



THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT

AWARDS EVENING 2012 Head Teacher's Annual Report

Al Baraka Grand Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 02 October 2012

Honoured guests, parents, colleagues and students –

Welcome to this year's Awards Evening, which our Founder and Director, Mme Vera Al-Mutawa, was keen to host in this superb new ballroom. Its scale and quality of finish certainly fit the occasion.

Philosophy behind the Awards Evening

This evening we are celebrating the various successes of almost 250 prizewinning students of the academic year 2011-2012.

The students here this evening have excelled in a number of ways. Some, the Subject Award winners, scored the top marks in their end-of-year examinations. Others, the Excellence Award winners, achieved top grades (A, or in some cases A*) in at least half of their subjects. Yet others, the Special Award winners, had notable successes in extracurricular pursuits.

To quote our Principal, Mr Paul Shropshire:

"The philosophy of BSK is to enable all students to be academically outstanding, all students to participate in sports as a life-long mission and all students to be artistically creative."

Recognising and celebrating success – never taking it for granted – is part of our shared culture at BSK, and rightly so. Growing up is tough! We, as adults, can look *back* and see our own successes in their proper contexts. We can see how those successes helped us to get where we are.

Young people, however, cannot *truly* see the end result of all their hard work and dedication. It hasn't happened yet! That's where *we* – parents and teachers – come in. We have key roles in helping young people to *visualise* successful futures. That isn't vanity or arrogance; it's basic human psychology. Without a target, we cannot aim. Without an aim, we have no direction.

So evenings such as this, where we paint – in vivid colours – a broad picture of success, and where we congratulate and applaud our most successful students, play a vital part in motivating and inspiring both the prizewinners and *other* students, some of whom are here – and *all* of whom we want to see on this stage next year!

Purposes of the Awards Evening

Before the Middle and Upper Department Coordinators introduce to you the Subject and Excellence Award winners, I would like to explain to you three other purposes of this Awards Evening.

Those purposes relate to our responsibilities towards you, our valued parents: to share key aspects of the Secondary Leadership Team's vision with you; to outline key aspects of our development plan for the year ahead – essentially to make you some promises; and to enable you to judge how we have performed relative to the promises that I made you last year.

Vision

So, to vision. It's very clear:

- happy students: secure, engaged, fulfilled;
- focused students: self-aware, mentally robust, dedicated and purposeful;
- pleasant students: disciplined, considerate, gentle and generous.

Staff-to-student and student-to-student relationships that nurture; partnerships that are effective.

The best schools are *collaborative* environments, true learning *communities*.

There, in a nutshell, is the vision – and our responsibilities, as educators, flow from it.

Rewards System

Last year, I promised you that we would be working to develop the Rewards System for students.

A policy by which teachers award exactly two housepoints in every lesson – reflecting BSK's twin pillars of achievement and attitude – had been introduced six months previously.

That system is now very well embedded, with teachers using it skillfully by explaining to students *why* their achievements and attitudes have merited a point, thereby reinforcing a wide range of beneficial actions and attributes – during *every* lesson, and *every* school day.

However, that wasn't enough. Remember the philosophy: a *rounded* education, in which *all* students may taste *some form* of success. Housepoints had always been given for placings in Sports Day events, but we set about expanding the range of competitions that could earn points. They now include Debating, Art, Mathematics, Physics, two Science Fairs, Robotics, the new BrainSTEM quizzes and competitions during Book Week.

In addition, performers at the Music Festival Week, this Awards Evening, the Festival of Achievement, School Productions and ISACK Sports Champions and Swimming Medallists all receive generous helpings of housepoints.

Students who help during breaktimes in the Learning Resource Centre, who perform at an assembly, win one of our Facebook quizzes or who serve in a variety of other ways now also receive housepoints.

Certificates at different levels are issued as students achieve bronze, silver, gold and higher targets, and thanks to the efforts of the Middle Department Coordinator, Miss Estelle Jones, we were able to pilot a system of giving students reward vouchers with cash values.

The humble housepoint has become the currency of success – valued by students across the Secondary phase, and an increasingly effective motivator.

This year, the next stage in this plan is to expand the Housepoint System beyond *individual* achievement, to further motivate students within the same House – England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales – to want to work together and to achieve for their House, their team.

A win for one will be a win for the team. And conversely, a loss for one will cause the team to want to support, to encourage, to help resolve the issue. This is the *positive peer pressure* effect.

Next year, please judge us – judge *me* – on that promise!

PSHE Developments

I also spoke to you last year about Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and its central role in teaching students to live healthy, positive, ethical and outcome-oriented lives. In Upper Department, we had just started involving class tutors in the active development of particular sections of the PSHE courses. The tutors rose to that challenge, with the result that the PSHE programmes are now more engaging and directly relevant to students' circumstances.

