



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

# **Schools Review Unit**

## **Review Report**

**Ma'aly Gate Private School**  
**A'ali – Central Governorate**  
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date of Review: 19 - 21 March 2012**

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## The Schools Review Unit

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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 seven 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		Ma'aly Gate Private School												
School's type		Private												
Year of establishment		2000												
Age range of students		6 - 12 years												
Grades (e.g. 1 to 12)		Primary				Middle				High				
		1-6				-				-				
Number of students		Boys	247			Girls	159			Total	406			
Students' social background		Low to middle class families												
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	Classes	4	4	4	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Town /Village		A'ali												
Governorate		Central												
Number of administrative staff		18												
Number of teaching staff		35												
Curriculum		Ministry of Education for the subjects thought in Arabic, English curriculum content for subjects taught in English.												
Main language(s) of instruction		Arabic - English												
Principal's tenure		12 years												
External assessment and examinations		-												
Accreditation (if applicable)		-												
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification		Outstanding			Gifted & Talented			Physical Disabilities			Learning Difficulties			
		276			25			3			12			
Major recent changes in the school		• The deputy principal is on extended sick leave and 12 teachers are newly recruited.												

## Table of review judgements awarded

Aspect	Grade: Description			
The school's overall effectiveness	4: Inadequate			
The school's capacity to improve	4: Inadequate			
	Elementary / Primary	Middle / Intermediate	High / Secondary	Overall
Students' academic achievement	4	-	-	4
Students' personal development	3	-	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning	4	-	-	4
The quality of the curriculum implementation	4	-	-	4
The quality of support and guidance for students	3	-	-	3
The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	4	-	-	4

### Key:

- 1: Outstanding
- 2: Good
- 3: Satisfactory
- 4: Inadequate

## Review judgements

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### Overall effectiveness

- ☐ **How effective is the school in meeting the needs of students and their parents?**

#### **Grade: 4 Inadequate**

While students show satisfactory personal development through their regular attendance, punctuality and sense of responsibility towards learning, their academic achievement is inadequate. This low level of achievement is mainly due to ineffective teaching, which does not sufficiently support or challenge the students' different ability levels. Low expectations are made of students in most lessons. While support and guidance is effective in helping students feel secure and safe at school, the curriculum implementation is inadequate since it is not reviewed or modified sufficiently to meet students' different needs and interests. Leadership and management are inadequate because of the ineffective use of procedures to monitor performance. Consequently self-evaluation does not help to ensure better provision. Parents and students are generally satisfied with the school.

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

#### **Grade: 4 Inadequate**

The school has procedures to evaluate a few of its practices and involves staff, parents and students in those procedures, but very limited use is made of the results of those evaluations to bring about change or set the school's improvement priorities. Furthermore, the annual plan is very general, does not focus on identified areas for improvement and lacks any success criteria to evaluate its effectiveness. Procedures to monitor and review the plan are unclear. The appraisals of teachers' performance are not sufficiently linked to an assessment of their needs and the provision of necessary professional development. The impact of the few programmes which are provided is not clearly evident in most teaching and learning. Students' performance data are not well-utilised to inform improvement planning, ensure better provision and raise students' achievement.

## Students' achievement

### □ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

#### Grade: 4 Inadequate

As the school does not have external benchmarking and measures of achievement are based on internal examinations, moderation of levels of achievement is insecure. Students achieve high pass rates, with a large number of high achievers identified. Results of Grades 4 to 6, over the past three years, show that the number of students apparently performing above age expected standards has increased. However, for Grades 1 to 3 the number has decreased in science and mathematics. Students' achievement and progress during lessons do not match their recorded high results in examinations.

In lessons throughout the school, students' knowledge and understanding are below expected standards. The majority of students make satisfactory progress in Arabic. However, their progress in other subjects is inadequate.

In Arabic, most students reach expected standards and converse occasionally in formal Arabic, with satisfactory listening and reading skills. Their writing and spellings skills are underdeveloped and show insufficient progress. In English, students have adequate oral and reading skills. The majority of older students read with appropriate fluency and expression. Students' writing and grammar skills are very limited in every grade. In the mathematics and science lessons that are taught in English, students make limited progress and understanding. For example, the majority of students lack confidence when describing and explaining key scientific concepts in their work. The achievement of students is better in mathematics and science taught in Arabic with very limited progress made by students in English-medium lessons.

