



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

# **Directorate of Government Schools Reviews Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews**

## **Schools Reviews Handbook**

For use in the review of schools in the  
Kingdom of Bahrain





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## Background to the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training

The Authority was established under the name of Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training, by the Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008 as an independent national authority governed and supervised by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kingdom of Bahrain. With the promulgation of the Royal Decree No 83 of 2012, the Authority was renamed the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA). The QQA was mandated to ensure that the quality of education and training in Bahrain meets international standards and best practices, and to 'review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority' in accordance with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

The Authority has three core businesses, namely: performance reviews of educational and vocational institutions by the General Directorate of Reviews (GDR), managing the National Qualifications Framework by the General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework (GDQ) and conducting the National Examinations by the Directorate of National Examinations (DNE). The (GDR) comprises four directorates: the Directorate of Government Schools Reviews (DGS), the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens Reviews (DPS), the Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), and the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR). The (GDQ) comprises the Directorate of National Framework Operations (DFO) and the Directorate of Academic Cooperation and Coordination (DAC).

### The Directorate of Government Schools Reviews and the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens Reviews

The Directorate of Government Schools Reviews (DGS) and the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens Reviews (DPS) are part of the directorates of the QQA. They are responsible for evaluating and reviewing the quality of education in government and private schools and kindergartens to improve their overall performance in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

#### The DGS and DPS are responsible for:

- setting guiding criteria for the quality assurance of education in schools and kindergartens
- establishing guiding frameworks and rubrics for success criteria and review procedures
- reviewing and reporting on the quality of provision in all schools and kindergartens
- spreading best practice
- making recommendations for schools and kindergartens improvements.

Reviews involve 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 overall performance.

## Review Principles

The schools' review processes are based on the following key principles:

**Learning process is student-centred:** the growth in students' experience and the development in their achievements and skills are key to the review process.

**Teaching and learning:** the review team will thoroughly evaluate how effectively teaching, including classroom management skills, independent learning, planning and assessment, promote learning and lead to improving students' levels of achievement.

**Continuous improvement:** the review process is a driver that helps improving the school's overall effectiveness, and the processes related to self-evaluation, planning, and ongoing development.

**Involvement and openness:** the whole process of review is initiated through school's self-evaluation and its leadership participation in all stages of the review process, including the planning, organising the review, and providing evidence to shape judgements, according to the concept: 'doing with' not 'doing to'.

**Transparency:** All reports are based on objectivity and accuracy, and published to insure increased public accessibility.

**Professional commitment:** reviewers will commit to a Code of Conduct, in accordance with the QQA's policies and procedures, evaluating schools objectively and impartially while making fair, accurate and consistent judgements.



## SCHOOLS REVIEW FRAMEWORK

The Review Framework sets out the evaluation requirements to be used in the review of all schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It lists the main aspects that reviewers must evaluate to arrive at the overall judgement of the school's effectiveness and its capacity to improve.

The Review Framework explains the judgements that review teams arrive at during each school review, based on the QQA's policies and procedures and on the review criteria. Schools are requested to apply the same criteria and judgements when they carry out their own self-evaluations.

### The Framework evaluates the following:

- **Quality of outcomes**

students' academic achievement aspect.

students' personal development aspect.

- **Quality of main processes**

teaching and learning aspect.

support and guidance aspect.

- **Quality assurance of outcomes and processes**

leadership, management and governance aspect.

Criteria as explained in the Framework contribute to grading/judging each aspect. Aspects' grades determine the judgement of the school's overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve.

## Judgement scales

Audits of practices and procedures, indicated by '■', are made on a four-point scale as follows:

Grade	Interpretation
Always (A)	Practices and procedures are always carried out. They are considered to be exemplary mechanisms applied at the school.
Often (B)	Practices and procedures are frequently carried out at the school.
Sometimes (C)	Practices and procedures are occasionally carried out at the school, or are not completed, and cannot be considered the norm.
Not available (D)	Practices and procedures are not in place. There is a significant difference in practices, and lack of consistency when actions are implemented.

Judgements related to criteria, indicated by '❖', are judged on a four-point scale as follows:

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	This judgement is awarded if the practices of all or the vast majority of those related to the criteria are diverse and of quality and highly productive. Performance and initiatives taken are exceptional and significantly exceed expectations. It largely reflects improvement and development and can be considered as a model to be followed.
Good (2)	This judgement is awarded if the practices of most of those related to the criteria are diverse and of quality and productive. Performance is effective, and initiatives are ongoing and sometimes exceed expectations. It largely reflects improvement and development.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgement is awarded if the quality of the practices of the majority of those related to the criteria is at an acceptable level, and performance and initiatives are at the expected level and reflects some improvement and development.
Inadequate (4)	This judgement is awarded if the quality of the majority of the practices of those related to the criteria is at an inappropriate level, and the school's performance is at a level less than expected. This judgement does not reflect any realistic expectation of improvement.

The aspects indicated by '□' will be judged according to a four-grade scale. Detailed description in the Framework illustrates how judgements are interpreted for each aspect, overall effectiveness and the capacity to improve.

## Aspects Judgements and Interpretation

### Quality of outcomes

#### □ Students' academic achievement aspect

To judge this aspect, the following audits of procedures and practices are taken into account:

- diagnostic tests are conducted to identify students' abilities when they join the school
- students' performance results are analysed
- records of students' academic achievement are kept.

Aspect criteria are judged against how well students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds perform in the following criteria:

- ❖ expected standards in general, and especially in core subjects, against benchmarks of the school's curriculum and any international standards that may apply
- ❖ expected progress achieved, compared to their starting point, and in lessons with reference to their different abilities.

#### Judgements of the students' academic achievement aspect

Outstanding (1)	This is awarded when students regularly attain significantly high pass rates in internal tests and external examinations. Proficiency rates are also high. In lessons and in their work, the majority of students demonstrate standards that are significantly above age-related expectations and progress well beyond their prior abilities.
Good (2)	This is awarded when students attain high pass and proficiency rates in internal tests and external examinations. In lessons and in their work, the majority of students demonstrate standards that are above age-related expectations and progress well with reference to their prior abilities.
Satisfactory (3)	This is awarded when students attain average pass and proficiency rates in internal tests and external examinations. In lessons and in their works, the majority of students demonstrate appropriate age-related standards and make the expected progress in line with their prior abilities.
Inadequate (4)	This is given when a substantial number of students' pass and proficiency rates are generally low. In lessons and in their work, a lot of students demonstrate standards that are below the expected levels, making insufficient progress compared to age-related expectations and their prior abilities.

## □ Students' personal development aspect

To judge this aspect, the following audits of procedures and practices are taken into account:

- records of students' attendance and punctuality are kept
- records of students' participation in extra-curricular activities are kept
- incidents of misbehaviour and actions taken are documented.

