



Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Kumon Bahrain
Mahooz
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 22-25 May 2016

VO034-C3-R035

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA), conducted this review over five days by a team of five reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and met with learners, parents, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of Kumon was judged as outstanding, as were the aspects of its provision except leadership and management that was judged as good.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to maintain its performance.

Grading scale

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Outstanding (1)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Outstanding (1)
Quality of programmes	Outstanding (1)
Quality of support and guidance	Outstanding (1)
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding (1)
Capacity to improve	Outstanding (1)
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding (1)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The overall effectiveness of Kumon Bahrain is outstanding, as are all the aspects of its provision. Most learners gain highly effective skills and knowledge in English and mathematics and the vast majority of learners make outstanding progress from their entry levels. Learners develop effective self-learning skills through repeated and systematic study methods, completing a given set of worksheets at home each day that gradually develop critical thinking skills and enhance their performance at school, as is evident from the sessions observed and the feedback received from parents.

Learners benefit from the comprehensive support and guidance they receive from highly competent class managers and assistants, who use their thorough understanding of the Kumon approach to manage sessions and provide feedback to learners on a one-to-one basis, enabling learners to become self-dependent. Class managers continuously update parents on the performance of their children. Prior to the commencement of a programme, Kumon staff provide informative orientation programme to parents about the Kumon concept and methodology; these are also printed in the parents' guide and answer book. Kumon offers a progressive range of English and mathematics programmes for learners, from pre-school to university entrance level, with the aim of fostering self-learning skills that meet parents' and learners' needs. Parents and learners are extremely satisfied with the programmes offered at Kumon, as shown by their feedback.

Kumon has a well-defined strategic plan which focuses on improving learners' skills and knowledge in line with Kumon international standards. The institute uses the Kumon standard operations manual and procedures to guide its daily operations; this includes very rigorous assessment procedures and effective monitoring of learners' achievement and progress. Kumon has a highly structured organisation and sufficient highly qualified and trained staff who suit the nature of the provision and meet its aims.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Kumon Bahrain has an outstanding capacity to improve the quality of its provision. The leadership and management have a very effective approach for driving continuous improvement and action planning. Kumon has a highly developed and effective strategic plan, with challenging targets that are closely monitored by the top management to ensure sustainable improvement. The institute continues to initiate improvement, such as by introducing a new Kumon students' information system (K-SIS) to replace the current database F3 system. This will facilitate more effective monitoring of learners' achievements and progress, and can quickly generate comprehensive reports about individual learners. Learners' success rates across both programmes over the past three years have been maintained at a high level and are steady. Many learners register for continued study at the higher levels and progress very well, so enrolment over the past three years has almost doubled.

The management maintains highly effective quality assurance system, with critical and on-going self-assessments. Internal quality worksheets such as the guide worksheet were recently updated, further improving lesson observation procedures. Quality is guided and supported from the Kumon Europe and Africa (KEA) office in the UK.

As per Kumon international standards, the institute recruits highly qualified staff and continuously monitors their performance and provides them with excellent development opportunities. The physical and human resources are sufficient to drive the institute's improvement plans. Kumon plans to expand to a fourth branch in the coming year.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Learners' achievement at Kumon is outstanding. Most of them gain very effective skills and knowledge in both English and mathematics. They develop effective self-learning skills that help them with their school learning, using their own abilities to solve problems and gradually develop critical thinking skills. The rigorous nature of the various assessment methods used by the institute shows up well in the high level of knowledge gained by the

learners. Almost all parents interviewed acknowledged that they are highly satisfied with the learning outcomes of their children and found the programmes enormously beneficial in helping children achieve levels higher than their current grade levels at school.

The vast majority of learners make outstanding progress from their entry level. This is clearly evident from the tracking of learners' marks and comparing learners' targets set at entry. Learners also progress very well over the different levels, particularly those who are enrolled at Kumon over a longer period.

Almost all learners achieve programme level objectives in a timely manner. The majority of learners not only meet their set targets but develop advanced skill levels, beyond the Kumon International Standards (KIS) which reflect the average level of learners at each age internationally. Moreover, a significant number of learners achieve Advanced Student Honor Roll (ASHR) certifications, particularly in mathematics; these are significantly higher than the average KIS standard and mean that the learners involved are one, two or more years ahead of school levels for their ages. A well-structured and effective assessment processes which are relevant to the level and type of course are in place. The grading system for different courses is standardised and systematic. There are a number of success stories of learners who have succeeded in achieving programme levels comparable to the UK Advanced Level at a younger age than expected. The retention rates are high and range from 90% to 94% across almost all courses and levels over the past three years.

