



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews Review Report

**Al Hekma International School
Sanad – Capital Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 15-17 April 2019
SP027-C3-R005

Introduction

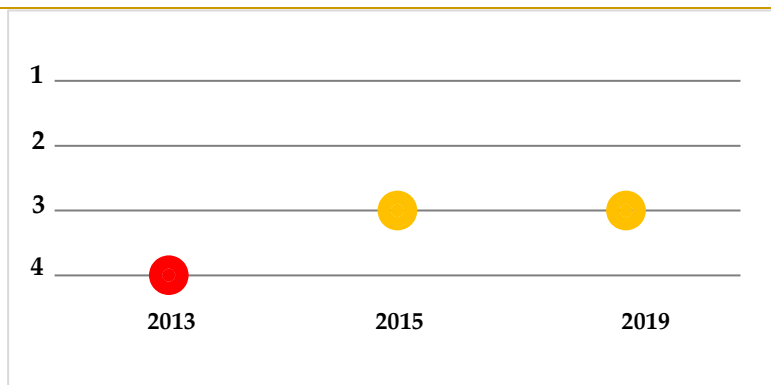
The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews (DPS), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of eight reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons and other activities, scrutinised students' written work and analysed the school's performance data and other documents. They met with staff, teachers, students and parents. This Report summarises their findings and recommendations.

Summary of review judgements

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Aspect		Grade			
		Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Quality of outcomes	Academic achievement	3	3	3	3
	Personal development and social responsibility	2	2	2	2
Quality of processes	Teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3	3
	Empowerment and meeting special needs	3	3	3	3
Quality assurance of outcomes and processes	Leadership, management and governance	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve		3			
The school's overall effectiveness		3			

The chart demonstrates the school's overall effectiveness throughout the last three reviews.



School Report

□ School's overall effectiveness 'Satisfactory'

Judgement justifications

- Students' progress in lessons is inconsistent, being best in Middle School, particularly in mathematics. However, in both Arabic and English lessons students' language skills are less developed, particularly their extended writing skills.
- Teachers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies in lessons. However, support and challenges provided vary in catering for students' different needs, and there are inconsistencies in managing learning time and using assessment results effectively to support students, particularly low achievers, affecting lessons' productivity.
- The school has taken positive steps in the moderation of assessment. However, assessment is still not sufficiently rigorous in raising students' levels to the required standards and to be consistently aligned to the implemented curriculum.
- Most students show positive attitudes and self-confidence towards learning. They participate eagerly in the various extracurricular activities which develop their talents and raise their awareness of global issues. They respect each other and show their commitment to local and global values and acceptance of each other despite their different backgrounds.
- The school has a system to identify students' categories and provide relevant support programmes. However, the impact of support provided to the low achievers varies.
- The school has a comprehensive self-evaluation and results are linked clearly with the strategic plan. Professional development programmes are offered based on teachers' needs. However, the overall impact of these procedures is inconsistent on school's performance.

Main positive features

- Students' self-confidence, their embracement of citizenship values, their awareness of global issues and exposure to different cultures.
- Enrichment of students' experiences, talents and innovation through a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Recommendations

- Raise students' academic achievement by implementing effective teaching and learning strategies that focus on:
 - developing students' understanding and skills, particularly in English and Arabic

- productive use of learning time
- effective use of assessment methods to challenge and support students, particularly the low achievers.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
 - monitoring the impact of professional development to support its effective implementation in the class to contribute to the raising of standards
 - moderating assessments so that they are more rigorous and better aligned to the relevant curriculum standards.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the academic support programmes provided, to meet the needs of the different categories of students, particularly the low achievers.