Aspect criteria are judged according to the extent to which students, of all age-groups, perform against the following:

- ❖ effective participation in school life with self-confidence
- ❖ commitment to positive behaviour and respect for others' views, feelings and beliefs
- ❖ feeling safe, secure and free from bullying or other intimidation
- ❖ commitment to values of citizenship and understanding of Bahraini culture and Islamic values
- ❖ regular attendance and punctuality throughout the school day
- ❖ ability to learn independently
- ❖ working and communicating effectively with others.

## Judgements of the students' personal development aspect

Outstanding (1)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria of the aspect are judged as 'Outstanding', including students' participation in school life, their commitment to positive behaviour, and Islamic and citizenship values, and feeling safe and secure without any fear of intimidation. All other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Good'.
Good (2)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria are at least judged as 'Good', and all other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory'.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory', and some criteria of the aspect might be 'Good'.
Inadequate (4)	This judgement is awarded when any of the key criteria is judged as 'Inadequate'.

## Quality of main processes

### □ Teaching and learning aspect

To judge this aspect, the following audits of practices and procedures are taken into account:

- teachers' appropriate professional qualifications for their duties
- lesson plans that guide teachers' practices
- lessons start and end on time
- learning objectives are shared with students
- students' work is marked, and feedback is provided to support on-going learning.

Judging the aspect criteria depends on to what extent teachers can perform the following:

- ❖ applying teaching and learning strategies, and utilising educational resources, which lead to effective learning
- ❖ managing lessons to ensure that they are productive and orderly
- ❖ encouraging and motivating students towards learning through their active participation in lessons
- ❖ making effective use of assessment, homework and activities for learning
- ❖ developing students' higher order thinking skills
- ❖ implementing differentiation to meet students' needs and challenge their different abilities.

### Judgements of the teaching and learning aspect

Outstanding (1)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria are judged as 'Outstanding'. These include teachers using effective teaching strategies and utilising learning resources effectively, managing lessons productively, consistently motivating students to participate effectively during lessons, and making effective use of assessment for learning. All other criteria of the aspect are judged at least 'Good'.
Good (2)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria are at least 'Good' and all other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory'.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgement is awarded when key criteria are judged as at least 'Satisfactory', while some criteria of the aspect might be 'Good'.
Inadequate (4)	This judgement is awarded when any of the key criteria is judged as 'Inadequate'.

## □ Students' support and guidance aspect

To judge this aspect, the following audits of practices and procedures are taken into account:

- records of monitoring students' academic progress are kept
- records of monitoring students' personal development are kept
- curriculum information and different academic choices are provided to students
- parents are kept informed of their children's progress
- the school has rules and routines defining acceptable behaviour
- records of maintenance and risk assessment related to health and safety are kept.

Aspect criteria are judged according to the extent that the school carries out the following:

- ❖ meeting the learning needs of different groups of students
- ❖ meeting students' needs to enhance their personal development, and supporting them carefully whenever they face problems
- ❖ reinforcing students' different interests and experiences through extra-curricular activities
- ❖ providing a safe and healthy environment for students and staff
- ❖ students are inducted, and prepared for the next stage of their education and/or employment
- ❖ supporting students with disabilities through deployment of staffing and resources
- ❖ promoting students' life skills.

## Judgements of the students' support and guidance aspect

Outstanding (1)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria are judged as 'Outstanding'. These include meeting students' learning and personal needs, developing their various interests and experiences through extra-curricular activities, and providing a safe and healthy environment. All other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Good'.
Good (2)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria are at least 'Good', and all other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory'.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory' and some of them might be 'Good'.
Inadequate (4)	This judgement is awarded when any of the key criteria is judged as 'Inadequate'.

## Quality assurance of outcomes and processes

### □ Leadership, management and governance aspect

To judge this aspect, the following audits of procedures and practices are taken into account:

- staff have clear job descriptions that explain their roles and responsibilities
- the school regularly seeks students' and parents' views about the quality of its provision
- clear systems for ensuring and monitoring the school's performance are in place
- records are kept of staff professional development needs and the programmes implemented
- the school's written vision and mission statements
- school's plans and procedures for curriculum structure and sequence (and curriculum selection procedures in the case of private schools).

Aspect criteria are judged according to the following:

- ❖ self-evaluation and strategic planning processes focus on achieving the school's vision and mission
- ❖ leadership's role and responsibilities, at all levels, in managing and developing staff performance
- ❖ relationships among the school's staff that generate enthusiasm for development
- ❖ effective use of resources including budgeting, facilities and learning resources
- ❖ effective links with the local community and society as a whole
- ❖ the school's governance role in holding the school's leadership accountable for the school's performance, and in contributing to its strategic leadership (for private schools).

### Judgements of the leadership, management and governance aspect

Outstanding (1)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria are judged 'Outstanding'. These include strategic planning processes, managing and developing staff performance and morale, and inter-staff relationships. All other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Good'.
Good (2)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria are judged as 'Good', and all other criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory'.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgement is awarded when all key criteria of the aspect are at least 'Satisfactory' and some of them might be 'Good'.
Inadequate (4)	This judgement is awarded when any of the key criteria of the aspect is judged as 'Inadequate'.

## □ Overall effectiveness

### Judgements of the overall effectiveness

Outstanding (1)	This is awarded when both students' academic achievement and teaching and learning are judged as 'Outstanding'. This is unlikely to be the case if leadership, management and governance are less than 'Outstanding'. All other review aspects are not less than 'Good'. The school has some exemplary features and issues that other schools may use to develop their performance.
Good (2)	This is awarded when both students' academic achievement and teaching and learning are judged as 'Good'. This is unlikely to be the case if leadership, management and governance are less than 'Good'. It is expected that there is generally strong performance across the school. Some aspects might be 'Outstanding', and there are not any major weaknesses.
Satisfactory (3)	The school is judged 'Satisfactory' when students' academic achievement, their personal development, and teaching and learning are at least 'Satisfactory'. This is unlikely to be the case when leadership, management and governance are judged less than that.
Inadequate (4)	This is the case when any of the following: students' academic achievement, personal development, or teaching and learning is judged as 'Inadequate'. This is likely to be the case when leadership, management and governance are judged as 'Inadequate'.



## □ Capacity to improve

### Judgements of the capacity to improve

Outstanding (1)	This is awarded when the school has a continuous history of high performance or is achieving significantly high levels of improvement in its work. Leadership and management are competent and contribute to this sustained strong performance through accurate strategic planning and systematic monitoring, or due to achieving exceptional improvements and overcoming challenges effectively.
Good (2)	This is awarded when the school is proved to be capable of improving and developing its general performance. Leadership and management are aware of the strengths and areas that need improvement, and work confidently to continue improving processes and outcomes, and overcoming challenges that might be barriers to improvement according to a comprehensive and clear strategic plan.
Satisfactory (3)	This is awarded when the school's strategic planning is adequately based on self-evaluation results, in a way that ensures and improves the quality of its general performance.
Inadequate (4)	This is the case when the school faces challenges and obstacles that hinder or prevent it from improving its performance. Strategic planning is not in place, or not in line with work development priorities. Self-evaluation is weak, not in place, or only in its initial stages. Staff responsibilities are vague, or not well specified.