In mathematics, most students' acquire knowledge such as simple number relationships and recognising basic geometric figures and angles. However, their application of knowledge is mostly theoretical with insufficient understanding of key concepts like area, circumference and probability. In science, students can recall key facts, for example about the nature of mixtures of materials and they can name parts of the digestive system, but they are unable to explain specific rules and properties using appropriate scientific vocabulary. Students' investigative, problem solving and practical skills are poorly developed, mostly due to limited opportunities provided in lessons. Students rely on memory recall rather than using and applying their knowledge to develop understanding and appropriate skills.

## **□ How good is the students' personal development?**

### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

Students attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons, which the school encourages effectively. The majority of students participate in the morning assembly and the various school committees and activities, such as the School Plays Committee and the Drawing and Painting Competitions, which take place during break-times. Students are provided with opportunities to take on responsibility through the Scouts and the Student Council. They also show confidence when discussing their views and presenting their arguments in the better lessons. However, this is rarely evident in most lessons as they are not given the opportunity to develop confidence or independent learning skills. When given the chance, students generally work well together in lessons and in activities, showing respect and appropriate behaviour. This results in most of them feeling safe and emotionally secure in the school. Nevertheless, a minority of students do not show sufficient respect or courtesy towards their teachers or peers with inappropriate verbal and physical behaviour. The majority have a clear understanding of appropriate values, which they demonstrate by participating in various Islamic events and activities, such as the Quran Recitation Committee. Most students also show their understanding of Bahrain's heritage by contributing to the different heritage corners in the school and to national events.

## **The quality of provision**

## **□ How effective are teaching and learning?**

### **Grade: 4 Inadequate**

The majority of teachers have fair subject knowledge and give clear explanations. However, in a few of the lessons observed, incorrect information was given to students; for example, mispronunciation of Arabic words and grammatical errors in English. Additionally, teachers are less knowledgeable about the effective use of different teaching strategies to promote students' learning. Teachers' lesson plans lack specific planning for activities to challenge and support students of different ability levels and lesson objectives set unrealistically low expectations for students. Most lessons rely too heavily on teacher instruction and give only limited opportunities for students to work independently and in cooperative groups. In the better lessons, teachers motivate, engage and encourage students to contribute, for example by using role play and games to increase the students' participation. Meanwhile, in less effective lessons, the majority of students are insufficiently supported and activities focus mostly on recall and repetition. Most lessons lack appropriate class management and are slow paced, which leads to students making little progress.



In the more effective lessons, in mathematics and Arabic, students are challenged with activities which cater for their different levels of ability. High achievers are presented with extension activities to develop their understanding. However, these opportunities are too few and students are insufficiently challenged in the vast majority of lessons. Teaching generally focuses on imparting facts and uses a limited range of strategies to develop the acquisition of practical skills and increase students' understanding. Moreover, in most lessons, students are presented with insufficient opportunities to think analytically and justify their views, particularly problem-solving and investigative skills in mathematics and science.

The school provides a limited range of resources including textbooks, worksheets and data shows, although these are not used sufficiently well to develop students' understanding. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of materials they have made such as flash cards and posters. Assessment is inconsistently used by all teachers to inform lesson planning and to challenge and support students. Teachers depend too much on observation, whole class questions and choral responses to assess students' knowledge. Limited consideration is given to the individual differences between students and there is little use of written assessment to measure students' progress and achievement throughout lessons. Homework is often given to complete class work and most of this work is marked regularly.

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

#### **Grade: 4 Inadequate**

A range of subjects based on the Ministry of Education curriculum is provided, with the subjects taught in English mostly relying on textbooks. Curriculum review is limited and irregular, with English reviewed over three years ago. Schemes of work in most subjects, especially English-medium, lack planning to include modifications to textbook units, which if carried out might then better meet the range of students' abilities. Additionally, the school provides insufficient enrichment in mathematics and science to develop students' practical, investigative and problem-solving skills. Teachers make links with other subjects during their lessons, such as referring to pollution in an Arabic lesson. However, there is limited cross-curricular planning to ensure students experience a coherent curriculum. Students develop an understanding about their rights and responsibilities within the school community through student participation in committees such as the Little Medic and the Student Council. Students participate in compulsory weekly committees providing exposure to a range of activities, as well as being given choice in joining a few extra-curricular activities during break-times. The school maintains an attractive outer area with colourful murals and displays of students' work, but makes very limited use of local resources, for

example a lecture on health provided by a parent. Special events and days, such as 'National Day' celebrations and 'Reading Day', in addition to field trips, provide adequate enrichment to the curriculum.

