



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

Review Report

**Abdul Rahman Kanoo International School
Salmabad – Central Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 31 March – 2 April 2014

SP051-C1-R051

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Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews

The Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews (DPS) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) 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 DPS is responsible for:

- evaluating and reporting on the quality of provision in all private schools and kindergartens
- establishing success measures
- spreading best practice
- making recommendations for private 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 private 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 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 | | Abdul Rahman Kanoo International School (ARKIS) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| School's type | | Private | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Year of establishment | | 1997 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age range of students | | 6–18 Years | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Grades (e.g. 1 to 12) | | Primary | | | | Middle | | | | High | | | |
| | | 1 - 5 | | | | 6 - 8 | | | | 9 - 12 | | | |
| Number of students | | Boys | 934 | Girls | 826 | Total | | | 1760 | | | | |
| Students' social background | | Most are from average income backgrounds | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Classes per grade | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| | Classes | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Town /Village | | Salmabad | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Governorate | | Central | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of administrative staff | | 90 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of teaching staff | | 134 teachers and 6 assistant teachers | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Curriculum | | Cambridge Primary and Secondary Programmes for Grades 1-8. International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) for Grades 9-10. Advance Subsidiary level for Grades 11-12. International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP) for Grades 11-12. Lebanese Curriculum for Arabic in all grades, MoE for Islamic and social studies and citizenship in all grades. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Main language(s) of instruction | | English and Arabic | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Principal's tenure | | 16 Years | | | | | | | | | | | |
| External assessment and examinations | | Primary Checkpoint Grade 5, Cambridge Checkpoint Grade 8, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) Grade 10, International Baccalaureate and AS Grade 12. | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Accreditation (if applicable) | Council of International Schools (CIS) Leiden, Netherlands & New England association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) USA. | | | |
| Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification | Outstanding | Gifted & Talented | Physical Disabilities | Learning Difficulties |
| | 595 | - | 34 | 58 |
| Major recent changes in the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of new leadership staff in 2013-14: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Head of High school – Head of School Development • Introduction of Rubicon Atlas Software and the Digital Campus (DC) portal in 2013-14. | | | |

Table of review judgements awarded

| Aspect | Grade: Description | | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| The school's overall effectiveness | 3: Satisfactory | | | |
| The school's capacity to improve | 3: Satisfactory | | | |
| | Elementary / Primary | Middle / Intermediate | High / Secondary | Overall |
| Students' academic achievement | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Students' personal development | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| The quality of the curriculum implementation | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality of support and guidance for students | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

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

Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is attributed to the inconsistent achievement in external assessments, where a significant number of students across the school are not progressing well and low achieving students need further support. In less effective lessons the approach is teacher-centred, limiting student interaction and hindering the development of their inquiry, analytical and problem-solving skills. In the best lessons students make good progress and most have well developed English language skills. Students' good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute to their learning. The curriculum is broad and well-organised, and the school provides a range of extracurricular activities and programmes that develop students' varied experiences. Students are well supported when they have personal problems, in a friendly environment for physically disabled students.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The senior leadership team is enthusiastic about the development of the school, resulting in the school recently gaining international accreditation and the introduction of the Advance Subsidiary Level "AS" curriculum to further meet students' needs and parents aspirations. However, strategic planning is not well informed by rigorous self-evaluation, which does not prioritise goals and actions effectively. A wide range of workshops are enthusiastically provided through the professional development (PD) department and teachers are effectively deployed with useful support given. However, these programmes are not effective enough to consistently and effectively impact on classroom practices. The school still faces other challenges, including the increasing turnover of teachers, raising students' academic achievement and improving the school's averages in relevance to external benchmarks.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' attainment in external assessments is inconsistent. The performance of Grade 5 and Grade 8 students in the Cambridge Checkpoints are stronger in science within overall satisfactory outcomes. In the IGCSE, standards are higher in languages with a significant proportion of students gaining Grades B and C. However, the school's A* to C averages are well below respective worldwide averages, being drawn down by weaker results in the sciences, though with adequate performance overall. In the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), overall pass rates are consistently high, being better than the worldwide averages. Even so, these rates show a steady decline since 2010. Grade averages for the majority of the IB students are stronger than the overall pass rates. Students demonstrate high standards in some IB subjects such as Arabic, A1 and A2 Standard Level(SL). In English A2 SL, Mathematics SL and Biology Higher Level (HL) and SL, results are above average. As a result, students' overall attainment in IB is satisfactory. In internal examinations, across the school, students attain high pass rates. Additionally, the proportion of students securing more than 80% marks is high in primary school but declines in the middle and high schools, particularly in science.