## Aspects and Criteria Description

### Quality of outcomes

#### □ Students' academic achievement aspect

Students' academic achievement is related to academic standards and the progress they make from their starting point, especially in core and specialised subjects. Students' results, at various stages of their education during their last three successive academic years, the progress they achieve during lessons, and the skills they acquire are also significant. These important factors reflect the school's leadership, management and governance effectiveness in planning for raising and monitoring students' achievement.

The two main criteria of academic achievement (standards and progress) are essential, and their judgement should always be aligned with each other. In rare cases when they are not, judgement of academic achievement matches the lesser rating of the two.

Judging students' academic achievement requires analysing their learning through lesson observations, pass and proficiency rates, results of the Ministry of Education (MoE) examinations, QQA's national examinations, and international examinations, scrutiny of students' written work and learning activities.

Judgement on students' academic achievement is in line with the judgement on teaching and learning, except in rare cases, such as:

Students sometimes develop a good level of education, due to family support that enables them to achieve high academic standards, while the review team evaluates school's teaching and learning as only 'Satisfactory'. The review report in such cases must clarify the situation and reflect the unique circumstances.

Aspect criteria are judged against how well students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds perform in the following areas:

#### ❖ **Expected standards, in general but especially in core subjects, against benchmarks of the school's curriculum and any international standards that may apply**

Evidence is collected by analysing students' results in internal tests, external examinations including MoE, QQA's national examinations, and international examinations, and establishing the extent to which these results reflect students' actual standards in lessons and in their written work. Performance is also assessed in all subjects (in general and core subjects), including Arabic, English, mathematics, science and specialised subjects in different educational tracks.

To reach a judgement, reviewers will analyse test and examination results, determining to what extent these are consistent and coherent. Samples of the school's tests and students' work are scrutinised. Pass and proficiency rates are considered, as these are judged against students' achievements in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding, and on the students' abilities to exhibit these. Although test and examination results may in some schools indicate high pass rates, it is important that they are in line with proficiency rates and accurately reflect students' cognitive standards and skill levels in lessons.

Reviewers use their knowledge and professional experience to evaluate students' performance in both general and core subjects against competences specified in the applied curriculum, forming a comparison with the standards achieved by their peers in similar schools that offer the same curriculum whenever data is available, especially in private schools.

### ❖ **Expected progress achieved with reference to their different abilities; when compared to their starting point and their progress in lessons**

Evidence is collected by scrutinising students' work, and the school's records of students' standards according to their different abilities over a period of time. Reviewers make sure that the school assesses students' abilities when they join the school, in order to determine the extent of their progress in lessons and work against their starting points. Students' progress is also observed through how well staff use assessment for learning, and how it is used in planning to develop students' standards.

Students' progress in lessons is evaluated in terms of how well all groups acquire basic skills in core and specialised subjects, and to what extent different categories of students make progress according to their abilities and starting points in the different activities provided in lessons. It must be noted that the amount of learning activities offered to students in any lesson does not necessarily give a measure of how well students are learning and making progress. Similarly, a wide range of remedial, reinforcement or enrichment programmes does not mean that students are making progress according to their abilities; unless having a clear impact on their academic results and progress.

### □ **Students' personal development aspect**

Students' personal development is an essential output in the education process. It is not just about students being quiet and disciplined. It is about students' punctuality, learning attitudes and behaviour in lessons, relationship with staff and peers, and respect for the school and all it offers.

Reviewers will evaluate how well students' personal development shows in their conduct, behaviour, enthusiasm, leadership skills, confidence, sense of citizenship, their passion for learning, attitudes, and their effective participation in all aspects of school life. Students'

abilities, their dedication and interest in gaining knowledge from different sources, rather than obtaining it only from textbooks, should be apparent in their learning.

Aspect criteria are judged according to the extent to which students, of all age-groups, perform against the following:

#### ❖ **Effective participation in school life with self-confidence**

Students' attitudes towards learning, in lessons and at school generally, are positive. They demonstrate a strong sense of self-confidence. They are enthusiastic about the school's provision and keen to participate positively, which helps developing and building their personalities. Students' enthusiasm in lessons is evident in their interaction with various learning activities and strategies, their self-confidence when they work independently, their interest in problem-solving. They are able to formulate meaningful questions and enthusiastically try to answer them in order to learn. They also participate in school events and extra-curricular activities.

Taking responsibility is not limited to leadership roles assigned to students during extra-curricular activities, but includes developing their ability to learn. This is evident in students' active response to new tasks and in initiating relevant and genuinely creative ideas. The quality and diversity of tasks assigned by the school, and the different group of students they target, will have an evident impact on forming students' leadership capabilities.

Evidence will come from various indicators such as participation rates in extra-curricular activities and student interviews, whether individual, collective, planned or unplanned. Also from records kept by the school of the roles students play in taking on responsibility throughout the school and its associated activities.

#### ❖ **Commitment to positive behaviour and respect for others' views, feelings and beliefs**

Students show, during and outside lessons, awareness of their rights, duties and responsibilities. They are expected to show positive attitudes and respectful conduct towards others, be self-disciplined, cooperative, interactive, and communicate with their peers and teachers with mutual respect. Students are considerate of each other's feelings, appreciate others' needs and interests, and have an attitude of forgiveness and harmony. Their self-awareness drives them to care for their appearance and keep the school's property, buildings and facilities in good condition. Evidence will come directly from observations, individual and collective interviews with students, and school records.

#### ❖ **Feeling safe and free from any intimidating behaviour**

All students should feel physically and psychologically safe. This clearly impacts on their academic attainment and self-initiatives. They are well aware of all measures and

procedures related to “Child Protection Protocol” and safety and security requirements. Students are also valued and respected, with their needs and age-related expectations being met. They learn in a safe environment free of intimidation.

Evidence is collected from student interviews, direct observation, and school records. Reviewers will evaluate the systems and processes used to deal with any harassment, aggressive behaviour, bullying, cyber bullying and the way the school has implemented the child protection policies and how it controls such incidents and how well they are documented and subsequently followed up. Reviewers will ensure that students are free from any intimidating behaviour.

### ❖ **Commitment to values of citizenship and understanding of Bahraini culture and Islamic values**

All students adhere to the national values that expect them to take responsibility in serving the school and community. They are positively and actively involved in programmes and activities that develop the homeland and maintain achievements. Students understand the values and principles of Islam, which are reflected in their behaviour in various situations. Students’ attitudes show understanding of Bahrain’s culture and heritage. They are familiar with Bahraini life, and have respect for and an obligation towards upholding the uniqueness of customs, traditions and practices such as respecting the National Anthem. Staff are expected to be aspirational role models and demonstrate the highest professional standards in order for students to be active citizens who contribute to the school community and beyond.

Evidence mainly comes from direct observation and discussion with students during and outside lessons. Students are asked what living in Bahrain means to them, and about their understanding of the distinctive nature of Bahrain’s culture. They are asked how they observe these values in practice in the school’s activities and programmes.