Learners are highly self-motivated, are able to work well independently and show extremely high level of self-confidence. This is most evident in the observed sessions and through class activities and exercises. Learners have positive attitudes towards their learning and take control. They reflect critically on what they need to do to improve further, this being evident from the way they challenge their class manager and assistant.

The institute has a very clear attendance policy that is implemented effectively, with follow-up calls made to absent learners. Most learners attend sessions regularly, with the overall attendance rate being high with an average of 86%, though during summer vacation and examination periods the attendance is less regular. Punctuality is not applicable as the style of the learning is highly flexible and mainly depends on learners' available time.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Kumon's teaching approach is to thoroughly guide learners to be self-dependent and responsible for their own learning. There is no formal teaching as per se; learners are guided and supported individually studying the concept of learning from given examples, then repeatedly completing worksheets relevant to their subject. Study is in small incremental steps in order to reach the required level of proficiency, then progress to a higher level or topic. The delivery of Kumon learning style is based on independently completing work at home on a daily basis, supervised by their parents who are thoroughly briefed on Kumon's learning style. Learners attend Kumon sessions once a week to practice the same challenges, with minimal guidance from the highly competent class managers and class assistants. The Kumon learning approach solely stimulates independent self-learning and higher order thinking, promoting life-long learning. This is highly appreciated by parents, who positively acknowledge how their children, after a while of practicing the Kumon learning style, become able to learn by themselves and responsible for their own study.

Kumon's main concept is based on an individualised study plan for each learner, accommodating their specific needs, capabilities and levels, taking into account the learning and social differences. The highly customised study plan is constantly informed by the outcomes of prior and continuous assessment, being regularly updated and modified as needed. Based on their plan, the objectives are always shared with learners and parents before the start of the study and throughout their learning, along with the specific standard learning objectives before each new level where available. The delivery of Kumon learning and assessment are supported and guided by the a number of class assistants who supervise a group of learners' during their classwork, guiding them when needed, correcting their classwork and providing instant and highly effective feedback. However, in a few of the observed sessions it was noticed that the abilities for a few class assistants to manage the group varied, not always coming up to expectations. The class managers oversee the class flow, the distribution of learners and relevant workloads, and amendments of the study plans alongside any learning issues. They provide accurate feedback to the parents on a continuous basis. Both class managers and class assistant are highly qualified and have extensive experience of the Kumon learning approach, which shows well in their high-level support provided to learners during the learning journey.

Kumon uses a wide range of accurate and rigorous assessment methods to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of objectives. They start with the very effective Diagnostic Test (DT), which defines the basics to customise the study plan. The knowledge

gained, skills and competencies are assessed effectively and in a timely manner through the daily worksheets completed by the learners and against the international standard time for completion. The check points are assessed and produced by Kumon Bahrain, to determine each learner's readiness to sit the Achievement Test (AT), or to modify the study plan if needed in order for the learners to practice more worksheets on a specific topic or learning block. The Achievement Test is consistently used to measure the extent of achieving the level's objectives and are given to learners whenever they are ready to progress to a higher level.

The learners' performance is systematically monitored by the class managers and assistants, within the classwork sessions and with the parents over the mutually agreed timeline. Learners' performance records, from their starting point and throughout their study journey, are meticulously maintained and updated. The class manager and class assistant occasionally write comments in the record book regarding an individual learner's performance and proficiency level. They also utilise the available learning resources effectively during the classwork sessions as well as during the DT and AT in order to enrich the learning experience.

