



THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT

AWARDS EVENING 2014 Head Teacher's Annual Report

Al Baraka Grand Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 19 October 2014

Excellencies, honoured guests, parents, colleagues and, most importantly, students –

Welcome to this year's Awards Evening, which due to the generosity of our Director, Mme Vera Al-Mutawa, we have for the third year been able to host in this superb ballroom.

Awards Philosophy

This evening we are celebrating various successes of over 300 award-winning students who were in Years 5-12 during the academic year 2013-14.

These students have excelled in a range of different 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 A*) in at least half of their subjects.

Yet others, the Special Award winners, had notable successes in extracurricular pursuits.

Finally, the Head Teacher's Award is given to one student in each year group whom Mr Mark Brisbane or I think best exemplified the overall achievements and attitudes which we value at The British School of Kuwait.

This awards matrix reflects the balance that exists within BSK's stated mission: to provide an education that is academically *rigorous*, that is *rounded* in terms of the values, attitudes and interpersonal skills that it helps to develop, and that is *relevant*, in terms of its applicability to real life situations – both professional and personal.

Any school which prepares students for academic success without also providing the opportunities to prepare them for the broader and deeper challenges of adult life, is a school only in name.

Really good education is about empowering young people to live professional and personal lives that are characterised by strong ethics, a sense of purpose, considered decisions and healthy relationships.

Increasing Achievement Levels

Last year, 95 more students earned Excellence Awards than in 2012. And this year, the total number of award-winning students has grown from 253 to 313. These increases far outstrip the simple numerical growth of the school. They indicate genuinely higher achievement levels.

There is not one student in the current Year 5-12 who could not, if they were determined enough, receive an invitation to a future Awards Evening – perhaps next year, or perhaps a little further down the line. The firmly-held philosophy of this school is to believe that of *every single student*, and to work accordingly.

Examination Successes

Now, it is customary for me to report to you details of our senior students' external examination results.

For Year 11, the A*-C pass rate at GCSE and IGCSE was up on last year, at 92%, with 84% of those in the "high pass" range of A*-B.

There were many truly outstanding results. Alorika Chakravorty achieved nine A* grades and Rawan Alhashemi had eight. Ahmed Fahmy, Farah Alyetama, Raghad Alyousefi and Sina Abou Zahr were each awarded A* grades in seven subjects. Dawood Al-Awadh, Hussam El-Nashar, Leena Albader and Preeti Choudhary all passed ten subjects at either A* or A grade.

In Year 12, at AS Level, the A-E rate was 95%. Ali Khajah, Abbas Ali, Farah Abdelhameed, Hee Soo Yang, Mridula Moorthiraj and Ethan Harradine all achieved four A grades.

At A Level, BSK students had a 100% A*-E pass rate for the fifth year in a row, with 92% in the A*-C range and 78% at A*-B.

The standout A Level performance was that of Aly Emam, with four A* grades. Tala El-Roz also achieved a tremendous three A*s and one A. Raneem Ismaiel and Zeyad Al-Tamimi each obtained three A grades.

Many of our Year 13 graduates joined British universities, including the Universities of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and Edinburgh.

Fewer BSK students than usual decided to study in Canada, but two joined the University of British Columbia and one joined the University of Toronto.

By contrast, the United States experienced something of a resurgence in popularity, with BSK graduates joining the University of California, the University of Washington, Indiana University and Boston University.

Two students joined the Bahrain campus of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and other Year 13 destinations included Germany and Australia.

The range of subjects was perhaps narrower than usual, with a stronger focus on career-aligned courses than on purely academic pursuits.

Ten Year 13 graduates are starting medical-related courses – including Immunology, Psychology and Neuroscience, Biomedical Engineering and Medical Genetics.

Five opted for physical sciences, including Engineering for Sustainable Energy and Computer Engineering.

A further five selected courses in fields such as Economics, Accounting and Business Administration.

Shakraf Shahid went to study Law in London, and James White is beginning a degree course in Chinese at the University of Edinburgh.

Extracurricular Successes

Many BSK students had noteworthy extracurricular or personal successes.

Last September, Roseanne Ismail won first prize in the British Council Kuwait Young Learner Art Competition.

In October, Farah Alyetama's book cover won the Art Team's Graphic Design competition.

In November's *Flying Start Triathlon*, which had over 300 participants and doubled as the BSME Under 19 Tournament, the boys' team of Nathan Gevao, Nikhil Varghese and David Heberle took silver, and the girls' relay team took gold. The time set by Aikaterini Konstantinidou and Leena Albader was not only the best BSME time, but also the fastest in the entire event.