### ❖ **Regular attendance and punctuality throughout the school day**

Students are self-disciplined and abide by school rules and regulations. They are punctual and attend school and lessons on time. The percentage of students’ absenteeism is not high during non-official holidays, nor are there any significant incidences of students dropping out of lessons or playing truant.

Reviewers will evaluate to what extent the school follows up students’ punctuality, motivates all groups of students to come to school, and records their attendance, tardiness and follow up actions in order to ensure that the attendance of all groups of students is high.

### ❖ **Ability to learn independently**

Students employ a variety of methods and techniques to acquire knowledge, concepts

and skills in different situations, so that they become motivated and responsible for their own life-long learning. They become independent so that they are able to improve their grades, drawing on their previous experience and capabilities in research, experimenting and organising, and using a variety of educational resources. Students' demonstrate independent learning skills and resilience in learning, where each student expresses genuine ideas and demonstrates the skills and ability to retrieve the information needed in a variety of ways.

Evidence is collected from lesson observations, various examples of students' work, their accomplishments and other contributions to school life. This will be obtained through individual and collective interviews.

### ❖ **Working and communicating effectively with others**

Students work effectively and communicate with others to establish good relationships, demonstrating the skills of persuasion, delegation, leadership and paying attention to each other. They build on each other's thoughts and share responsibilities when they undertake tasks. It is expected that students' interaction is evident in their verbal and non-verbal communication and that they use various modern communication technologies in accordance with the school's rules and regulations. It is important for students to work and communicate with each other easily and clearly, without confusion, boredom, weariness or misunderstanding.

Evidence is gathered through observing students' verbal and non-verbal interactions in various situations, inside and outside classrooms and during supporting activities provided at various levels.

## **Quality of main processes**

### □ **Teaching and learning aspect**

Teachers' subject knowledge and qualifications are reflected in the quality of planning for teaching and learning in an orderly and productive way, ensuring that all groups of students regardless of their prior attainment are catered for in lessons. This is evident in planning lessons, implementation of teaching and learning strategies that motivate students through student-centred lessons, ensuring delivery of information, answering students' inquiries, giving alternative solutions to problems, and presenting various examples to illustrate and clarify meanings and ideas. Teachers demonstrate high levels of capability in handling misbehaviour during lessons, enable students to acquire knowledge and concepts, expand their understanding, develop their basic skills, employ modern technology across subjects, and meet students' different needs, including students with special educational needs (SEN).

Teachers emphasize students' active engagement in their learning, through taking responsibility for their learning. This can be achieved through correcting their own



mistakes, for example, as well using assessment for learning since it contributes to students' holistic personal development in addition to achieving learning goals. Inquiry and critical thinking skills are considered to be essential skills students should acquire. Teachers are vigilant in ensuring that students are equipped with these skills to be life-long learners.

Analyses of lesson observations and related documents greatly impact the judgement of teaching and learning effectiveness. No specific learning patterns or strategies are favoured. Instead, the focus is on evaluating to what extent teachers' techniques are successful and effective in supporting students of all groups and enhancing their learning.

Judging the aspect criteria depends on how well teachers can perform the following:

### ❖ **Applying teaching and learning strategies, and utilising educational resources, which lead to effective learning**

Teachers apply effective strategies to teach their subjects, using various methods and techniques that motivate and encourage students to discuss and debate, enabling them to understand and grasp the specific nature of the subjects while acquiring subject-specific knowledge and concepts and developing basic skills. It is important to meet all students' needs, including those who have special educational needs (SEN). There should be awareness that students learn in different ways, for example through curiosity, discovery and investigation. Students are expected to show skills as learners, utilising information technology and confidently and accurately applying the skills they gain in various educational situations. They can employ these skills across subjects and are able to use problem-solving skills in real-life situations.

Teachers enrich students' learning and enhance their experiences by effectively using learning sources, resources and information technology in creative and innovative ways. They ensure that the learning is relevant and meaningful as per the curriculum competencies and that students can apply it across subjects and to real life. The school's environment, spaces and resources are comprehensively used to go beyond just using textbooks in teaching.

Lesson plans provide a clear picture of teachers' efforts to go beyond just delivering facts. Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work reflect effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies, use of learning sources and resources, implementation of various activities and the impact of these on students' learning.

### ❖ **Managing lessons to be productive and orderly**

Lessons management is underpinned by purposeful teaching and learning in terms of planning, preparation, management, timekeeping and maintaining order. It is based on clear instructions and provision of learning activities that ensure productivity and optimal use of time. Learning objectives are shared with students and achievement of these

objectives is evaluated. To ensure effectiveness of the lessons, teachers firmly and wisely deal with unusual situations, especially when students incline towards erratic behaviour.

Reviewers observe if lessons begin and end on time, are orderly and productively managed, and class activities undertaken by students are balanced and time realistic.

### ❖ **Encouraging and motivating students towards learning by participating actively in lessons**

Teachers motivate students towards learning by attracting their attention and adopting motivational methods that are age-appropriate, suit the students' abilities and prior learning, and help develop curiosity and interest. This enables students to actively participate in lessons and activities, reinforcing and developing their performance and academic achievement. Students are supported to learn by using a wide range of interesting teaching strategies such as effective induction strategies, motivational activities, and modern technology devices.

Evidence is drawn from observing teachers' interaction with their students, their ability to attract students towards learning and enabling them to participate in activities continuously according to students' needs, to enable them to achieve their learning objectives.

### ❖ **Effective use of assessment, homework and activities for learning**

Teachers make sure that learning objectives are both set and met, informed by the use of assessment for learning. Teachers are expected to employ various assessment methods that effectively measure students' levels and performance and contribute to planning tasks that meet students' different learning needs. Learning is enhanced through providing homework and activities that are regularly marked and corrected, with comprehensive feedback given using motivational and guiding remarks. This enables students to recognise their strengths, and the areas they need to improve on so that they make even better progress.

Assessment for learning techniques, and school policies in using assessment results, are observed during lessons and in interviews. A thorough scrutiny of students' work and notebooks provides insight on the quality, variety and differentiation of the methods and activities used to enable students to progress in their work, and the quality of encouragement and guiding feedback in their written work.

### ❖ **Developing students' higher order thinking skills**

Teachers offer students sufficient opportunities to challenge in order to stimulate and develop their higher order thinking skills. These skills enable them to justify, reason, interpret their answers and express their points of view fluently. Students are expected to show efficiency in discovering new information, keep pace with the ever-increasing body



of knowledge available, progress cognitive development, and apply higher order thinking skills such as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, inference, induction and synthesis.

Evidence is drawn from lesson observations, evaluating how thinking skills are developed at the various stages of education.

### ❖ **Implementing differentiation to meet students' needs and challenge their different abilities**

Effective teaching and learning aims to broaden students' capacity. Learning activities meet students' individual needs, as well as the differing needs of groups of students with different needs and abilities. Differentiated activities consider different learning styles, multiple intelligences, diversity of experiences, cultures, desires and aspirations, different levels of understanding, and responses to study requirements.

