



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Kumon Bahrain
Mahooz - Kingdom of Bahrain

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Kumon Bahrain, which holds a license from the Ministry of Education, was established in 1999, as a local office of Kumon worldwide. The Bahrain office reports to the Europe and Africa headquarters office of Kumon, in the UK. Kumon offers courses in mathematics and English. Kumon's approach is based on independent study; the student goes through pre-prepared worksheets for each level. A student's individual progress is gauged against the Kumon International Standard (KIS), which represents the average level of students at each age. Students work at home daily, but come into the classroom once a week to work individually under the supervision of a class manager and assistants and receive worksheets and targets for the coming week.

In 2009, some 1,500 students, aged between 5 and 18, were enrolled with Kumon Bahrain. Most of the students are based in Bahrain but about 12% are in neighbouring countries and studying through distance learning. About 60% of the students do mathematics courses and 40% do English. Kumon Bahrain is managed by a director, who reports to a board of governors. The main branch is in Mahooz and there are two additional branches, one in Janabiya and the other in Sanad. Each branch is run by a coordinator, two or three class managers and a number of class and office assistants. In addition, Kumon Bahrain employs seven administrative and support staff.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed classroom sessions, analysed data about the skills and qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with management, class managers, students and parents.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations for improvement. Because of the nature of Kumon Bahrain's provision, Main Question 2, about the effectiveness of teaching is not applicable, and is not covered in the report.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 2: good

The overall effectiveness of Kumon Bahrain is good. All aspects of the provision – students' achievements, the quality of courses, support and guidance, and the effectiveness of leadership and management – are good.

Kumon Bahrain rigorously and systematically assesses and monitors students' progress and achievements throughout their learning journey. Students whose skills are assessed as being higher than expected for their age are given Advanced Student Register (ASR) status. In 2009, 98% of Kumon Bahrain's students gained ASR status in mathematics and 42% did so in English. As well as gaining good core skills in mathematics and English, students develop effective personal skills in areas such as self-reliance, independent study, time management and discipline.

The courses offered are prepared well by Kumon's international headquarters. Courses offer good progression routes to match all ages of school students. The courses have clear objectives and contents. There are effective support materials for students, class managers and parents. Although Kumon courses are largely standardised across the world, Kumon Bahrain has successfully customised some courses, most notably by introducing well-designed end-of-level achievement tests for three junior levels in mathematics and English.

Kumon Bahrain supports students and parents extremely effectively. It starts by giving comprehensive orientation and guidance to parents and students and continues by offering helpful support and good incentives to help students achieve better throughout a course. Kumon Bahrain's premises have not been properly assessed for health and safety risks. Parents and students, who only attend once a week for a short period, are insufficiently aware of health and safety considerations, as are the staff.

Kumon Bahrain's managers have a significant impact on the quality of the provision, by closely monitoring students' achievements at various levels and setting challenging objectives for the institute as a whole, as well as for individual staff, to maintain and improve students' achievements. Managers also play an effective part in selecting, training and continually developing class managers and assistants. The monitoring of class managers and assistants is not recorded well enough.

Capacity to improve

Grade 2: good

Kumon has been successful in raising students' achievements. The proportion of students on mathematics courses who achieved above the normal skill level for their age, as measured by the total ASR indicator for the month of September each year, rose from 48% in 2007 to 80% in 2008 and reached 98% in 2009. The same indicator for English was 24% in 2007, 35% in 2008 and 42% in 2009. Kumon Bahrain was ranked number 16 among all Kumon centres worldwide – over 20,000 centres – in 2005. Bahrain's ranking rose to third in 2009. Ranking mainly reflects student enrolment and achievements.

Students' achievement is very much the focus of Kumon's management, at various levels. The staff performance management system was recently improved and individual key performance indicators introduced. A new human resources manager is further developing the staff performance management system.