How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Kumon offers a wide range of progressive levels of English and mathematics programmes for learners from pre-school to university entrance, with the aim of cultivating self-learning skills. Learners develop very useful skills through repeated and systematic study methods, where they have to complete a given set of worksheets at home on a daily basis. The English programme consists of 26 levels from 7A to L, (including sub-levels at certain stages) that focus on areas ranging from the development of phonics and extending vocabulary to critical analysis of literary texts. The mathematics programme consists of 21 levels that focus on core skills corresponding to school grade levels, subsequently extending to calculus and applied mathematics for advanced learners. Parents and learners are highly satisfied with the programmes offered at Kumon, indicated by parents' feedback and during Parent's Communication Day. As part of its sensing of local market needs, it is evident that the institute uses social media networks and other relevant platforms to reach the target audience effectively. Moreover, Kumon introduced the AASA (Advanced Arabic Speakers Award) target by adjusting it to a level lower to KIS (Kumon International Standard) to recognise the standards of public school learners. All materials for Kumon programmes are centrally prepared by Kumon international team and are designed to meet learners' goals explicitly and efficiently. Reviews and updates of programme levels, materials and

guidelines for both learners and stakeholders are highly systematic and implemented in accordance with Kumon corporate standards. Teaching support resources, manuals and parent guidance forms are also updated as required. Kumon Institute is regularly updated with information regarding any forthcoming programme modifications through the Kumon corporate publications, Focus and Thinking Face magazines.

Kumon programmes are well-structured and planned, with specified level objectives, standard completion times, success criteria and a range of effective tests (checklists, reading, spelling, achievement) are used to methodically measure learners' progress. English and mathematics programmes have Kumon approved resources, particularly at the beginner levels. Within lessons, a number of resources such as number or alphabet boards, flash cards and dictionaries are used to support Kumon's programme materials. Additionally, learners are encouraged to use constructive resources such as a multiplication key ring, CDs and recommended reading to promote their self-learning skills. Useful websites and Kumon practice books are also recommended for the different levels in both programmes.

The nature of Kumon programmes does not, as such, stipulate the need for extracurricular activities as learners attend classes once a week and for a short period. Moreover, Kumon Bahrain complies with the franchise terms which do not permit the use of any activities outside of the Kumon programmes. Yet, as most English learners are non-native speakers, the institute encourages them to read aloud every day at home to improve their vocabulary and critical thinking skills.

English and mathematics learners are placed accurately within the different levels, based on the outcomes of highly effective diagnostic tests. The wide range of tests allows learners to be assessed at both micro and macro skills levels and for the class managers to create individualised study plans and targets for each learner.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Kumon has a comprehensive and systematic mechanism for supporting and guiding learners throughout their learning experience, enabling them to achieve better outcomes and obtain their certifications. Prior to the commencement of a programme, Kumon staff provide a very informative orientation programme to parents covering the Kumon concept and methodology; these are also well documented on the parents' guide and answer book. It includes a very useful overview of the programme structure, programme content, assessment methods, attendance and punctuality policy, health and safety arrangements, and details of homework, grading and weekly study plan. During sessions, class managers and their assistant provide systemic support to each learner on a one-to-one basis. Learners

are asked to repeat their work until they master the skills according to Kumon criteria. Kumon occasionally celebrates the success of various learners by holding an Advanced Student Honour Roll (ASHR) event. Kumon management encourages learners by offering free membership cards and a treasure box. The institute maintains a well-constructed and interactive website, newsletters, and very useful social media networks.

Kumon maintains purposeful communications with parents throughout the study journey of their children, informing them about learners' performance and course outcomes through parents' evening events, the learners' record book, WhatsApp messages and phone calls by class managers and management. However, written feedback to parents is insufficiently detailed.

The learning environment is fit for purpose and learners have access to good learning facilities. However, from parents' feedback classrooms are crowded in peak hours and only limited car parking is provided in some branches. Arrangements for the delivery of programmes are highly flexible to suit the needs of learners and parents. For instance, learners have the opportunity to transfer between Kumon branches, and distance learning is provided on request. Likewise, programme timing is flexible and agreed with parents to suit their needs.

The institute has clear instructions for learners with special needs. Learners who require particular arrangements are accepted and the programme is developed based on their personal requirements.

Leadership, management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Kumon has clear mission, vision and core value statements that focus on improving learners' skills and knowledge. The strategic plan is based on a detailed SWOT analysis and feedback received from the Board of Directors. Although the institute has recently developed an operations plan, it methodically implements the Kumon standard operations manual and procedures to guide its daily operations. The institute has a structured organisation and a suitable number of highly qualified and trained staff that suits the nature of the provision and meets its aims. Detailed job roles and responsibilities are in place for every function. The management maintains a healthy and safe environment, all work areas and classrooms are clean and tidy.