Teachers need to know each student's abilities and challenge them as a basis for differentiated education, bearing in mind the overarching requirement of raising students' levels and improving their performance. For example, cooperative learning can be considered differentiated teaching when tasks are properly organised and distributed in accordance with students' interests and preferences. When an activity fails to capture the interest of the students or does not challenge them sufficiently as demonstrated by the fact that they complete tasks quickly and easily.

Evidence is gathered through observation of the quality of activities and tasks provided, as well as teachers' questions, responses and comments. These will determine if support and challenge is provided to all students in order to raise their academic attainment and progress to the highest level.

### □ **Students' support and guidance aspect**

The school makes efforts to induct students to ensure their safety, stability and smooth transition into the school, between year groups, and through the various stages of education. It also guides and promotes students' life skills for the future, including their academic, professional and social development. Students are appropriately supported in developing sound skills of citizenship through comprehensive care, pastoral nurturing, personal counselling, monitoring and following up their academic progress, enhancing experiences for the different types and levels of students, specially SEN and disabled students, monitoring their personal development, and enabling them to deal with misconduct and behavioural incidents, all of which, covered by a comprehensive work system. Various measures and arrangements are taken to ensure health, safety and security in and around the school.

Aspect criteria are judged according to the extent that the school carries out the following:

### ❖ Meeting the learning needs of different groups of students

The school has systems to assess and monitor the academic progress of different groups of students. This is not just limited to diagnostic and summative tests but includes what further efforts are made to determine how students learn, the circumstances that may influence their progress, and the support and guidance provided outside lessons. The school is expected to have detailed and relevant information on all student groups, from those with learning difficulties to the most able and gifted. It identifies difficulties, sets adequate remedial plans and programmes to help them improve. The school also oversees and documents students' academic progress effectively, evaluates their work and discusses it with them in order to determine the actions necessary to achieve the desired improvement quickly and effectively.

Judgement is based on the extent, diversity and comprehensiveness of the support systems and their relevance in meeting all students' educational needs.

### ❖ Meeting students' needs to enhance their personal development, and supporting them carefully whenever they face problems

The school makes use of all available information regarding students' personal aspects to achieve positive improvement in the building of students' characters, support them morally and financially, and implements behaviour management programmes. Schools are expected to support students in different ways, particularly with personal problems, allowing them to communicate positively with administrative and teaching staff and encouraging them to be open about their personal problems, situations, challenges and complaints. The school deals with each issue with sensitivity and care, documenting it while maintaining confidentiality.

Reviewers check to what extent the school is familiar with the problems students may face, and recognise the school's efforts in promoting good behaviour and controlling misconduct, focusing on special cases and financial and psychological problems such as strained family relations and selective mutism. Procedures and actions taken by the school to control and treat such problems are observed and evaluated for their effectiveness.

### ❖ Developing students' different interests and experiences through extra-curricular activities

The school broadens students' experiences and interests beyond the scope of the planned curriculum, providing additional opportunities for all categories to learn from their local community and the wider environment. This complements the targeted learning inputs already available through the school's curriculum. These opportunities may be internal or external activities, provided on an optional and voluntary basis, providing a diversity that enriches learning opportunities, enhances students' potential and abilities, matches their

desires and needs, and develops their interests. The school encourages field trips and guest speakers to inspire students, develop their talents and enrich their experiences.

Reviewers judge this aspect on the comprehensiveness and diversity of activities and programmes, choices available to different categories of students, and the extent of students' uptake of these opportunities.

### ❖ **Providing a safe and healthy environment for students and staff**

The school provides for its entire staff a risk-free, safe learning environment regardless of any barriers that it might face. It oversees health, safety and security issues in all activities, maintains the school buildings, monitors the environment and all facilities, including transportation and the school canteen ensuring that it provides healthy food and drink and deploys professionals in each field as needed.

Reviewers will observe and evaluate the school's efforts in assessing risks, promoting and encouraging all students and staff to be healthy, and looking after their interests. This will include the school's risk-assessment and maintenance of equipment and materials used in scientific laboratories, vocational workshops and fire extinguishers. Evaluation also includes the efforts made by the school's leadership in eliminating risks and ensuring the vigilance of the staff and students in recognising and dealing with potential risks and how to handle them.

Reviewers will ensure that the school has systems and procedures that are understood by everyone, including the steps they must follow whenever they feel unsafe, such evacuation plans and other safety measures.

### ❖ **Students' induction, and preparation for the next stage of education and/or employment**

The school implements programmes and various activities to induct new students, including those who join the school at different times, to enable them to settle easily, and help all to adapt to all aspects of school life so that they can be engaged in the school's activities and achieve their highest expectations. The school also provides comprehensive and clear advice and guidance regarding students' future academic and career choices, offering programmes and support activities to help them decide on the right educational track or career path. Changes that may occur in their personal development, health or academic progress are also monitored so that effective interventions can take place wherever needed.

Available support programmes such as; relevant activities, services, and resources are scrutinised and evaluated. The school's guidance and support plans, and the actual support offered to students are evaluated through interviews with staff, students and parents.

## ❖ **Supporting students with disabilities through deployment of staffing and resources**

The school effectively employs staffing, resources and equipment to support students with disabilities and special educational needs. It helps them to access all aspects of learning and reach their full potential by overcoming obstacles and enabling them to fully participate in all aspects of school life. Careful consideration to their needs is essential, including practical consideration such as; utilising a suitable area for them in the school premises and using appropriate assistive technology, e.g., software and devices, to enable them to complete their work efficiently inside and outside classrooms. The availability of specialists, such as an inclusion specialist, speech therapist and/or other professionals who will meet students' different needs, is considered.

The quality of the school programmes, services and supporting resources offered to special needs students is evaluated. This is checked through the school's support and guidance plans, by observing the support the students receive, and through interviews with students, staff and parents.

## ❖ **Promoting students' life skills**

The curriculum offered including the enrichment activities should provide students of all different ages and groups with appropriate life skills. These will include opportunities for communication, negotiation, objective criticism, gathering information, reading charts, drawing and reading maps, problem-solving, writing research papers, drafting letters, e-learning, and curriculum vitae preparation. This will also include using dictionaries and information technology skills. Students should have opportunities to take informed decisions and develop entrepreneurial skills, seizing opportunities to study or participate in work related experiences. Students are then able to deal with different situations and initiate activities such as taking advantage of available resources including laboratories, educational centres and media technologies.

Reviewers evaluate these skills through direct observation and they will discuss the school's efforts in enabling students to acquire life skills which match their educational and career requirements. The school's role in offering appropriate locations, facilities and time needed to practice and adequately acquire such skills, and offering students the chance to participate in relevant activities at school during lessons and through extra-curricular activities, is to be observed and evaluated.

## Quality assurance of outcomes and processes

### □ Leadership, management and governance aspect

Senior and middle leadership should have practical experience and professional competency that enable them, in cooperation with staff and the school's stakeholders, to set a clear vision focusing on achieving the highest academic and personal outcomes for all groups of students and demonstrate the capacity for improvement. Leadership plays an effective role in developing and bringing about the desired changes by taking the right decisions for school improvement. It is committed to carrying out accurate self-evaluation, strategic planning, and managing, inspiring and motivating both students and employees effectively. It enhances teamwork where ethics and values prevail, strengthens community and human relations among the staff, and motivates them to develop their performance with enthusiasm and determination.