In the elementary school, standards attained by the majority of students in English and science lessons are above average. In Grade 1 English, students are skilled in understanding instructions and they spell complex words. By Grade 3 students can read poems well, showing good levels of understanding. In science, most students demonstrate an appropriate understanding of key concepts. However, in Arabic and mathematics lessons students' standards are broadly in line with age-related expectations. In the middle school, the majority of students perform very well in science, for example demonstrating a good understanding of vertebrates and invertebrates, properties of magnets, and factors affecting the rate of chemical reaction. In high school, students' standards and progress in lessons are better in English. However, in Grades 9 and 11 a significant number of students are not performing well enough in science lessons due to low expectations and less developed standards.

Lesson observation and scrutiny of students' written work show that overall progress is satisfactory across the school. The majority of students develop good English skills in both elementary and high school. However, a significant proportion of low achieving students are not progressing well in lessons, and a minority of middle and high school students are not effectively developing their inquiry, analytical and problem-solving skills.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Students attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. They express a good sense of safety and security, which contributes to their positive attitudes towards learning and good behaviour across the school. They exhibit great respect for Islamic values and have a clear understanding of the culture and the national heritage of Bahrain. Students participate enthusiastically in school life, particularly outside lessons and in a variety of extra-curricular activities. For example, they work collaboratively by organising events like National Day celebrations, the ARKIS carnival, Walkathon and fund raising for charity.

Students in Grades 6 to 10 are keenly involved in a wide range of activities as they compete to gain points toward the Abdul Rahman Kanoo Award (AKA). High school students are very involved in the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) programme and conduct various activities to help people overseas, which contribute effectively to their sense of community service, self-confidence, local and global awareness. Students use the TEDx video software to spread their ideas on general issues to the public. Senior students enjoy leadership roles as members of the Students' Council. However, primary students participate less, with fewer opportunities available to them. Similarly, in less effective lessons students' skills in working independently and taking responsibility are not sufficiently well developed as a few opportunities are provided to them.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and set clear lesson objectives. The learning environment and rapport between the students and teachers are positive. In the best Arabic lessons, effective starter activities secure good levels of comprehension and engagement, Arabic language is skilfully used in its Standard Arabic form, throughout lessons, and in general most teachers manage classes well. Opportunities for collaboration enable students to be critical and debate their findings with their peers, particularly in some mathematics and science lessons. In a Grade 11 English lesson, the notion of stereotyping in advertising came to life as students explored good quality authentic material, including video-bites, enabling them to analyse the subject matter and draw their own conclusions.

In the Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System (UCMAS) lessons, students enjoy high levels of challenge with tasks including the use of abacus, flashcards, songs and mime; as a result most students make good progress. Resources are used in many lessons, but they are not always accurately aligned to students' abilities or learning styles.

Students are regularly encouraged, motivated and praised when answering open-ended and closed questions which secure high levels of engagement. However, in most lessons the support provided to students is inconsistent across the schools and affects their level of understanding and development of skills, particularly low achievers. The least effective lessons are often teacher-led with limited interaction, resulting in the slow progress of most students, with opportunities for analysis and critical thinking being limited in the majority of lessons observed.

Strategies utilized to meet the needs of both high and low achievers and challenge their different abilities are often inconsistent. High achievers are often provided with extension activities but low achievers are not always given adequate time to think and work. Homework is set centrally and is available remotely to both parents and students on the Digital Campus, reinforcing topics covered in lessons. The school tracks students' progress through regular assessment. Students' work is marked regularly and comments from teachers usually include praise and scores, with both students and teachers using examination boards' rubrics as benchmarks. Teachers' verbal feedback is regularly given during lessons, usually directed to the whole class. Written feedback in notebooks offers adequate advice on how students can improve their work.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The curriculum is broad and well-organised, being regularly reviewed to meet the needs and aspirations of most students and parents. Through continuous improvement within the curriculum, the school recently introduced AS level courses instead of the school certificate to provide a valid and systematic benchmark to better prepare Grades 11 and 12 students for their next stage of education. Developments are the result of effective procedures to evaluate curriculum implementation and are supported by action plans that focus mostly on low achieving students. However, programmes to challenge the more able students need further development.

