



THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT

FESTIVAL OF ACHIEVEMENT 2014 PRINCIPAL'S SPEECH

Dr Khaled Al-Rasheed, Assistant Undersecretary for General Education; Your Excellency Mr Frank Baker OBE, Her Majesty's Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait; Your Excellencies; Honoured Guests; Mr Chairman; Mme Vera Al-Mutawa; Parents; Graduates.

At the Festival of Achievement last year, I was delighted to inform everyone present that BSK had been inspected by three teams; one from Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education in the UK) one from the BSME (British Schools in the Middle East) and one from the DfE (Department for Education in the UK).

The three teams were unanimous in their praise of BSK:

- the breadth of the curriculum;
- the quality of the resources;
- the standard of teaching;
- and, most importantly, the quality of learning taking place, that really does set BSK apart from all other schools.

The inspection report, which is available for all to read on the DfE website, is a testament to what all of the students, parents and teachers in this hall tonight have known for a very long time.

BSK is a very special place. Indeed, a World Class British School.

Our new BSO status holds significant advantages. It certifies BSK to link with an appropriate body in the UK, to attract the very best newly-qualified teachers and to mentor them carefully through their induction year. This means that our fantastic team of teachers is strengthened further by young, energetic professionals with the very latest training. We are delighted that our partner in this important new initiative is Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, based to the west of London.

At BSK we never stand still because there is always room for further improvement.

Our students deserve nothing less.

BSK was the pioneer of eLearning in schools in Kuwait. We are partners with SMART Technologies, and there is a SMART Interactive Whiteboard in every teaching base of the school, 113 of them. Our Virtual Learning Environment is the envy of all the other schools and laptop computers are now as common as pencils and pens in the Secondary phase.

I am delighted to announce that from September, all students in the Primary phase will be using their own individual iPad Mini, loaded with carefully chosen applications to enhance and support the teaching and learning taking place.

Every student from Reception to Year 4 that has re-registered for the new academic year has been gifted a new iPad and parents given guidance on how to load these apps.

But eLearning is more than iPads and laptops, more than SMART Boards and VLEs.

To make best-use of these devices, BSK is investing in a replacement of its ground-breaking WiFi network to enable over 3000 devices to simultaneously access the internet.

In Design and Technology, the days of using saws is drawing to a close as students will be using computer-controlled, high-power laser beams to cut out their designs.

The team has also taken delivery of their first metal-turning lathe and will shortly receive six new wood-turning lathes to enhance the skill-base of our students even further.

But technology is only one aspect of the new investment at BSK.

Technology is the practical application of science and our insistence on laboratory-based science, however expensive, sets BSK apart from other schools in Kuwait.

For the new academic year, we are investing in a new science area specifically targeting Middle Department students. Two new laboratories and a new preparation room are under construction; a new Science Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator have been appointed in addition to the Biology, Chemistry and Physics labs and teams already in place.

The Secondary Maths team, under the leadership of Mr Brendan Burns, has achieved remarkable success and BSK has responded by investing in a brand new Secondary Maths suite of eight purpose-built rooms.

Modern Languages will move into three brand new rooms along with a further new room for History.

This kind of investment is the direct result of our Director, Mme Vera Al-Mutawa, choosing to reinvest the profits of BSK in the certain knowledge that generations of students will remember and reflect on their school days as the happiest days of their lives.

It is a journey that starts at TSK, our superb Early Years Centre where children are given the opportunity to investigate the world around them; to find meaning in words; to share and enjoy active learning experiences; to take risks while feeling confident and secure; to learn new skills and to cooperate to create things that are truly amazing.

Now those are the words of the Principal, Miss Joanne Wild. When you think about it, those words can be applied to learning at any age, but for us it starts at TSK.

This has been an ambitious year for the Primary phase at BSK, Reception to Year 5 and managed by the Head Teacher, Mr Mark Brisbane and Department Coordinators, Mr Marcus Wild and Miss Jackie Shropshire in conjunction with subject leaders.

In Reception, along with curriculum initiatives such as *Talk for Writing* and *Talk Homework*, students have been making use of *Numicon* templates in Maths. They make best use of Q Garden and their wonderful Art Exhibition, *Once upon a Time*, was opened by HE the Ambassador of India.