The school's leaders are expected to utilise resources efficiently, including budgeting and evaluating the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions, providing appropriate facilities and effective educational resources to ensure an educational environment that provides high quality education, supported by programmes and local and community-shared activities. Separation of the roles and responsibilities of the school's professional leadership and its governance – as applicable – should be clearly defined, understood and respected.

There should be professional dialogue at all times. In private schools, it is expected that the Board of Directors or Advisory Group – if applicable – cooperates effectively with the school's leadership, takes responsibility for the school's performance, and participates in setting the strategic plan.

Judgement of the leadership, management and governance aspect is usually in line with judgements on both academic achievement and teaching and learning, except in rare cases such as: a new leadership, supported by an energetic effective administrative team, might have made a strong start but there has been insufficient time for the impact to reflect on improving teaching and learning, and on raising academic achievement. In such case, the review team members may judge leadership, management and governance as 'Good' while both academic achievement and teaching and learning are only 'Satisfactory'.

The school's capacity to improve is closely linked to the judgement on leadership, since key factors that determine the judgement are linked to strategic planning, self-evaluation, and recent improvements the school's leadership has achieved, especially regarding students' academic achievement, their personal development and improving teaching and learning. The role of senior teachers and subject coordinators holding key positions will also be taken into consideration when coming to a decision on leadership.

Aspect criteria are judged according to the following:

### ❖ **Self-evaluation and strategic planning processes are focusing on achieving the school's vision and mission**

The school has the ability to carry out accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation of its performance and use its results to identify strengths and areas for development, ensuring quality of performance. Rigorous self-evaluation should be linked to the improvement and planning for development, based on accurate work priorities.

The strategic plan is an essential component that reflects the school's vision and mission and puts them into action, leading to achievement of the required improvement. This criterion does not focus on having a particular document, but on the quality of the strategic plan and the activities and programmes included in the action plans, in addition to the plans related to organising and implementing the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In private schools, the curriculum is expected to be reviewed regularly with a clear focus on its scope and sequence. Requirements of the adopted curriculum/certification should be satisfied.

Clear steps, processes and procedures in the plans are implemented on time and evaluated based on specific performance indicators, which indicates the leadership's awareness of the importance of these aspects. This should be achieved by putting aims and plans into effective practices, while monitoring the implementation so that decisions become reality in classrooms and in all aspects of school life. The quality of self-evaluation reflects the leadership's dedication and ability to carry out the steps necessary to bring about improvement. It should be regularly updated and monitored for its impact on improvement and development, particularly in relation to students' achievement and personal development, as two major outcomes of the quality of teaching and learning, and support.

### ❖ **Leadership's role and responsibilities, at all levels, in managing and developing staff performance**

The senior leadership manages both the teaching and administrative staff efficiently, with clearly defined and understood roles in internal teams and committees. Leadership takes the necessary steps to deploy staff effectively according to their qualifications and experience and strives to raise their competency through a performance management system that focuses on continuous performance evaluation and professional development programmes.

The clarity of roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leadership is reviewed, as well as the role of school committees and councils in quality control, performance improvement, following up teachers' professional development programmes and measuring their impact on performance, reflected in students' achievement and progress.



Private schools are expected to have different governance arrangements such as a 'Board of Directors' or an 'Advisory Board'. Consequently, reviewers determine if professional and management roles are separated so that each level of leadership fulfils its role effectively.

### ❖ **Relations among school's staff that provoke enthusiasm towards development**

Leaders and staff have positive social and professional relationships. They cooperate and communicate well with each other, relying on consultation and teamwork to ensure a high degree of commitment and responsibility. Effective leaders should be exemplary role models, demonstrating the highest professional standards in all of their undertakings, their practices, efforts and attitudes influence the conduct, work styles and attitudes of employees at all levels. Leadership is inspiring and motivating staff and other stakeholders, making them enthusiastic about work and encouraging them to bring about change and supporting the exchange of experiences. A good leader encourages an equitable distribution of responsibilities, delegation of authority, and an open culture in which leadership is able to receive complaints, suggestions and handling them, thereby achieving the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Reviewers evaluate how well leaders guide and support staff, through effective continuous professional development, in achieving the school's aims and targets. Reviewers also evaluate and observe the level of staff responses, and the reactions and nature of communication between administrative and teaching staff. This is done through discussion with teachers in meetings and other situations, alongside observing motivation and guidance techniques and scrutinising management records.

### ❖ **Effective use of resources including budgeting, facilities and learning resources**

The school's leadership makes sure that learning resources such as textbooks, tools, office equipment and information and communication technology are available and optimally utilised. Additionally, school buildings, facilities and playgrounds are used to facilitate, support learning and help students acquire and develop their knowledge, concepts and skills while motivating students to learn, and encouraging them to actively participate in the school life.

Reviewers evaluate how well leaders use the budget to achieve priorities. Evidence comes directly from lesson observations, evaluating how efficiently resources and facilities are used to support learning. Focus is also on enrichment of the learning environment, and utilisation of facilities that ensure a conducive educational environment and provide high quality teaching which impacts on students' learning. The extent that students broaden their experiences and concepts, rather than the quality of the resources themselves, will be considered.

### ❖ **Effective links with the local community and wider society**

The school makes use of national institutions, local facilities, various community events and programmes, local expertise such as the legislative assemblies, exhibitions, charitable societies, and other schools in developing and expanding students' knowledge and their expertise. Local communities should benefit from the school through students' participation in local activities and by use of the school facilities to educate community members, such as allowing them to participate in activities including lectures and the use of school halls and playgrounds. The Parents' Council should be encouraged to play an active role in achieving this.

Reviewers observe and evaluate the extent of the school's relations with the community, including parents and community institutions, and how it is taking advantage of available resources in the local community and the wider society. The impact of this interaction on the quality of education provided to students and their personal development is evaluated.

### ❖ **The 'Board of Directors' role in holding leadership accountable for the school's performance, and in their contributions to its strategic leadership (for private schools)**

In private schools, the Board of Directors provides strategic direction to the school's leadership. They contribute effectively in developing the school plans, especially in relation to financial matters. They take responsibility for monitoring and investing in the staff, the school environment, and the learning resources.

Reviewers evaluate the Board of Directors' role in providing a clear vision for the school's work consistent with its goals and in holding the school leaders accountable for the school's performance and students' welfare based on the highest educational standards. Focus will mainly be on whether management and the owner(s) are aware of the ongoing work at the school, and what is offered in terms of appropriate support and motivation that encourages growth and development. The important role of this group in ensuring that the school has effective procedures and systems for meeting its commitment to parents by providing high quality outcomes in relation to students' performance, and the capacity to bring about further improvement, will be evaluated.

