assessment by the school and by applying the distinguished Bahraini school project. The strategic plan includes success standards and accurate performance indicators. These are effectively translated into practice. The school's improvement team follows up with further evaluation, submits improvement recommendations and holds discussions on performance under the supervision of an external support team, thus positively contributing to the students' outstanding progress and achievement.

The school adopts a performance management system which includes evaluating teachers' performance through class visits. The school identifies the teachers' professional needs and meets them by using model lessons, sharing micro-teaching techniques and holding training workshops through the improvement team on topics such as, 'Preparing Electronic Tests', 'The New Teacher Package', 'Differentiated Teaching' and 'Effective Classroom Management'. The school administration encourages its members to take part in school committees and councils, which positively contribute to high levels of commitment to all the tasks assigned to them.

The school's educational facilities, such as the learning resource centre, are effectively used and motivate students. The school communicates with students' and their parents well and seeks their opinions on the regularly provided services through Um Salama's e-blog and responds to many of their suggestions, such as honouring distinguished teachers and changing the canteen entrepreneur. Furthermore, students participate in events such as the World Health Day for the elderly under the motto 'Forever Indebted to You', which gained the students' and their parents' satisfaction.

The school has enhanced the students' learning experiences by communicating effectively with the local community through trips, visits and various programmes. These have included a trip to the petro-chemical companies and a visit to the Amal Institution, in addition to the cooperation with the Traffic Directorate on the traffic week under the slogan 'Let us Work Together to Limit Traffic Accidents'. These enrich and enhance the students' learning experiences deploying different sources.

The school's main strengths

- Students' high attainment in the MoE and national examinations, that reflect their real standard
- Effective use of teaching and learning strategies, deployment of educational resources to ensure active outstanding teaching and learning
- Strategic planning based on the findings of the accurate self-assessment according to the school work priorities
- An accurate performance management system to assess and meet the teachers' professional needs
- The students' acceptance of responsibility and leadership roles in a stimulating environment
- The broad and effective methods to communicate with students and their parents, including the use of information technology to keep them updated with their students' progress.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- spread best practices at the school and across the educational institutions in Bahrain to ensure on-going outstanding performance to achieve further distinction.