□ Capacity to improve ‘Satisfactory’

Judgement justifications

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school maintains its satisfactory overall performance, while students’ personal development and social responsibility has improved to be good in the current review. • The strategic and improvement plans have clear key performance indicators and are linked to the results of the self-evaluation. The departmental action plans are aligned to the strategic priorities. However, the rigorousness of class | <p>observation varies, which affects the accuracy of self-evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgements reached by the review team differ by two grades from the judgements given by the school in the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF). • The school continues to raise students’ standards in English and Arabic and to ensure a greater impact of professional development programmes on actual classroom practices. |
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Quality of outcomes

□ Academic achievement 'Satisfactory'

Judgement justifications

- In the 2017-2018 internal examinations, students achieved high pass rates in all core subjects, reaching 100% in most subjects. However, there are inconsistencies in the rigour of marking these examinations. Students achieved high and very high proficiency rates in Elementary School, where proficiency rates range from 65% to 100%, the highest being in Grade 1 English and the lowest in Grade 2 in the same subject. In Middle School, rates range between 54% in Grade 6 science and 76% in Grade 8 mathematics. High School students achieved high proficiency rates in all core subjects, ranging from 53% to 92%.
 - In the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), students who participated achieved higher than the international average score by 61 points.
 - In the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Grade 4 students who participated achieved average levels in mathematics and science, while in Grade 8, their performance was high in both subjects.
 - In the 2017-2018 Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) results, students achieved high rates of 83% in English reading and writing (ERW), but in mathematics their achievement was weak at 33%.
 - The high pass and proficiency rates reflect the standards of students in only the good lessons, being mostly focused in mathematics and in some science lessons.
- However, students' standards are inconsistent in more than half of the lessons, particularly in Arabic and English.
- Students acquire appropriate English skills such as reading and analysing the content of reading texts. In Arabic, the better students are able to read aloud in Elementary School, analyse poems in Middle School and understand types of literary texts with critical criticism in High School. Extended writing skills in both languages are less developed in lessons.
 - Most students acquire good mathematical skills, such as comparing numbers, addition and multiplication that enable them to solve mathematical equations and to recognise trigonometric functions.
 - In science, the majority of students in Middle School acquire good scientific concepts and knowledge, such as their knowledge of the components of the atmosphere, while their acquisition in Elementary and High Schools varies, such as the knowledge of terrain and natural environments and transverse and longitudinal waves.
 - Over the academic years of 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 students achieved steady and high pass rates in core subjects, while their progress in most lessons and written work varied, particularly in Elementary and High Schools.
 - Students make better progress in Middle School and outstanding students progress

well in most lessons, as do the non-native speakers of Arabic in the programme dedicated to them. However, the low achieving students make less progress in and out of lessons due to the inconsistent support provided to them.

- Students acquire appropriate learning skills in most lessons, such as searching

the internet to support their own learning, problem-solving and transforming statistics into mathematics graphs, proposing solutions for some environmental problems, the use of scientific experimentation and critical thinking for interplanetary comparison in science classes.

Areas for improvement

- Students' standards, and their acquisition of basic skills in the less effective lessons.
- Extended writing skills with expression in both Arabic and English.
- Students' progress according to their different abilities in lessons, written work, and school programmes, particularly for the low achievers.

□ Personal development & social responsibility 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Students are self-disciplined, well-behaved in and out of the classroom and are considerate of each other despite their different backgrounds. Behavioural incidents are minimal, which enhances students' sense of safety and security in school.
- Students have good awareness of Bahrain's culture and heritage and organise events such as 'Bahrain is the Ship of Benevolence'. They also show awareness of local and global cultures and values through organising and participating in many charitable events such as 'AlHekma Ramadan Basket' for orphans and 'Young Leaders Conference' forum for youngster to discuss global issues.
- Most students are self-confident and participate enthusiastically in class activities and discussions. They have positive attitudes towards learning. In the good lessons, students assume leadership roles like 'little teacher'. However, such opportunities are provided to a lesser extent in the rest of the lessons.
- Students lead the Students' Council activities effectively, such as planning for the summer camp and designing students' jackets. Students also participate in high profile activities such as the 'Future Arab Leaders' forum and 'Junior Ambassadors Conference'.
- Students work well with each other in pairs and groups during lessons, showing good collaborative and discussion skills, exchanging views and cooperating to

achieve goals. Their communication skills are demonstrated well in activities such as Model United Nations 'MUN', 'Trade Quest' and 'Toast Master'.

- Students show good interest in their physical health, personal appearance and the school environment. They participate in many health and environmental programmes and projects, like Bapco's bi-annual 'Environment and Health Safety Week' and Bahrain National Gas Company's 'Safety, Health and Environment Week'.
- As part of the 'Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics'

(STEAM) project, students participate in the Perma-Culture Educational Garden and Greenhouse, which enhances their awareness of environment matters.