### □ **Overall effectiveness interpretation**

Judgement on the overall effectiveness is mainly dependent on the quality of the school's outcomes, namely students' academic achievement and their personal development, taking into account the quality of teaching and learning and support and guidance judgements. Consideration is also given to the role of leadership, management and governance in ensuring the quality of outcomes and processes, considering the extent to which they succeed in meeting students' needs, parents' satisfaction and pursuing the



school's mission. Parents' views will be sought through online questionnaires available on the QQA's website ([www.qqa.edu.bh](http://www.qqa.edu.bh)). They can also highlight any concerns during the interview with members of the review team. The school might also have its own evidence regarding parents' satisfaction.

The impact of both teaching, and support and guidance on students' outcomes is checked and evaluated. Focus will also be on the impact that leadership and management has on what is provided, and subsequently on students' academic achievement and personal development. All these factors are considered and interlinked to enable the review team to reach a collective professional judgement on the school's performance.

In most reviews, judgements of the five key aspects are consistent and coherent. If outcomes are 'Good', it is generally due to the sound quality of the school's processes supported by its leadership and management. However, where there are some exceptions – but the overall effectiveness is not impacted – regarding the coherence of judgements between school processes and the effectiveness of its outcomes and leadership, the review team provides evidence to clearly explain and justify their judgements. Such exceptions are reflections of the complexity frequently involved in arriving at a coherent, consistent, evidence-based judgement on all review aspects, and subsequently on the overall effectiveness judgement of the school.

#### □ Capacity to improve interpretation

Judging the school's capacity to improve considers the school's history, including recent performance, in terms of accuracy, effectiveness of self-evaluation processes and strategic planning. The availability of appropriate human resources is also considered, including administrative, technical and teaching staff, and their ability to face challenges. These factors are essential in enabling the school to improve its performance according to work priorities, thereby enhancing and raising students' academic achievement and personal development to higher levels or sustaining existing high levels of performance.

Reviewers assess points of strength and identify issues that need improvement. Consequently, the school must produce an action plan identifying the measures and procedures it will take to achieve the required results.

## REVIEW GUIDANCE

The review process helps develop schools' performance, which is measured through clear criteria. Additionally, it contributes to the identification of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school. This is underpinned by a professional discussion with the school about its work and its self-evaluation. The Review Report provides the school with the judgements arising from the review, including recommendations from the review aspects, overall effectiveness and capacity to improve. The task of improvement is the responsibility of the school and those who give it day-to-day support.

The review methodology and guidance have been developed to form the basis of the schools' review model to be used in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

### The approach to reviews

Self-evaluation plays a central part in the review process. Schools are asked to evaluate their overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, quality of outcomes and processes, and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance in quality assuring outcomes and processes. This is done by using the Review Framework and analysis of the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), using the same criteria that reviewers use. Schools are also asked to audit how fully they follow particular procedures and practices. Accurate self-evaluation will enable the school to identify strengths and areas of improvement regarding its provision.

Reviewers use the evidence the school offers in its (SEF), alongside with other documents the school provides, to form hypotheses about the school. These are included in a Pre-Review Brief (PRB). Reviewers test the hypotheses by directly closely observing students and teachers at work, reviewing students' work, analysing data in the school documents, and conducting interviews with administrative, teaching staff, and students. Parents will be surveyed and interviewed regarding their views concerning the school's performance.

The review approach is based on collaboration between the school and the review team. Through the (SEF), the school provides the main source of information for the review, thereby contributing to preparation of the (PRB) and review plan to be discussed with the school's leadership. The school will be asked to arrange the interviews for reviewers to talk with the administrative and teaching staff who can shed light on the main issues and hypotheses in the (PRB). The school will be able to suggest where particular practices, strong or weak, can be seen in the school.

Reviewers will form judgements about the school's provision based on the evidence they collect during the review. Regular feedback to the school's leadership is an essential part of the review process, so that the school staff are fully involved and understand how the judgements evolve.

## The review stages and procedures

### Review stages

The on-site review will normally extend for three days. The following table explains the stages of the review:

Time	Stages
8 weeks prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train the school's leadership, as needed, on completing the self- evaluation form (SEF).</li> </ul>
6 weeks prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school sends the (SEF) and other key documents to the concerned directorate.</li> </ul>
4 weeks prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Lead Reviewer writes the Pre-Review Brief (PRB) based on the (SEF), the PQ analysis and any other available information.</li> </ul>
1 week prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PRB is sent to the school and the school starts preparations for the meetings outlined in the review plan</li> <li>The Directorates of Schools Review notify the school of the dates of the review and the name of the Lead Reviewer.</li> </ul>
2 days prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Lead Reviewer visits the school to clarify and discuss the (PRB) with the school's senior leadership, and plan for the review including assigning an appropriate team room.</li> </ul>
1 day prior to the review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school completes its arrangements for the required meetings.</li> <li>The school contacts a sample of parents to conduct a meeting with the Review team as scheduled in the review plan.</li> </ul>
On-site review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A meeting is conducted with the school's senior leadership to clarify any concerns regarding the (PRB) and review plan arrangements.</li> <li>The school is requested to arrange meetings with academic and administrative staff, students and parents.</li> <li>The school provides documents and samples of students' work and any other information required.</li> <li>The Lead Reviewer gives brief feedback to the school's leadership at the end of each day, and in more details at the beginning of the next day.</li> <li>Final verbal feedback will be given to the school's leadership on the final day of the Review.</li> </ul>

6 weeks after the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school receives the draft of the Review Report for an accuracy check.</li> </ul>
One week after the school receives the draft report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school submits comments, to the concerned directorate, to be integrated where appropriate into the draft Report.</li> </ul>

## Pre-review visit procedures

### Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)

The school should send the completed SEF within the deadline assigned to the concerned directorate, with the following documents:

- the school's parents' booklet - if available - or any similar documents
- any key documents that clarify the analyses of the school's performance, either produced internally or from an independent body
- the school's plans and timetable of events
- lessons schedule, teachers' weekly schedule with clear period timings
- students' attainment results
- school's development and improvement plans.

### Pre-Review Brief (PRB)

The Pre-Review Brief (PRB) is prepared by the Lead Reviewer. It should be brief, but capture the most important points about the school. It will draw primarily on the (SEF), PQ results and any other documents provided by the school.

For each of the main questions in the Review Framework, it will identify the following:

- apparent strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in relation to the criteria in the Review Framework
- hypotheses about the performance of the school and factors likely to be influencing it
- any gaps in evidence
- areas where the judgements in the (SEF) conflict with the evidence cited
- internal inconsistencies between aspects of processes and outcomes, for example students' achievements against the quality of teaching; personal development against support and guidance
- parents' remarks (if available).

The (PRB) and the Review Plan and resulting requirements will be discussed with the school's leadership in the scheduled meeting, then with the review team in the pre-review meeting.

## Procedures during the review visit

During their time in school, reviewers will:

- observe lessons
- scrutinise students' work and monitor their standards and progress
- analyse any available data and statistics about the performance of students
- observe school activities
- study any additional documents that are related to the review aspects
- hold interviews and discussions with administrative and teaching staff, students and parents
- inspect the premises and the school's resources.

