



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

Schools Review Unit Review Report

**Um Ayman Primary Girls School
Manama - Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 26 - 28 September 2011

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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 eight 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 Ayman Primary Girls School													
School's type		Government School													
Year of establishment		1961													
Age range of students		6 - 12 years													
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High					
		1 - 6				-				-					
Number of students		Boys		-		Girls		349		Total		349			
Students' social background		The students have a range of economic backgrounds, from limited to good, with low prior educational achievement. One third of the students have Arabic as a second language.													
Classes per grade		Grade		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		Classes		2	2	2	2	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Town /Village		Manama													
Governorate		Capital													
Number of administrative staff		12													
Number of teaching staff		38													
Curriculum		Ministry of Education													
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic													
Principal's tenure		One year													
External assessment and examination		QAAET National Examinations													
Accreditation (if applicable)		-													

Number of students in the following categories	Outstanding	Gifted & Talented	Physical Disabilities	Learning Difficulties
	127	31	-	20
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management changed in the academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11 • More than one third of the school's staff changed in the current academic year 2011-12 • The school joined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) projects and the Performance Management System (PMS) program in academic year 2010-2011 			

Table of review judgements 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
Students' personal development	2	-	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	3	-	-	3
The quality of the curriculum implementation	2	-	-	2
The quality of support and guidance for students	2	-	-	2
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	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 went from good in the last review visit in November 2008 to satisfactory. This is attributed to a number of factors; namely, the low impact of professional, managerial and educational development programmes on teachers' improvement due to the instability of teaching staff. This is clearly reflected in the students' level of academic achievement and in teaching and learning.

Overall, the students' level of academic achievement and the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning are satisfactory, while the remaining review aspects are good. The school's recent strategic planning is built on good self-evaluation of most of its performance. Improvement of non-native students' levels of achievement has pleased parents and students.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school's capacity to develop and improve went from outstanding to good since the last review visit in November 2008. Capacity to improve is good because the school managers believe in development and work according to a strategy based on the accurate diagnosis of the school situation and focuses on the priorities of improvement and development.. This judgement is attributed to similar factors as for the drop in overall effectiveness. This affects the school's efforts to realize more progress, in spite of the school being aware of its main strengths and areas for development. Also, the impact of the strategic plan is reflected in the school's overall performance, especially in the students' personal development and effective guidance provided.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students achieved above average success rates in the school's examinations 2010/2011. These are consistent with the proficiency rates in the first cycle, particularly in English and mathematics in Grades 1 and 2. However, results varied in the second cycle, especially in Arabic and science in Grades 5 and 6. These high rates reflect students' actual standards in outstanding and good lessons, due to the use of various teaching strategies and taking different students' needs into account. They do not reach the same level in the satisfactory lessons, which represent more than half of the core subjects lessons. Written works of most students is satisfactory also. The majority of the second cycle students can use reading skills and oral expressions in both English and Arabic. The fluency of students who do not have Arabic as their first language increases when they move to the next grade as a result of effective support and guidance. However, the level of fluency is less in language relating to scientific concepts and numeracy skills.

Students achieve good progress in most core subjects in the first cycle, but slightly less in English in Grade 3. The success rates of the second cycle range between 82% to 100%. The majority of students achieve a good progress level when moving from one cycle to another, especially in Arabic and English due to the effectiveness of the remedial and enrichment programmes provided.

Students' progress is obvious in good and outstanding lessons, due to differentiated activities that cater well for students' needs. This is not so evident in the majority of other lessons and in their written work, which is just satisfactory. Most of the students make good progress according to their abilities in Grades 4 and 5 but less so in Grade 6.

Outstanding and gifted students make faster academic progress than students with learning difficulties, however, they do not progress as much as they might due to the limited challenge, and few differentiated activities.

The National Examinations results, for the years 2009 to 2011 for both cycles were above national average in most core subjects and the second cycle students outperformed the first cycle in English and mathematics.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Attendance records show that most students have above average attendance and good punctuality. Most students participate enthusiastically in a number of internal and external events and various school committees and activities. For example, they participate in the morning assemblies and municipal council, which contribute to the development of their personal skills and confidence.

Students take on leadership roles and work together through a variety of opportunities. These include the students' council, the scout team and 'the little nurse and micro teachers' programme where students perform these roles in group activities in some lessons. This contributes to enhancing their ability to take responsibility and expressing their opinions.

There is reciprocal respect and harmony between the different groups while working together in lessons and activities. Students behave responsibly and with self-confidence which is clear from the school's cleanliness and maintenance.

A good understanding of Bahrain's culture and heritage prevails as students take part in national events. The school reinforces a sense of belonging through adopting citizenship achievements as a monthly praised feature. Trips to local monuments contribute to in simplifying the concept of citizenship and reinforcing it, mainly to the new non-native students.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a range of strengths and weaknesses. Most teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain concepts and choose good examples to reinforce them. They are good at answering students' questions. However they are less good at using the assessments of students' prior learning to meet their differing needs. Most lessons start on time. Class management is effective, but time management is less so when balancing different activities within lessons. Lesson objectives are shared with the students so that they know the direction that the lesson is taking as well as what it is they are to learn. Assessment methods vary considerably and in about half the lessons it is effective in pointing students in the right direction for their next steps in learning. However, in the majority of the other lessons assessment is merely focusing on direct oral questions which are answered

collectively by students, along with limited feedback to students about the points that need to be improved, which effected their progress.