- Students show their sense of competitiveness and innovation through participating in various events, achieving positions such as the first three places in Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad's Competition for Innovation and Artificial Intelligence, 'Hack Fest', and participating in the 'I Camp Injaz' programme for entrepreneurial skills. However, their competitiveness and innovation are less evident in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students assuming more leadership roles in lessons.
- Students' sense of competitiveness and innovation in lessons.

Quality of processes

□ Teaching, learning & assessment 'Satisfactory'

Judgement justifications

- Teachers use a range of teaching and learning strategies such as brain storming, discussion and questions for learning. These enable the majority of students to progress and achieve the lessons' objectives, particularly in mathematics.
- In the good lessons, students are encouraged to work collaboratively to investigate mathematical theories and scientific definitions, particularly in Middle School. Educational resources are used adequately to maintain the students' understanding, like samples of rocks, bulbs and measuring cylinders. However, the effectiveness of these strategies and resources is inconsistent in the majority of the observed lessons across the schools.
- Teachers use digital empowerment tools sufficiently, such as Kahoot, Class Dojo and Quizzlet. Students use their own devices as part of the 'blended learning' approach which intends to establish a balance between students using their books and searching the internet to gain and save the information easily.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour well in most of the lessons and they motivate them adequately through several encouragement strategies. Teachers give clear instructions and ensure suitable transitions between the lesson objectives that enable the majority of students to progress within lessons. Time management is less effective, with some lessons having long introductions and activities that take more time than required, and other lessons having less time for assessment. This all affects productivity.
- Formative assessments are used appropriately in lessons. However, teachers rarely provide constructive feedback to support the low achieving students and the more able students tend to dominate group assessment activities. The accuracy of marking internal assessments is inconsistent, and questions are not used well to challenge high achieving students to make further progress except in mathematics where assessment is well structured and marked, particularly in Middle School.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers tend to assign unified tasks to students, and opportunities for students to justify, reason and interpret varies. This affects students' development of higher order thinking skills, except in a few lessons where the more able students are given extra challenging tasks like concluding the rectangle perimeter law, the rule to solve quadratic equations and investigating the reason why Venus is hotter than Mercury. In most English and Arabic lessons, tasks given are mostly direct and differentiation is not effective in catering for students' different abilities, particularly for the low achievers.

Areas for improvement

- Effective use of assessment to provide feedback, and the quality of internal assessments and marking.
- Using learning time more effectively.
- Differentiation to support the low achieving students and challenge the more able ones, especially in Arabic and English.

□ Empowerment & meeting needs 'Satisfactory'

Judgement justifications

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school identifies the different categories of students, mainly the low achievers. Non-native speakers of Arabic are supported well in their special classes and programme. However, a significant number of students with learning difficulties are not clearly recognised and the impact of individual plans is still not clearly evident on their progress.• Support to the low achieving students includes pull-out sessions, assistance during breaks and after school tuition. This has an appropriate impact on their progress. High achieving students are provided with opportunities to support their peers, and benefit from 'Khan Academy'.• The school inducts new students well, and positive behaviour is promoted effectively by sensitive care and counselling on different topics such as 'Tolerance and Coexistence' and 'Cyber-bullying'. Their good personal development is supported by programmes such as 'Good Touch Bad Touch' and other initiatives including the 'Student of the Month' award. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school enriches most students' experiences and creativity through a range of extracurricular activities such as drama, horse riding, chess club, Go Green and social committees. Other activities include the STEAM project, 'Bahrain Young Entrepreneurs' and the 'Junior Ambassadors Conference'. Trips are also organised to places such as 'The National Charter Monument' and Bahrain Fort.• Students are supported in moving to the next cycle through programmes around what it means to be a teenager, and guest speakers from universities in Bahrain and abroad to help students decide on career choices.• The school provides a safe environment through monitoring safety issues and the maintenance of the buildings. Fire drills and evacuations are conducted and students are closely monitored during arrival and dismissal times. Medical care is provided by the nurse, as well as providing workshops such as 'anti-smoking' and 'road safety'. |
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Areas for improvement

- Systems to identify and better support students with different abilities, especially the low achievers and those who have learning difficulties.