Literacy has been a major theme in Year 1. In addition to receiving the visiting author, Robin Price, a fictional character, *Mr Big Wig* has been helping students with their Science projects via email and the iPads.

In Year 2, the curriculum is thematic with English, Maths, Science, Humanities and Design taught through topics such as Health and Growth, Oceans and Seas, Investigating Materials and The Great Fire of London.

The Junior Department embarked on an ambitious programme that included their wonderful production, *The Piper*; a new venue in Messilah for their sports day; a new inter-House basketball competition for each year group; participation in the Festival of Music with the JD Choir; celebrations of National Day and Liberation Day and a number of fun evenings to help the students bond in a social setting.

Students in Year 3 opened their own Egyptian Museum and used Book Week as the theme for multi-disciplinary work.

In Year 4, the Tudor period of English history was a key topic along with a focus on Literacy utilising the renowned Pie Corbett approach known as *Talk for Writing* which has gained popularity in the UK.

The creative curriculum extends into Year 5 where the novel *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes was the focus on a multi-subject approach involving Maths, and Design and Technology.

Throughout the Primary phase, year groups have been keeping parents, other teachers and students aware of their progress through the use of blogs on our VLE. And by the way, the most widely used software resource in Primary schools in the UK and overseas is called *Education City*. It specifically targets English, Maths and Science. Students at BSK have more hits on the Education City website than any other school in the world – over 300,000 hits in a single year.

The move from Year 5 to Year 6 takes students from the Primary phase into the Secondary phase and to subject specialist teaching. The Secondary phase consists of three Departments – Middle, Upper and Sixth Form – under the leadership of Head Teacher, Mr Andrew Moulden.

The Coordinators have the task of establishing Department identity and team building. They achieve this by providing a range of extracurricular activities, and here is a selection of this year's events.

Ms Estelle Jones and her team have organised a range of social activities for students in the Middle Department: Years 6, 7 and 8. The ever popular trips to Entertainment City supplemented by Film and Pizza evenings and games evenings for both girls and boys. There has also been a fashion show and, last week, the wonderful Middle Department Production of *The Wind in the Willows* which played to delighted audiences.

Mr John Lambert and his team held a variety of events for the Upper Department. The main school production was the traditional British pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. It was directed by Mr David Allcock and proved very popular, especially with Kuwaiti audiences.

A team of eight UD students took part in the Dow / LoYAC Ecoquest challenge, an environmental treasure hunt in the Mubarakiya Souk area.

The UD team also arranged two blood donations and, indeed, received an award from the Minister of Health on National Blood Day.

For Ms Emma Bowie and the Sixth Form, this year's *Oscars*, the most glitzy of all events at BSK, was held in the grounds of the British Embassy for which we extend thanks, once again, to Ambassador Frank Baker. This year's theme was *The Great Gatsby* and formal events such as these are excellent learning experiences for students that will go on to attend many more in later life.

The Sixth Form organised this year's Talent Show which, once again, demonstrated the incredible gifts of our students in music, dance and variety performances.

The second annual Spring Carnival was also organised by the Sixth Form and raised 1700 Dinars for various charities including the Dasman Diabetes Institute in Kuwait; the Children's Cancer Trust in the UK and the Tawal School in Nepal where BSK students work during their Duke of Edinburgh's International Award expedition.

Pink Tuesday is an annual event, again organised by the Sixth Form, that raises awareness of Breast Cancer and money for Breast Cancer charities and research. This year, the team doubled their previous best, raising 3500 Dinars.

The academic curriculum in the Secondary phase is organised into subject teams, each led by a coordinator. There are a small number of subjects that continue to work across the whole school, albeit with separate Primary and Secondary planning teams, and I will report their successes next.

The Euston building at BSK operates as a working Art studio, with a strong creative atmosphere, and where students are encouraged to express themselves creatively. Many fine examples of work by BSK students were on display at the annual Art and Design Exhibition, this year entitled *Kaleidoscope*, and which opened to the public on 23 March.