Kumon introduced an effective and structured system for staff development two years ago. Class managers go through a rigorous initial training programme in their first year. After this, they receive training from external verifiers from regional office staff, who visit Bahrain two or three times a year. These training workshops are compulsory and are well assessed. Staff also hold weekly meetings to share good practice.

Kumon Bahrain benefits from the good resources and practices of its regional and global offices. Learning materials are regularly updated and improved. Kumon Bahrain is in the process of being certified with the global Kumon Quality System (KQS), which should further enhance the consistency of its procedures and practices. Kumon Bahrain has effectively tailored courses to local needs, by designing and implementing internal assessment for the three junior levels in mathematics and English that did not have end-of-level achievement tests.

Kumon Bahrain sufficiently considers the local needs of parents and students and improves the provision accordingly. As an example, it negotiated with its regional office to allow students to take up to two months break a year without having to re-register on their return. It has expanded from a single branch to the current three and is considering opening a fourth to provide better coverage in Bahrain. Parents' meetings used to be conducted in English only, but are now conducted in Arabic as well. Kumon has adequate plans to expand and improve its website to provide better support and guidance for students and parents.

The institute's self-evaluation form is sufficiently detailed, but over-generous in its grading.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: good
Capacity to improve	Grade 2: good
Review findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 2: good
How effective is teaching?	Not applicable
How well do courses meet the needs of students' and stakeholders?	Grade 2: good
How well are learners guided and supported?	Grade 2: good
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade 2: good

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Students' achievement.** Students at Kumon Bahrain achieve well and develop good skills in mathematics and English. Most students reach levels higher than their normal school level.
- **Development of students' personal skills.** Students develop good skills in time management, discipline and self-reliance. Assessment of these skills forms part of the assessment criteria used to measure students' progress. Students display such skills in the classroom; their parents also recognise their improved personal skills.
- **Course structure and materials.** Kumon Bahrain offers good progression levels in both mathematics and English. Programmes are divided into over 20 levels. Each level is well structured, with clear course contents, objectives and assessment criteria. The worksheets for students and support materials for class managers and parents are well prepared and regularly updated by experts in Kumon's international offices in the USA, the UK and Japan.
- **Customisation of courses.** Kumon Bahrain has effectively tailored some courses to meet the local needs of students and parents. For example, it has developed its own well-structured achievement tests for levels which do not already have them.
- **Guidance for students and parents.** Students and parents are given well-informed advice before the beginning of a course. Kumon Bahrain holds evening sessions for interested parents at which comprehensive guidance and orientation on course selection and programme levels are given. Parents are also given useful information about Kumon's study concept, the assessment system and parents' vital role during a child's time at Kumon. Class managers offer useful guidance during a "welcome day" for all new students and parents.
- **Support and incentives for students.** High achievers receive good incentives and encouragement. Medals and certificates are awarded at a special ceremony held twice a year. Kumon showcases special achievers on its global website. Kumon Bahrain also sponsors exceptional students and their parents to attend Kumon's global annual conference.
- **System for selecting and training class managers.** Candidates for a class manager post must first pass Kumon's basic proficiency test. Once appointed, they receive intensive training in their first year, including initial training and mentoring, four written tests and four assignments. Their competency has to be formally verified and

approved by assessors from the Bahrain office and external verifiers from the UK. Class managers continue to be developed by internal workshops run by external verifiers during their visits to Bahrain every four to six months.

Areas for improvement

- **Health and safety risk assessment and awareness.** The premises have not been adequately assessed for safety and health risks and Kumon Bahrain has not properly informed staff and parents, who must accompany their children to weekly classes, how to deal effectively with any incidents. Branches are equipped with fire extinguishers but staff are not trained how to use them. Escape routes and assembly points are not marked. In the reception area, a boiling water dispenser is accessible to young students.
- **Recording of classroom monitoring.** Kumon Bahrain's director observes classes approximately once a month and gives useful verbal feedback to class managers and assistants, although this is not recorded.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Kumon should:

- carry out safety and health risk assessments and take appropriate action
- record the outcomes of class monitoring for use in improving staff performance