Quality assurance of outcomes and processes

□ Leadership, management and governance ‘Satisfactory’

Judgement justifications

- The school carries out self-evaluation on regular basis which includes several surveys among stakeholders, analysis of examination results, feedback from external consultants, the previous recommendations of BQA and curriculum reviews. However, the rigorousness of evaluating the process of teaching and teaching varies, particularly in assessing the impact of teachers’ practices on students’ progress and development of basic skills.
- The school’s strategic planning and improvement plans are linked to the results of the self-evaluation and are based on identified work priorities. The departmental action plans are aligned to the strategic priorities. The school plans have clear key performance indicators, proper monitoring mechanisms and are systematically updated. However, the impact of such planning and monitoring on school’s performance is inconsistent. The school has systems in place to monitor performance through the ‘For all Rubrics’ tracking system. Although there is moderation of examinations and assessment, it is still not consistently aligned with the curriculum standards.
- The school’s senior leadership team successfully encourages staff to work towards the identified three main objectives: ‘effective differentiation’, ‘blended learning’ and ‘successful personal development’. There is a well-understood system in place to identify individual teachers’ needs, provide professional training and monitor its impact. Teachers are appreciated for their performance through awarding certificates and various celebrations.
- The senior leaders conduct systematic class observations and provide verbal and written feedback to teachers. However, observations vary in their rigour. Regular staff meetings are held, and teachers are encouraged to share best practices within and across the school departments.
- A range of professional development opportunities are planned based on individual teachers’ needs and are provided both internally and externally to all teachers. These include differentiation, blended learning and flipped classroom techniques. However, the impact of these sessions on the performance of teachers is inconsistent, particularly in Arabic and English across the school.
- The leadership ensures availability and good use of learning resources and facilities. There is good integration of technology in teaching across the school and the science and computer laboratories are well equipped.
- The leadership motivates staff, which impacts positively on their commitment and willingness to improve. There is trust

amongst the staff, resulting in a high staff retention rate.

- The school has developed good links with the local community through educational visits to local organisations such as 'BanaGas' and 'Bapco'. Students participate in inter-school competitions and charitable programmes, which have a positive impact on developing their leadership skills.

- The Boards of Directors and Advisors meet periodically and there is respect between the Board members and the school's leadership. Their roles are separate and well understood. The Board of Directors monitors the school's performance, contribute to future plans and provides strategic direction to the school's leadership. It holds the senior leaders accountable for the school's performance and students' welfare.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring the impact of professional development programmes to support the effective implementation in lessons, particularly in Arabic and English.
- The effectiveness of the moderation of examinations and assessments to better align them with the implemented curriculum standards.

Appendix 1: Characteristics of the school

Name of the school (Arabic)	مدرسة الحكمة الدولية												
Name of the school (English)	Al Hekma International School												
Year of establishment	1995												
Address	Building 1962, Road 4363, Block 743												
City / Town / Governorate	Sanad / Capital												
School's telephone	17620820	-			Fax			17624800					
School's e-mail	Info@alhekma.com												
School's website	www.alhekma.com												
Age range of students	6 to 18 years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)	Primary			Middle					High				
	1-5			6-8					9-12				
Number of Students	Boys	365			Girls	321			Total	686			
Students' social/ economical background	Most students are from average income backgrounds												
Classes per grade in Primary and Intermediate Stages	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1
Number of administrative staff	38												
Number of teaching staff	73												
Curriculum	American curriculum. The Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for religion, Arabic social studies, civics and Arabic.												
Main language(s) of instruction	English, Arabic												
External assessment and examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). • PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). • SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test). 												

<p>Accreditation (if applicable)</p>	<p>Middle States Association (MSA) from 1996 until 2022 North Central Association for Accreditation (NCA) from May 2012 through to 2021 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)</p>
<p>Major recent changes in the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New appointments in 2018-2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an Assistant Principal for Middle School, and Elementary Academic Supervisor. • Introduction of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – bring your own device programme (BYOD) for Grades 4 to 12 to support blended learning – greenhouse and permaculture education garden – implementation of ‘For all Rubrics’ tracking and monitoring system.