At November's Model United Nations, Yousef Rezk, Yousef Mahmoud and Angad Bhatia received commendations for their contributions.

In December, Joseph Collier, Leena Albader, Ethan Harradine and Abbas Ali travelled to Repton School in Dubai for the regional trials of the Cambridge Schools Debating Competition. Ethan and Abbas made it through to the final.

Also in December, 22 students travelled to Debate Dubai, competing against some tremendous teams. Impressively, all six BSK teams made it through to their semifinals, and two teams advanced to the finals. Our Under 16 team, comprising Saad Zahoor, Leena Albader and Hussam El-Nashar, beat Jumeirah College to win the Under 16 Cup.

In January, Fatima Al-Sulaiman won the Year 9 share trading competition.

In February, Year 11 student Karan Bhasin won an adult golf tournament at the Sahara Club, beating 159 other players with a winning margin of six shots.

In February, La Camerata and Hai Wei Li competed at the Young Musicians of the Gulf competition in Bahrain. Hai Wei won the overall Piano Award.

Beginning in March, Zeenat Ahmed raised money for charity by selling copies of a recipe book that she had written and designed herself – a great initiative.

In March, Abdulrahman Fares won two gold medals in the Kuwait Liberation Wushu-Kungfu Championship.

Also in March, seven students passed the A1 Level German language examination. Two students - Aikaterini Konstantinidou and Renata Gelevska – passed the higher A2 Level.

In the Kuwait *Mathletes* competition, held in March, Cian Williams was voted “second best mathematician” by the students from the participating schools.

In April’s Kuwait Times Art Competition, Roseanne Ismail and Verda Hussein were runners-up in their age categories and Basmalla Alghunaiman took first place.

Also in April, Atesha Onggono was one of only twenty prizewinners amongst several hundred entries in the Radisson BLU Art Competition.

That same month, twins Hussain and Fatemah Dashti (then in Year 10) entered the Kuwait Science and Engineering competition, competing against students from 105 Kuwait schools. Their project and presentation won first place in their category and second place overall. This summer, Fatemah also participated in the two-week London International Youth Science Forum, based at Imperial College.

In May, Renata Gelevska, Aikaterini Konstantinidou and Yousef Mahmoud were awarded scholarships for three-week summer study programmes in Germany, with all expenses paid by the Goethe-Institut.

Also in May, 33 Secondary students passed LAMDA examinations through BAIA, with 26 of them at Merit or Distinction.

In June, Rigje Namdroen won first place in the Year 6 Design and Technology competition.

Also in June, Jamil Summaq and Hussam El-Nashar were offered places on The Protégés summer programme.

In June, Seth Margolis-Able, Rayan Abdul-Baki, Omar Al-Faraj, Rawan Abu Zahr, Zoe Landram, Osama Obeid, Faisal Jaffar and Munaema Khurram were all accepted onto the “Junior Docents” intern programme at the Dar Museum.

Then in July, after completing Year 10, Ali Aboubih took a course entitled “Investigations in Theoretical and Experimental Physics” at Columbia University, New York. Ali’s professor wrote that he had come to the course “nicely prepared by his training at The British School of Kuwait.” Well, of course!

A record 35 Secondary students passed instrumental music examinations: eleven with distinction and thirteen with merit.

More Year 10-13 students than ever before met the standard for a Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award: 67 at Bronze Level, 19 at Silver and 10 at Gold.

Sporting Successes

2013-14 was another fantastic year for sport.

BSK is currently the Kuwait schools' league (ISACK) champion in Under 15 boys' 5-a-side football; Under 15 boys' football; Under 13 and Under 15 girls' football; Under 15 girls' netball and in both Under 15 and Open Age girls' basketball.

BSK is also the British Schools in the Middle East (BSME) champion in Under 15 girls' netball and Under 15 boys' football. Our boys beating an excellent team from St Christopher's School, Bahrain 2-0 in the final was a particularly sweet moment!

At the BSME Under 15 Games in November, Donaven Lobo and Nathan Gevao each won silver medals, in Long Jump and High Jump, respectively.

At the ISACK swimming galas in October and November, Maya Alhuneidi, Aikaterini Konstantinidou, Mai Aguib, Michael Zoghb, Torki Alflaj and Nathan Gevao all won gold medals.

In March, at the BSME Girls' Swimming Championships, Aikaterini won four silver medals.