In line with the Kumon international standards and principles, Kumon Bahrain has comprehensive training policies and procedures guided by various quality assurance systems such as operation manuals, instruction principles and guidance and worksheet guides that are regularly updated. Several highly effective internal self-evaluation processes are carried out, with each class manager and assistant reflecting critically on their own areas that require further development and share good practice. The self-evaluation form (SEF) provided for the review is critical and detailed and provides very useful information about Kumon's operations. Judgement of grades is similar to those of the review team.

At entry, the institute conducts detailed diagnostic tests for both the mathematics and English programmes in order to place learners at the appropriate level. Once enrolled, the institute maintains detailed records for each individual learner's performance; these are further verified and analysed. Monthly and annual reports are generated from the Students' Management System (K-SIS) and trends are observed closely; these are shared with the management team and trigger improvement actions.

Kumon has a detailed recruitment policy and procedures. Highly qualified staff are recruited and class managers and assistants are deployed according to their specialisations. Staff are provided with highly effective theoretical and practical development opportunities on aspects of the Kumon approach. They are inducted and continuously trained and updated through internal workshops, self-development, and well-structured training workshops provided by the regional manager who leads on the Kumon Quality Standard certification. The performance of class managers and assistants is monitored through a highly effective lesson observation process. Class managers visit their peers and constructive feedback is provided to class managers and assistants on how to improve further. Additionally, the training/QA department visits lessons on a quarterly basis, with improvement action plans being based on these visits. Follow-up is regularly carried out, with visits being tightly linked to individual performance.

Kumon maintains productive links with parents and external awarding bodies. However, although the views of parents and learners are sought at various times these are not aggregated or analysed further. Governance policies and procedures are in place; the Board is aware of the progress of the strategic plan and contributes effectively to its development.

The provider's key strengths

- Learners develop very effective skills and gain knowledge through both English and mathematics programmes that help them to achieve levels higher than their actual school levels.
- Highly qualified class managers and assistants are deployed who have extensive experience of the Kumon learning processes and utilise well-structured study plans that are tailored to each individual learner.
- A wide range of accurate and rigorous assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of objectives.
- A range of English and mathematics programmes are offered, with progressive levels from pre-school to university entrance.
- Effective and rigorous mechanisms are in place to design, update and regularly review programmes based on the Kumon international standards.
- Highly systematic support and guidance mechanisms are in place to assist learners during their learning journey, helping them in achieving better outcomes and obtaining their certifications.
- The effective and critical self-assessment review processes are conducted on a regular basis to inform improvement decisions.

Recommendations

In order to maintain its outstanding performance, Kumon should:

- ensure that learners and parents are provided with comprehensive written feedback on how to improve further
- ensure that parents' feedback is systematically collected and aggregated to inform improvement decisions.

Appendix

Overview of the provision

Kumon Bahrain was established in 1999 as a franchise reporting to Kumon Europe and Africa (KEA) headquarters based in the United Kingdom. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education, providing guided self-learning programmes in mathematics and English. Both programmes have progressive levels catering for pre-school to university entrance levels, prescribed by the Kumon International Standards (KIS). These standards represent the average level of achievement of learners at each age. Learners who advance by the equivalent of six months, one year and more than two years above their equivalent KIS levels are recognised as being on the Advanced Student Register (ASHR). The mathematics programme consists of 21 levels, from basic counting at the lowest level to calculus at the highest level. The English programme consists of 26 levels, progressing from pre-reading skills and the alphabet to elements of critique and text analysis. Approximately 54% of learners do mathematics and 46% do English. Most learners attend the Kumon institute once a week. However, around 14% of learners from the greater Gulf region are enrolled as correspondence learners. Enrolment in both mathematics and English at Kumon Bahrain reached approximately 2,284 learners by May 2016.

The institute has three branches: Mahooz, Janabiya and Sanad. Kumon Bahrain has five members on the Board of Directors and is managed by a director who leads a full-time team comprising a deputy director, branch managers, a human resources administrator, eight class managers (CMs) and administration staff. They employ a pool of class assistants (CAs) on a part-time basis. The central KEA office provides continuous strategic support, monitors the quality of provision, and provides local capacity-building.