



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

Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews Review Report

**Shaikha Hessa Girls' School
West Riffa – Southern Governorate
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date of Review: 24-26 March 2014
SP050-C1-R050**

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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 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		Shaikha Hessa Girls' School											
School's type		Private											
Year of establishment		2001											
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	-	Girls	410				Total	410			
Students' social background		Middle to upper class families											
Classes per grade	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Classes	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Town /Village		West Riffa											
Governorate		Southern											
Number of administrative staff		18											
Number of teaching staff		49											
Curriculum		Cambridge International Curriculum (CIC) for Grades 1-8 International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) for Grades 9 and 10 International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP) for Grades 11 and 12											
Main language(s) of instruction		English and Arabic											
Principal's tenure		4 years											
External assessment and examinations		IGCSE, IBDP, Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). QQA National Examinations for Grade 12											
Accreditation (if applicable)		Council of International Schools (CIS) The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools											

	(MSA)			
Number of students in the following categories according to the school's classification	Outstanding	Gifted & Talented	Physical Disabilities	Learning Difficulties
	65	-	-	19
Major recent changes in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting the Cambridge International Curriculum for Grades 1-8 in 2010-2011 • appointing a new Assistant Principal this academic year 2013-2014 • re-accreditation of the school this year from MSA and CIS. 			

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. Although students' skills are well-developed in English and science, this is less evident in other subjects due to inconsistencies in applying effective strategies that support and challenge students' different abilities, and in making use of assessment results to plan for students' learning. Therefore, students' progress is better in English and science than in Arabic and mathematics. Effective support and guidance programmes in particular help students overcome problems, resulting in good personal development. Curriculum enrichment is good, being regularly reviewed and enriched with meaningful extracurricular activities and community service activities. Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory, with a lack of systematic approaches to achieve the priorities of consistent improvement and the differences in performance between departments.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The school's strategic plan is successful in improving performance in some aspects such as the curriculum enrichment, support and guidance and students' personal development. Self-evaluation processes focus on key aspects of school development, however, the results of this evaluation are not implemented systematically to plan for further development of teaching and learning.

Overall, there is a lot of focus on implementation of processes rather than monitoring the impact on students' performance. Good practices are not systematically shared to ensure consistency across the school. Generic professional programmes are provided which focus on essential teaching topics. Measuring the impact of professional development on actual practices varies, as there are limited initiatives targeting individual teachers' needs.

Students' achievement

□ How well do students achieve in their academic work?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Students' levels of attainment in Cambridge International Curriculum assessments and external examinations of IBDP are satisfactory. Grade 12 students achieve well in biology and English in IB, though attainment in mathematics is consistently below world averages in the past three years. The attainment of the first batch of Grade 10 IGCSE is low, as most students attained grades C and D in core subjects. PSAT results for Grade 10 students show satisfactory performance overall, but with lower scores in mathematics in the past two years. Similarly, students' performance is lower in mathematics in the ACER-ISA when compared to reading and writing in most grades. However, in the TIMSS-2011 benchmark exams, Grade 4 Students achieved well in mathematics and science. Students' results in internal examinations are generally high in most subjects across the school. However, they score lower in mathematics in Grade 2, English in Grades 9 and 10, and mathematics in Grade 12. Proficiency rates are generally high in elementary school, inconsistent in middle and high school.

Across the school, students' standards and progress in written work and most lessons are satisfactory, as the majority acquire adequate knowledge and understanding. In English, students across all grades develop well in the four language skills of oral communication, reading a range of texts with fluency and good comprehension, writing with suitable use of grammar and vocabulary for various purposes.

However, students' Arabic skills are weak, particularly in middle and high school. Speaking and reading skills are satisfactory in primary. However, writing skills are weaker across all phases as the range of opportunities for writing is limited.

Students across the school have adequate understanding of basic mathematical concepts. A majority of elementary phase students understand multiplication and fractions, students in middle school can simplify algebraic expressions and calculate the gradient of a line on a graph. The majority of high school students can find derivatives of power function and understand conditional probability. However, students' application of mathematical concepts when solving problems is underdeveloped across all grades.