Only this week, Basmalla Alghunaiman in Year 5 won the Kuwait Times Art Competition. Year 10 student Roseanne Ismail's painting of Thomas Edison is now on display at the British Council Headquarters in London and is shown on the Council's 2014 calendar. Of course, as a British person, I would like to point out that the electric light bulb was invented and demonstrated by Joseph Swan of Newcastle-on-Tyne a year before Mr Edison's patent.

The Music Team is led by a Primary Coordinator, Mr Gary Ruston, and a new Secondary Coordinator, Mr Simon Amura. However, for many of the public performances, the team come together and students from Primary and Secondary combine, as they are doing with the orchestra this evening.

If you are fortunate enough to drive your children to school and walk them to Gate D, I am sure that you will have been impressed by the huge band of Primary students that casually play the theme from *The Great Escape* every morning.

The fact that it is taken for granted that huge numbers of children play musical instruments, carry them around the school and practise on the playgrounds, encapsulates BSK. This is normal for us.

This year we had exactly 100 students taking ABRSM examinations. And they all passed: 73 with merit or higher, and 40 with distinction. Our musicians have, once again, been in high demand at events across Kuwait.

La Camerata and Hai Wei Li competed at the Young Musicians of the Gulf competition in Bahrain with Hai Wei winning the Piano award.

There were many public performances throughout the year and during Music Festival Week, three concerts delighted audiences including a public performance at the 360 Mall.

Physical Education is still organised across the whole school. There were three sets of Sports Days in Primary, one for Reception, one for Key Stage 1 and one for the Junior Department. The Secondary phase held a single Sports Day once again at the Kaifan stadium where thirteen new school records were set.

The achievements of BSK students in sporting competitions during the year have been outstanding:

In Football, BSK teams are the Kuwait Under 15 boys' champions, Kuwait Under 15 boys' indoor champions, BSME Under 15 boys' champions and the Kuwait Under 13 girls' indoor champions.

In Netball, BSK teams are the Kuwait Under 15 girls' champions and the BSME Under 15 girls' champions.

In Basketball, BSK are the Kuwait Open age girls' champions.

In all Swimming competitions, BSK swimmers have gained, for girls: eight gold, eleven silver and four bronze medals, and for boys: six gold, nine silver and nine bronze medals.

At the BSME triathlon, BSK became the Under 19 girls' team gold medalists.

And although BSK does not win everything, yet, we are finalists in four other volleyball and basketball tournaments with those seasons still running.

And so to the achievements of the Secondary Subject Teams.

The English team organised two overseas trips this year. Last April, 33 students visited the United States with events in New York and Washington DC. In New York, they saw a number of Broadway shows and attended professional actors' workshops. In Washington, they visited famous sites and were excited when President Obama's motorcade passed by.

In March this year, fifteen students attended the Emirates Festival of Literature in Dubai and met leading authors of children's novels including Carnegie medal-winning author Philip Reeve.

Also in March, students in Years 11 to 13 held a video conference with poet Moniza Alvi, whose poetry they are studying for final examination.

The Mathematics team entered Year 6 into the inaugural Kuwait Mathletes competition in which Cian Williams was nominated for Best Mathematician in the tournament.

And a problem-solving project for inquisitive independent learners entered its third year of unfamiliar challenges including Alien Symmetry, Grid Algebra and statistical analysis.

The Biologists held ecology fieldtrips to Failaka island and contributed to the Science Fair, the Science Challenge and the Maths/Science School Quiz. They are particularly pleased that Tala El Roz has been offered a dentistry placement at the University of Manchester, one of only four to be offered to international students; and that Ishita Handa has been offered a medical placement at the University of Bristol, one of only nineteen offered to international students.

Students of Chemistry were also able to demonstrate their skills at the Science Fair in January. BSK's commitment to practical science, with students familiarising themselves with laboratory techniques and procedures equips them well for their science degree courses at University.

In addition to their part in the Science fair, the Physics team entered eight students from Year 13 into the Oxford University British Physics Olympiad with all eight achieving Merit status.