The learning environment is enriched in most classrooms, particularly in the elementary school, with displays to celebrate students' work. There is a good range of high quality accommodation, including the well-resourced science and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) laboratories and libraries. Students' appreciation of their rights and responsibilities is well developed. The CAS programme involves the whole school community, with charity work aiming to raise money for the less fortunate, particularly in Africa. Students enthusiastically participate in school and Bahrain-wide events. These include sports events, conferences and the Model United Nations (MUN). All these enrich school life and help develop students' confidence and self-esteem.

Although the linking of subjects is a strength of the elementary curriculum, this is not so across the whole school.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

Newly-joined students receive effective induction, including instructions, a tour and a good pairing system that helps them to settle quickly. Students in Grades 2, 6 and 9 receive guidance at the beginning of the academic year for their current stage of education.

The school provides students with additional good quality support, both academically and personally, through after-school programmes. Each year two orphan students are accepted and get fee exemptions. The school uses the Digital Campus (DC) programme to electronically track both academic and personal progress, though it is not yet fully effective.

The school's external links and interventions provide strong support for students with special educational needs, with a friendly environment provided for physically disabled students. Many students turn to supervisors to solve personal problems. This sensitive support is highly appreciated by students. There are many communication methods with parents to inform them about their children's progress, including SMS, diaries and the DC. Parents also regularly receive progress cards that include comments about students' behaviour.

The school provides a healthy and safe environment. Risk assessment checks are in place. However, shaded areas need to be increased. The school conducts regular evacuation drills and fire extinguishers are updated and sufficient.

Leadership, management and governance

- How effective are leadership, management and governance in promoting high achievement, strong personal development and school improvement?**

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school has a clear and comprehensive management structure containing an overview of the different aspects. The senior leadership team is dedicated to the school, its community and is enthusiastic about its development. The school's vision rightly focuses on student attainment and values, and is shared by all stakeholders. Leadership inspires and motivates staff, helping to create a family atmosphere across the school. Job descriptions for leaders and teachers have clear guiding responsibilities which support the delegation of responsibilities.

Whole-school development planning is improving due to support from the accreditation body and the school development department. However, strategic planning is still not sufficiently informed by rigorous self-evaluation of all aspects, and currently lacks prioritised goals and actions, timelines and effective monitoring processes. Wide-ranging workshops are enthusiastically provided through the PD department. However, programmes are not effective enough to impact consistently on classroom practices. Well-structured performance management procedures successfully involve heads and deputies of departments in formal lesson observations, with oversight by subject coordinators. Teachers are effectively deployed with useful support given.

Budgeting is focussed on providing almost all the teaching resources needed by staff. Appropriately, high priority is given to the integration of information technology to support learning. The attractive campus and displays provide a motivating learning environment.

The school responds promptly and positively to parents' comments and suggestions. It seeks the views of parents through the Parents Teachers Association. However, many students, including members of the Student's Council, feel that their views after being listened to by the management are not sufficiently well acted upon. Good links with the local community enhance older students' experiences, including visiting and helping the elderly in senior citizens home and even families in need, locally and overseas. A highly worthwhile charity programme sponsors orphans each year.

The Board clearly understands and fulfils its advisory role. The Principal is effectively held to account for the school's performance through regular meetings to discuss the school's performance. The proprietor, as Chair of the Board, is committed to and effective in providing strategic guidance in securing the school's general development.

The school's main strengths

- Students are responsible, well-mannered and have good understanding of Bahraini heritage and the values of Islam
- The curriculum is broad, well-organised and regularly reviewed
- Students are sensitively supported when they face personal problems and the school provides a friendly environment for physically disabled students.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise students' academic achievement, with more focus on understanding and development of scientific inquiry-based skills
- review professional development programmes to ensure their impact on students' academic achievement
- implement effective teaching and learning strategies that ensure:
 - providing effective challenge to students of all abilities, and further support to low achievers
 - developing students' critical thinking and problem solving skills
 - using assessment for learning effectively and utilising its results to inform teaching.