In science, most students across the school have a sound grasp of scientific knowledge and experimental skills, with good progress in lessons. Across all grades, students' theoretical understanding is regularly supported by experimental and investigative work, enhancing the capacity to enquire, critically analyse and think deeply.

□ How good is the students' personal development?

Grade: 2 Good

Attendance levels are high and students are punctual to almost all lessons. The school has an effective system for monitoring absences and tardiness.

Most students participate enthusiastically in school life and work together well. They enjoy whole-school events, such as assemblies, "Fun Day" and a range of extra-curricular activities and competitions. In most lessons, students are motivated, participate enthusiastically and ask and respond to questions appropriately. They share ideas and work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. However, in less effective lessons, students' enthusiasm and motivation is lower.

Most students work well independently and the majority have good research skills appropriate to their age. However, this is not consistent across school. They are confident and act maturely through the various opportunities provided, such as the Student Council in elementary school and various international activities like the Model United Nations (MUN) conference and the International Award for Youth.

Students behave well in most lessons and around the school, adhering to school regulations and having good relationships with each other and their teachers. They have a deep understanding of Bahrain's heritage, culture and Islamic values, promoted through visits to local heritage sites, the celebration of National Day and religious events, and cultural corners in and outside classrooms.

The quality of provision

□ How effective are teaching and learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The majority of teachers have secure subject knowledge, setting clear objectives and using meaningful examples to extend students' knowledge. This is prominent in the more effective lessons, particularly in science and English where students' understanding and skills develop well through engaging teaching strategies. They include collaborative and experiential learning in science and role-play in English. However, in other lessons the focus is on relaying knowledge through lengthy teachers' explanations and instructions. Learning resources such as Interactive Whiteboards, mini clocks, comic versions of stories and selected visuals are used inconsistently, sometimes impeding students' learning.

Nevertheless, students are encouraged, motivated and praised when answering open and closed questions. In the vast majority of lessons, adequate opportunities are provided to challenge or support students of different abilities. However, this is less likely for high achievers, who rarely reach their full potential. In a minority of lessons, teachers provide limited opportunities for students to be creative, critically examine documents or explore the relationships between variables. Consequently, students' higher order thinking skills are only adequately developed, other than in English and science where appropriately challenging questions are successfully used to extend students' abilities. Classroom management is strong in the vast majority of lessons but less effective in Arabic and mathematics, leading to disengagement. Lessons are generally appropriately paced, with activities introduced in an orderly manner. However, in less effective lessons, the pace does not adequately match students' abilities and leads to confusion or inactivity.

Homework successfully reinforces the work done in lessons by providing opportunities to develop research and investigative skills, particularly in English and science. This raises students' understanding. Although rigorous assessment systems are in place, the data gathered does not systematically inform students' target setting or lesson planning. Students' written work is often marked and corrected, but feedback to help students' improve their work is very limited. On-going assessment is evident in lessons, mostly verbal questioning targeted at the whole class but written and individual input is used in the more effective lessons. However, in a significant proportion of lessons, particularly in Arabic and mathematics, teachers' assessment strategies do not consistently support and challenge students of different abilities.

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

Grade: 2 Good

The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences, enabling students to progress adequately to the next level of their education. Regular reviews of the curriculum have led to meaningful modifications, including the introduction of the Cambridge International Curriculum and the use of international benchmarks which enable the school to structure and evaluate its curriculum more effectively. One positive outcome of the curriculum review is the earlier introduction of science in elementary, to raise attainment. Nevertheless, the provision for meeting the needs of the more able and talented students is still under development. In English and science, the curriculum modifications have had a positive impact on students' progress over time, with the acquisition of good learning and life skills. However, in Arabic and mathematics, curriculum modifications are more sporadic. Opportunities for cross-curriculum links are irregular and not always planned

consistently across subjects. The school regularly consults parents and students and offers a bespoke range of sporting and extra-curricular activities, with high participation levels in elementary school. The school capitalises on resources available in the community to provide students with a wide range of opportunities to become responsible and caring adults. This is evident in students' participation in community service activities such as Think Pink and the Recycling project.