Reviewers have a code of conduct, which will be observed at all times:

### Code of conduct

Reviewers will uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that school staff are treated fairly during the review. These standards are ensured through the following code:

- evaluate objectively and impartially
- report honestly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity
- treat all those they meet with courtesy, and do all they can to minimise the stress on those involved in the Review
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those whose work is being evaluated, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and the nature of their work.

## Lessons observations

Lesson observations are scheduled in order to follow up the PRB hypotheses. Reviewers will normally spend at least 60% of their time in school observing lessons. Focus will be on core subjects such as Arabic, mathematics, science, English and specialised subjects according to the educational tracks, as in technical teaching, and based on the language used in teaching. Reviewers will sample lessons across the school, therefore, it is possible that not all teachers will be seen. Reviewers will usually observe a whole lesson, except in some cases, part of the lesson will be observed, in which they will stay for at least 20 minutes.

The lead reviewer will not report on observations of individual lessons to the Principal or other senior managers except in exceptional circumstances, such as when issues of safety are involved.

Reviewers will review lessons' plans during observations, try to minimise disruption to lessons, and will not intervene in a lesson in any way; but if the opportunity arises to sensitively talk with students about their work they are likely to do so.

## Discussions

Discussions with students, parents, administrative and teaching staff are likely to occupy a good proportion of review time. Reviewers will conduct pre-arranged interviews with students to gain their views on the competence of the school in supporting their academic and personal progress, as well as having random meeting during breaks, extra-curricular activities and students' council. Meeting will be held with parents, administrative and teaching staff and perhaps others if needed. The Lead Reviewer will ask to meet with the proprietor of the school of the private school (or their representative) and/or one or more members of the governing body, board of directors or advisory group.

Reviewers will aim through discussions to reach a clear view about different aspects of the review including finding answers to the questions in the PRB that are related to the review criteria. All educational practices will be monitored, and their impact on students' achievement and personal development determined.

Discussions will focus on:

- How particular self-evaluation judgements in the SEF were made
- How processes in the school, such as self-evaluation and new students induction are managed
- What has been done about particular concerns
- Priorities for the school and how they are identified
- Recent developments and how they were implemented, and plans for the future
- Perceptions of strengths and areas for improvement
- How the views of staff, students and parents are handled.

## Examination of students' work

Reviewers will see students' work as they visit lessons, and the school will be asked to gather all the written work of a sample of students' in core subjects for reviewers to look at and analyse.

## Team meetings

Meetings of the review team are essential to develop the review plans and reach consensus on debatable issues that arise during the review. They will discuss group and individual views perceived in the interviews, which play a vital role in reaching collective judgements about review aspects, overall effectiveness and capacity to improve.

The final judgements are not made by averaging or aggregating the grades for each criterion, nor is the 'overall effectiveness' judgement arrived at by averaging the grades for the individual criteria. These are professional judgements, made on the basis of weighing all the evidence and taking into account documents given by the school in the SEF and during the review, and considering the particular circumstances of the school.

## Feedback

Effective reviews are not possible unless the reviewers engage in professional dialogue with the school and with each other. Throughout the review, they will share observations and hypotheses with the school in a way that allows the school to discuss and respond. They will be open to receiving additional evidence.

The feedback will be delivered as follows:

- the Lead Reviewer will discuss the progress of the review and the emerging hypotheses and issues with the school's leadership each day
- the Lead Reviewer will discuss the positives and areas for improvement with the school's leadership in brief at the end of each day, and in detail the next morning
- the review team will feedback its overall findings and results to the school's leadership by the end of the last day.

This oral feedback is not considered a final report. The main judgements offered at the oral feedback are provisional and may change. If they do change as a result of the quality assuring procedures, the Principal will be informed by the Lead Reviewer before the written report is issued.

## Post-review visit procedures

### The review report

The Lead Reviewer will prepare the draft report after quality assuring the review judgement. The draft will then be sent to the school for a factual accuracy check within six weeks after the review. The school then has five days to check the report for perceived inaccuracies and propose reasons for amendments.



The final report will then be sent to the school and published after approval of the QQA Board and the endorsement of the Cabinet.

## Complaints

The Directorates expect reviews to be completed efficiently, but in some exceptional cases the school may not be satisfied with any aspect of the review process. In this case the school Principal should discuss this with the Lead Reviewer and the quality assurance director immediately. If the matter is not resolved, there are procedures for the school to follow with the concerned Directorate and the Principal can file a formal complaint as per the QQA policy and procedures.

Complaints can only relate to reviewers' behaviour, their compliance with the code of conduct, and the quality of communication and interaction during the review. Complaints cannot be filed about review judgements. In turn, according to QQA's regulations and policies, the review team is entitled to file a complaint in the event of any violation by the school.

## Appeals

In the event of a school not being satisfied with the judgements of the review, it has the right to submit a written appeal to the Director of the Directorate concerned. This has to be as a formal letter as well as the Appeal Form, with verified evidence enclosed. This should be carried out in accordance with the QQA policy and procedures and timeframe.

## Monitoring visits

Schools judged as 'Inadequate' are subject to monitoring visits, in line with QQA's policy and procedures. Consequently, the school must produce an action plan identifying the steps that it will urgently take to achieve the necessary results. The planned actions must be tightly aligned with the report recommendations and include details so that reviewers, during monitoring, are able to trace the impact of the specific actions that have been planned and taken. The school's capacity to address the review recommendations will determine the monitoring visits judgement.

## Preserving evidence

The school review Directorates keep a record of all evidence concerning each school review for a period of not less than one year.

## Reviewing 'Outstanding' schools

A one-day review is set to review schools, which were judged 'Outstanding' in their last review. At the end of the day, the review team presents feedback to the school, advising whether the school is sustaining its outstanding performance and continuously developing and improving, or it needs to undergo a full three days - or more - review to reach an

accurate judgement about its overall effectiveness. The review will be scheduled according to the QQA's policies and regulations.

### Review quality assurance

Schools will be invited to give their views on the review, and the extent of reviewers' adherence to the code of conduct, to the quality assurance director during his/her visit to the school. Schools will be asked to complete a post-review questionnaire to further develop reviews, returning it to the concerned Directorate.

### Child protection protocol

The review team will gather information about the school from different sources, and may receive information or claims that could relate to harassment or threatening the safety of the students. Should the review team hear such claims from the PQs, the interview with parents or the students, the issue will be taken very seriously and the procedures of the relevant Directorate will be followed. Key actions include:

- keeping all names and information about cases confidential
- checking that the school's leadership is taking the necessary and appropriate measures on this issue
- the relevant authority will be notified.

The schools review directorates are not responsible for dealing with these cases but will highlight them and check whether the school is taking effective measures, and that the relevant authority is notified.

### Non-Compliance with the review procedures

In the event of a school not complying with any of the review requirements, the school will be given an 'Inadequate' overall judgement as per QQA policy and procedures.