Educational strategies used in the good and outstanding lessons, such as brainstorming, learning through games and projects, and the use of interactive boards, leads to involving students increasing their enthusiasm and participation. In other lessons, about half, the teacher is too much the centre of the process and participation by students is low. This engages students far less, particularly the low achievers. It hinders their acquisition of basic skills, mainly in mathematics and science. Students' abilities are not challenged often enough although they are given opportunities to develop their higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, critical thinking and composition, as seen when composing a story in one of the Arabic lessons. Most questions focus on lower level thinking skills, such as memory recall and retrieval. Students are given homework where individual differences are frequently taken into account in these assignments. However, the feedback on some homework assignments is not sufficiently clear as it does not clarify what the students should do to improve and make more rapid progress.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The school seeks to develop the curriculum beyond the limits of the prescribed textbook. Teachers provide enrichment activities in the majority of lessons. Extra-curricular activities support the curriculum and meet the students' different needs, such as participation in the 'UNESCO School Project' that enhances the school environment and the 'Reading for All' project. Additionally students participate in competitions such as short story compositions, learning the Holy Qur'an and the Child Art Exhibition in which students gained advanced commendations.

Although the school buildings are old, the environment is used to enrich the curriculum by celebrating students' work by posting wall displays and setting up educational corners in classrooms, such as Um Ayman's gifted pearl corner. These contribute to creating a stimulating environment. Links between subjects and life have been implemented well in the first cycle, but not to the same degree in the second.

Students are prepared well for the following phase of education by organising visits to the neighbouring intermediate schools and stressing the students' acquisition of the necessary basic competencies, such as reading and oral expression in Arabic and English. The curriculum reinforces students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities by

focusing on 'one human value every month' and getting students accustomed to practising this during lessons, the morning assembly and extra-curricular programs.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

The school's well-planned induction programme is effective and includes meetings to introduce students to school staff, rules and facilities. An entertainment day for first graders, along with their parents, help students to get to know each other quickly.

Students' personal needs are diagnosed and met by the provision of moral education and kindness. Priority is given to ensuring appropriate behaviour and discipline and giving advice to students to help them overcome any problems. Students' academic needs are met according to assessment results and diagnostic tests. Non- native students with learning difficulties are supported well so that they make good progress appropriate to their abilities. The special needs programme, remedial lessons and activity classes are effective as is the reinforcement programme for more able students. Class activities though are not differentiated enough.

The environment is safe and healthy. Security and safety aspects are checked, such as fire extinguishers, evacuation procedures and canteen cleanliness. Good medical support is provided by the nurse.

Parents praise the school's efforts to communicate with them about their daughters' academic and personal development. Channels include parents' meetings, open days and a schedule of weekly visits. A number of the school staff referred to some parents' low response to invitations, which they feel decreases the benefit of being an open school.

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 has a shared vision focused on achievement, which is currently satisfactory. This is translated in the educational practices inside and outside classes, where impact is seen in the students' behaviour and learning. Teaching staff are involved in the development

process. They have contributed to the strategic plan which is based upon the results of the diagnosis of the school situation using SWOT analysis. The plan has sharply focused priorities. The positive impact of the strategic plan is enhancing the school's strengths, particularly with respect to the improvement of students who do not have Arabic as their first language.

The Self-Evaluation Committee assesses different aspects of the school performance based on comprehensive and accurate self-evaluation mechanisms and in collaboration with the school staff and parents. Stakeholders take part in assessing educational performance through meetings, the open day, class visits and visiting the school. The results of these assessments effectively inform planning which is used to improve the aspects that need development, particularly those related to curricular reinforcement and enrichment, personal development and school environment.

The school inspires all the school's administrative and teaching staff by applying effective motivation approaches such as their participation in decision-making and encouraging them to organize training workshops, which enhanced their enthusiasm and motivation.

Teachers' professional competencies programmes vary and have focused on improving aspects reported in the previous review report. As a result, the school held a number of workshops on how to build behavioural objectives, the development of higher-order thinking skills and differentiated teaching. However, the instability of the school's administrative and teaching staff limited the improvement in these aspects and the role of middle management was diminished.

Although the school's building is old and lacks modern facilities, it effectively deploys its financial resources and educational facilities to enhance learning. There is high usage of the scientific laboratory, the e. learning class and learning resource centre.

The school seeks and responds to students' and parents' suggestions by responding to the parents' and students' councils. It seeks their views during open days and educational meetings about strategy planning and the school's mission and vision. The students and parents express their satisfaction with this.

The school's main strengths

- Students show mutual respect for each other and their teachers
- Students take part enthusiastically in the school committees and extra-curricular activities
- The curriculum is enhanced with various experiences that are consistent with the students' educational needs, particularly students who do not have Arabic as their first language
- Accurate self-evaluation of the school's performance
- Strategic planning that is based on comprehensive analysis and focuses on improvement according to priorities
- Use of the school's financial resources and educational facilities to promote learning.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise achievement by developing teaching and learning strategies to include the following:
 - use assessment effectively to meet the different students' educational needs through the presentation of well-pitched lessons and homework activities
 - develop the students' skills of analysis and enquiry so as to challenge their abilities more, especially in the second cycle
 - make more links between subjects, especially in the second cycle, so that students can see relevance across the curriculum and apply key skills across different subjects
- assess teachers' professional competencies to a greater extent, particularly the new teachers and develop systematic programmes for improving teaching
- enhance the school's basic subject departments through the role of middle management.