For this year, we have taken that to the next level, utilising the specialist PSHE skills of Miss Paula Russell, who is serving as a consultant to the Department Coordinators. Together, they have already made solid progress in auditing the courses against student needs.

Staff Appointments

There have been several other important staff appointments for this academic year.

Mr John Lambert, our most senior Department Coordinator, is now an Assistant Head Teacher. He will be using his strong project management skills to develop deeper links with outside agencies including the British Council, Club 25, Dar al Athar al Islamiyyah and LoYAC. He will be seeking to involve a greater number of students in activities with a strongly cultural, social or environmental dimension.

Also, given Miss Emma Bowie's appointment as Sixth Form Coordinator, and Mr David Howarth's promotion to Secondary English Coordinator, Mr Jonathan Storer has now become a Senior Teacher, inheriting the responsibility for Records and Reports. He has also started supporting Mr John Lambert with Upper Department pastoral care and interventions, as is the new Assistant Department Coordinator, Miss Khadijah Broome.

Furthermore, Miss Alya Muflihi has been appointed to a newly created post as Student Performance Coordinator. This is a crucial new role. The school has invested heavily in a powerful information management system which Miss Alya, together with Mr Jon Storer, will be using to develop analytical tools to better inform teachers, curriculum managers and department coordinators about student performance. Another of Mr John Lambert's new roles will be to develop systems by which such data can be used effectively, at a human level, to help students improve their performance.

The other Assistant Head Teacher, Mr Nicholas Smith, is currently working hard to introduce the parent portal website that our Chairman, Mr Sadiq Al-Mutawa, promised you at last April's Festival of Achievement. You will have noticed that, on the June 2012 reports, we included housepoint totals, authorised and unauthorised attendance data and also punctuality data. But that is only the beginning of our commitment to keep parents better informed. In time, we will provide all of that, plus behaviour information and assessment data to parents, in real time, via a secure log-on.

Campus Developments

Last year I promised you that we would continue to develop the BSK campus, and so a number of important developments took shape this summer, including:

- five large History and Geography rooms in the new Portman Building;
- a new Year 10 and 11 break area, with its own canteen facilities;
- and a much more spacious, functional and attractive Sixth Form Centre.

Examination Results

It has become customary for me to report to you, at this Awards Evening, about our Year 11-13 students' external examination results.

The proportion of GCSE and IGCSE entries at grades A*-C was again 93%, with over 60% of those at A* or A. Three students – Tala El-Roz, Nicholas Zoghbi and Reem Almonoofy – achieved straight A* grades.

A further six students achieved A* grades in all but one of their subjects and a total of twelve students had no grade, in any of their subjects, below an A.

But a more important indicator than the top end for BSK as a school is how well the average – the median – Year 11 student performed. So I'll tell you: the year group had exactly one hundred students, and the fiftieth ranked student achieved one A*, three As, a B and a C.

Together with the Ministry of Education examinations, that student scored 91% in terms of the Kuwait equalisation, enough to qualify for a range of university scholarships. Had that student wished to continue at school with a view to joining a world class university, they would also have met the requirements for entry to the Sixth Form.

At AS Level, our Year 12 students scored a 98% A-E pass rate – a new BSK record!

And for the third year in a row, our Year 13 students achieved a 100% A*-E pass rate at A Level. Moreover, a record 94% of those were at grade C or above.

More Year 13 students than ever went to Britain, joining King's College London; the University of Glasgow; Nottingham; Bangor; Queen Mary, University of London; the University of East Anglia and the very beautiful University of Greenwich.

Three students went to Canada, joining McGill, Carleton and the University of Toronto.

In the USA, two students gained entry to Cornell and one each went to Purdue and Penn State.

Others joined the University of Auckland in New Zealand, the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, Ireland and the Malaysian campus of the University of Nottingham.

The range of subjects was immense – including Neuroscience, Dentistry, Mathematics, English Literature, Accountancy, History, Political Science, Operational Research, Medicine, Economics, Psychology and several flavours of Engineering: including Mechanical, Computer, Chemical and Environmental.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, the school is in great shape. We know where we want to go and we have the plans and the determination to get there. Standing still has never been the BSK way, and it never will be. Your children deserve better.

Warm congratulations to all this evening's prizewinners. You've done brilliantly; keep it up!

Thank you to all the subject leaders, tutors and teachers for their staunch professionalism and their untiring efforts on behalf of the students.

And thank you also to our valued parents, for your crucial role in supporting and encouraging your children. As I said last year – and I'll probably say every year – you are vital partners in our work. We appreciate your support, your friendship and, at times, your welcome critique.

I trust that you will enjoy the rest of your evening. Thank you very much.

Andrew Moulden
Head Teacher