□ How well are students guided and supported?

Grade: 2 Good

New students' induction includes an informative tour of the school facilities, meeting their teachers and being assigned a 'Buddy' to help them settle. Students moving to the next stage of education receive information about curriculum requirements, enabling them to settle easily. The school entry tests and subsequent regular tests identify students' needs, leading to effective monitoring of their academic progress. Low achievers and those with special educational needs receive effective support in and outside lessons, so progress well. However, support for the more able and gifted is limited. Students' personal development is monitored through a six step behavioural tracker. Effective interventions from the counsellor and teachers, and regular feedback to parent, resolve problems swiftly. Regular lectures and theme weeks are conducted by the school counsellor and doctor, educating students about issues such as bullying and intolerance. The career counsellor advises Grade 12 students about after-school study choices. University representatives provide information about higher education. Still, Grades 10 and 11 lack regular support to ensure that they make informed decisions about their future. Systematic, multi-channel communication informs parents about their children's academic and personal progress, including monthly reports, quarterly meetings and teachers' emails. The school environment is secure and well maintained. Regular fire drills are conducted. Facilities are clean and medical staff provide care for both students and staff.

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 an ambitious vision set by the Board of Trustees that aims to move the school toward better achievement. Although the school has managed to realise this in some aspects

of its work, there is inconsistency throughout the school. The annual motto, this year focusing on 'National and International Community Service Above Self', is clearly reflected in the school's activities and leads to good links with the local and global communities through the wide range of experiences offered by the school. Programmes such as MUN and Community Activity Service (CAS) add value to the learning of the majority of students.

The strategic plan is reviewed annually, focusing on promoting improvements. It is based on self-evaluation and involves most staff as part of the re-accreditation process with MSA and CIS. However, there is over-emphasis on procedures rather than monitoring of performance, resulting in erratic performance between departments. The Arabic and mathematics departments lack accurate implementation and monitoring mechanisms, whilst clear performance indicators are not addressed. Good practices in other departments are not shared across the school.

Professional development programmes are usually generic as they are not linked to accurate assessment of teachers' individual needs. Therefore, their impact on the quality of teaching is only satisfactory. Parents' and students' opinions are sought through questionnaires, direct communication and feedback from the Students' Council and Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). The school often responds to their opinions, such as the students' proposal to organise the Think Pink Campaign and the parents' offer to change the carpets in the prayer room.

Resources for learning are used well. The school capitalises on its teaching facilities, including the science labs, music room and teaching resource centre. The majority of classes are equipped with interactive boards. Senior leaders support and motivate school members by promoting social and interpersonal relationships, and delegating responsibilities such as the role of school coordinator in most academic departments.

The Board of Directors has a clear role in planning for the school's educational and financial improvement and is involved in setting goals and strategic planning. It successfully holds the key leaders accountable for performance, including the school's educational standards and students' well-being.

The school's main strengths

- Students' sound progress in English and science, due to effective teaching strategies that challenge them and develop their skills
- Students' strong embracement of Bahraini heritage and Islamic values
- Students' leadership skills and active involvement in community service activities that develop their confidence and sense of responsibility.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- raise students' achievements and develop their skills in Arabic and mathematics
- develop teaching and learning further by:
 - challenging and supporting students of different abilities
 - using assessment results to inform planning for students' learning
 - developing students' higher order thinking skills more systematically.
- develop leadership and management by:
 - implementing a rigorous professional development programme based on an accurate evaluations of teachers' individual training needs, and thorough monitoring of its impact on improving performance
 - establishing a more systematic approach towards reviewing, planning and monitoring performance and sharing good practices across the school, to secure consistency in pedagogical approaches.