At the Secondary Sports Day in February, nine students broke twelve school athletics records: one each for Madeleine Doughty, Yousef Al-Kasaby, Mohammad Alhashemi, Leena Albader, Moneer Mourad and Nathan Gevao, whilst Mai Aguib, Donaven Lobo and Rodina Jad each broke two records.

Finally, in May, some 26 students were awarded Sports Colours according to a freshly relaunched system. Sports Colours recipients may wear the special ties with maroon stripes.

Partnership and Service

Of course, not all achievements are as *visible* as the academic, extracurricular and sporting achievements on which I have focused so far. Many are more subtle, and often harder to acknowledge.

Who trained the 22 students who did so well in Debate Dubai? That was Year 12 student Abbas Ali, of course guided by Debating Coordinator Miss Abigail Bartholomew.

The students all know that Gauri Nair, Alice Thompson and Mohammed Abu Rouss won the Talent Show in March, but they probably don't know who was on the Sixth Form organising committee, or for example that Rawan Moussa designed the programme.

Similarly, students and staff work together to organise the annual *Pink Tuesday* charity event – entirely appropriate as it was actually the brainchild of 2004 graduate Sandi Ismail. For example, Richa Elangovan designed this year's advertising poster.

Alice Thompson was Assistant Stage Manager of the Middle Department production. Lara El Dabet was its official photographer. Rawan Moussa also designed that programme.

The Prefect system, which runs from Year 5-13 and typically involves about 270 prefects within Secondary, is increasingly focused on precise job descriptions, student-to-student mentoring and success indicators that the Senior Prefect Team and Sixth Form Coordinator can monitor.

Between them, the Junior Department and Secondary School Councils enable over 100 students to gain insights into management considerations and processes.

Book Week sees Primary and Secondary students enjoying paired reading.

Year 8 students help at Lower Department Sports Days.

Junior Department and Secondary students habitually help the younger children adjust their seatbelts before the buses leave the school each afternoon.

Year 7 and 8 students serve as Librarians: more this year than ever before.

We have recently introduced a system of Class Monitors into Years 6-9. This will give about another fifty students an opportunity to partner with their class tutor, to serve and to lead.

My main reason for highlighting these things is this. Teachers can lead. We can manage and coordinate. We can, and must, set positive examples. However something amazing only happens when we partner *actively* with students, and also facilitate partnerships *between* students. The development of a deeply rooted culture of student leadership, and moreover a culture in which students understand that *service towards others* is at the heart of all true leadership, can only take place when all relationships within the school are professional, honest and focused.

Aquanauten Film Project

This year, my report is in two sections. But before I move onto the second part, I would like to show you a short film.

In June 2009, BSK was honoured to become the first school in the Gulf region to be recognised by the German Government as a German Partner School. As part of this scheme, last November, twenty-one of our students participated in an international film project entitled "What does water mean for my life?" The short documentary that they produced proved to be an excellent opportunity for our aspiring directors, actors and journalists. It is witty, bordering on spoof at times, and delightfully self-deprecating. It's intelligent fun, and I hope you enjoy it.

****FILM****

Whole-School Developments

Thank you. I am glad you enjoyed the film so much. Particular credit is due to Mr Stuart Howard, Miss Sigrid Hauser and Mr Peter Martin for their work in supporting that project.

Of course, opportunities like these do not become available to our students without careful planning at every level of management.

At a whole-school level, developments on the BSK campus for this year were extensive: a new home for Mathematics in the Whitehall building; new classrooms for Foreign Languages; two new Middle Department Science laboratories; improved facilities in the Marble Arch, Swimming Pool and playgrounds; as well as the acquisition and redevelopment of a new building which will become the home of the Royal Scot and other administrative services.

There has been a massive investment in new high-tech equipment for Design and Technology.

Substantial upgrades to the school wireless network are also currently underway.

Secondary Developments

A major focus of the *Secondary Development Plan* for last year was the design of a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which the Secondary Leadership Team (SLT) can keep close track of how well we are doing.

That work has now been completed, and detailed KPI data relating to student attendance and punctuality, academic attainment and progress, and also to attitude and conduct over the past three years have now been produced. Data relating to lesson quality will also be added this year. Underpinned by a set of what we have called *Strategic Intent*s which define our general direction of travel, and with carefully planned improvement mechanisms and accountability chains, SLT is confident that the Secondary phase is moving from strength to strength. Indeed, we have the data to prove it!

For this academic year, specific developments include ensuring consistent best practice by the three Department Coordinators and tutor teams; creating a student careers service and mentoring service; completing a phased introduction of the keenly-awaited parent portal; continuing to develop effective student data-tracking and performance management systems; and further embedding and refining the Secondary House System.