### ☐ **How well are students guided and supported?**

#### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

An induction programme and a meeting for students help them settle quickly when they first join the school. Useful information and a visit to a nearby intermediate school support Grade 6 students and prepare them appropriately for their new schools. The school meets students' personal needs when they face problems and the counsellor provides adequate support. Results from regular testing are used to identify low achievers and additional support is given through a few extra-curricular programmes, such as 'The Mathematics Champions'. The extra-curricular committees are also used to provide challenge for high achievers, such as the 'Expressive Writing Committee'. Students with learning difficulties sometimes receive additional support after lessons in the 'Ma'aly Oasis'. However, with limited reliable assessments, the school has difficulty in identifying learning needs and providing appropriately for students' academic progress in lessons and beyond. The Ministry of Education rules for student behaviour have recently been implemented to help maintain discipline, which has had a positive impact on students' behaviour. Most students are confident that they can approach a teacher or the counsellor for advice and guidance. Parents are satisfied with the many forms of communication that keep them well-informed about their children's development through open days, parent meetings, and reports. Students and teachers interact positively with each other and the school provides a healthy and safe environment.

### **Leadership, management and governance**

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

#### **Grade: 4 Inadequate**

The school's vision aims for excellence and quality, but these principles are only reflected in a small minority of practices in the school. The senior leadership motivates and encourages staff to contribute to the school's various procedures, such as setting the vision and the self-

evaluation process, but these are generally ineffective because the results, including those of 'SWOT' and 'Root and Cause' analyses, are not translated into effective plans that focus the school's improvement. The annual plan is very broad and gives insufficient attention to setting priorities for improvement. Furthermore, the monitoring process is not clear, particularly with the absence of success criteria and definite evaluation mechanisms to judge progress. Strategic planning lacks direction.

Although students' assessment data is recorded, it is inconsistent and the school makes limited use of it to inform lesson planning, teaching and curriculum review. Some general professional development programmes are provided and these involve all teachers without targeting their individual development needs. This is because training opportunities are insufficiently based on accurate assessment and the results of teachers' appraisal. Deployment of staff is not sufficiently efficient in ensuring the necessary quality of provision, for example in the role and use of teacher assistants in lessons. Not enough use is made of the few resources available in the school, such as educational displays and learning materials in the classrooms. This is particularly notable in the limited learning corners in some classrooms and in the facilities available.

The school regularly seeks students' and parents' views. It responds well to their suggestions through the Student Council and by responding to the results of questionnaires, for example by providing shading in the playgrounds. It has established links with the local community by communicating with local organisations, such as the Royal Charity Organization and A'ali Health Centre. The school has a Board, that includes the principal, and different members of the staff, the Ministry of Education representative, and a parents' representative. However, the role and responsibilities of the Board are not clear and do not, with its present capacity, provide sufficient contributions to the school's strategic planning, its monitoring of overall development and lines of accountability.

## **The school's main strengths**

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- The communication with parents both to keep them informed of their children's progress, and responding to their suggestions
- The attractive school environment that motivates students, celebrates their work and enhances their knowledge of Bahrain's heritage
- Students' regular attendance and their emotional safety and security.

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, the school should:**

- establish effective leadership, management and governance by:
  - developing the strategic planning based on rigorous self-evaluation with clear priorities and success criteria
  - continuous monitoring of the school's performance, particularly students' academic achievement, to plan for improvement of provision
  - developing the role of the School Board to ensure an effective contribution to the overall improvement of performance.
- raise students' achievement through using effective teaching and learning strategies that focus on:
  - managing behaviour in the classroom
  - assessment for learning
  - challenging and supporting students of all levels of ability
  - developing students' understanding and skills.
- review the curriculum regularly and make modifications to meet the different needs of students.