House System Developments

On that last point, further to last year's report, I can confirm that 2013-14 was indeed a breakthrough year in terms of the impact of the House system on student achievement and attitude. There were four main reasons for that: firstly, the move to so-called "net points" (that is, "positives" minus "negatives") as the basis for the House competition; secondly, the addition of bonus points for students achieving zero negatives in a term; thirdly, setting threshold points values for students to be permitted to attend privilege events and trips; and finally, the reintroduction of House assemblies in a new form that ties in perfectly with the focus on maximising the positive and minimising the negative.

For this year, we have introduced some further very fine tuning. We now have House Captains (not deputies) in every year group. Their remit is now limited to their own year group. They have a new and clearer job description, and they meet their Head of House every week to plan and execute the kind of peer support and that is now embedding naturally throughout the student body.

Raising Standards

Returning to the issue of high attendance and punctuality, you will all be aware that with the assistance of the Private Education Department at the Ministry of Education and upon approval by

BSK's Strategic Management Team, a much stricter Attendance Policy was brought into force for 2014-15. I am pleased to be able to report that the KPI data is already showing very clear improvements in attendance levels and morning punctuality. Attendance in Secondary year groups is up from 95.0% to 96.4% and morning lateness has declined sharply, from 3.2% to 1.2%. Thank you, parents, for appreciating the big picture in respect of that change. High attendance and punctuality are essential for academic success and personal discipline.

I reported last year that uniform infringements had reduced very significantly, in part due to the *zero tolerance* approach taken within the Secondary sanctions system, and of course the regular morning checks by class tutors, but more importantly because of increasing student awareness and acceptance. That tendency has continued, to the extent that uniform infringements are now almost a non-issue, certainly for regular uniform and increasingly also for PE and swimming kit. Again, thank you, parents, for supporting this.

Such basic standards contribute greatly towards creating a sense of order, a strong work ethic and a learning environment in which students can genuinely thrive. The strict enforcement of such standards is not in any way old-fashioned and does not run counter to BSK being a school in which students are treated with the deepest respect, and in which creativity, independence and individuality are celebrated. Rather, such standards provide the solid structural and emotional framework within which a rich, rounded education becomes truly possible.

Quality Staff

My final theme this evening relates to the quality of the academic, pastoral, leadership and support staff at BSK.

Student achievements are possible because our staff are also high-achieving.

In some cases, this achievement is highly visible and prestigious – for example, our Director, Mme Vera Al-Mutawa, being made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

However, most staff achievements are much less visible to parents and students.

The day-to-day work of the Department Coordinators, Heads of House and Class Tutors underpins the work of every other teacher.

The same is true of the Assistant Head Teachers, with their essential organisational and technical roles.

Similarly for the Senior Teachers, with responsibility for eLearning and student records and reports.

And also the Examinations Officer and Student Performance Coordinator.

Mathematics, Art, Drama, PE and DT are all forging ahead under new Subject Coordinators.

Mr James Thomson and his team are driving Middle Department Science forward at an amazing pace – and it is quality work.

Mr Ian Masters is doing tremendous work on the forthcoming commemoration of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

The June 2014 Physics results were our best ever. They've always been good, but this was a definite breakthrough.

Work within Foreign Languages on ensuring that best practice is shared between teachers of French, German and Arabic for non-Arabs is advancing very well.

The English Team's extracurricular opportunities are better than ever – and they were good before!

I could go on, and tell you something about every other subject, but time is against me. Suffice it to say that the ambition and scope of the subject teams' development plans for this year are like never before. They are all excellent, and you can confidently expect great things.

The new teachers who joined BSK this September, and who are present this evening, are the finest group we have ever employed. I said that last year, because it was true. It is true again this year. And here I must pay tribute to the Principal, Mr Paul Shropshire. He and I interview almost every prospective new Secondary teacher together, and over the years we've got quite good at it! We know a great teacher when we find one, and this year we found lots of them!

So, in summary, our development plans are clear. They are working well. The staff are capable and have a solid shared vision. We are operating the same policies and procedures reliably. We trust and respect one another.

The result of all of this is that your children's education is in very safe hands.

Concluding Remarks

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

Thank you again to my colleagues for their professionalism and untiring efforts on behalf of the students.

Thank you, parents, for your crucial role in supporting and encouraging your children. As always, we very much appreciate the strength of your partnership with us.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening, and thank you very much.

Andrew Moulden
Head Teacher