Last year, the Primary Head Teacher, Mr Mark Brisbane and I attended a seminar in Amman, Jordan, where a British entrepreneur, Ian Livingstone, exalted us to teach Computer Programming in school. He had done very well having further developed a board game called *Dungeons and Dragons* and outlets called *Games Workshop* before going on to develop a computer game called *Tomb Raider* with a character called *Lara Croft*. He explained to Mark and I that he done quite well and had sold his share of the company for 450 million pounds. He stressed that the problem-solving approach embedded in British education gave our students a head-start in imaginative programming and that, consequently, British talent dominates the industry. I am delighted that the ICT Team has introduced Computer Science into the curriculum at BSK.

Next week, the results of this year's Ministry of Education Arabic competitions will be known but in 2013, BSK student Dawood Dawood won the Ministry Arabic writing competition in his age group and BSK student Abdulaziz Hasan won the Ministry reading comprehension competition for his age group.

In Business and Economics, Year 12 students took part in the Agility entrepreneurial workshop, organised by Injaz. A Year 9 student, Fatima Al-Sulaiman, won the Share Trading competition and six teams entered the Enterprise competition.

Both the Geography and History teams have expanded and have searched for opportunities to gather first-hand data for analysis. BSK has been successful in both rounds of the Model United Nations competition and we look forward to events to mark 100 years since the start of the First World War in 1914. Meanwhile the Social Studies Team has taken advantage of new *Flowol* and *Flexidata* software to discover and display aspects of Kuwaiti heritage.

Our latest cohort of students of German took examinations for Goethe-Institut scholarships, BSK being the first school in the Gulf region sponsored by the German Government scheme. Last year, Angad Bhatia and Alex White were two BSK students awarded all-expenses paid three-week study courses in Germany and in November, BSK supported a professional Goethe-Institut film crew in the making of a movie focusing on water sustainability. As always, our International Day was an opportunity for our students from over seventy countries to share their cultures with the BSK family. Last week, BSK gained second place in the worldwide German Partner School podcast competition and the school will be receiving its prize of recording equipment and a library of German music shortly.

Our rich curriculum is enhanced by many, many extracurricular activities, some of which you have already heard about. Of course, our community programme is supported in the Arts by BAIA, The British Academy of International Arts and by BAS, The British Academy of Sport. But there are many more extracurricular activities that result from the interests of students and staff.

The Robotics Team has just returned from the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics challenge in Qatar where BSK have participated every year since its foundation. Led for the last time by Zeyad Al-Tamimi before he goes to university, the team equalled their best ever performance in this NASA-supported event.

Debating is firmly established at BSK and this year saw a massive increase in popularity amongst the students. Our internal, inter-House competitions set the foundation. And this year, BSK teams participated in the BSME event in Bahrain; the Debate Dubai competition and for the first time, the Cambridge Schools' Debate supported by Cambridge University. Once again, the backbone of Team Kuwait comes from BSK, with three of the five team members from our school, representing Kuwait in the School World Championships, this year in Thailand in August.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award has been rebranded but remains as popular as ever. In a change of strategy this year, the Bronze, Silver and Gold final expeditions took place at the same time, during the February holiday.

Following four highly successful expeditions in the desert here in Kuwait, the 75-strong Bronze team set out to a new location in Ras Al-Khaimah.

Whilst a nineteen-strong Silver team returned to Nepal where the students of Tawal School were delighted, once again, to receive financial, physical and emotional support from BSK.

The eleven-strong Gold team travelled to South Africa but in a change of programme were able to complete both the required sections; expedition and residential project in a single trip, the four-day Giant's Cup Trail followed by 5-days supporting a native Zulu orphanage.

All of these achievements are tremendous, of course, but tonight is mostly about the achievements of the students that are about to leave BSK and to embark on the next stage of their education at university.

To gain entry into the best universities requires the highest possible examination results. These students now have to match or better those of last year. And it won't be easy

because the 2013 examination results at GCSE in Year 11; AS in Year 12 and Advanced level in Year 13 continue to set standards that other schools admire.

At GCSE and IGCSE our students maintained a 91% grade A Star to C pass rate.

At Advanced Subsidiary level, our Year 12 students achieved 98% pass rates and at Advanced level, the 100% pass rate was achieved for the fourth consecutive year. Indeed, Year 13 students equalled the school record for the number of A* and A grades awarded: 47% of all entries.

As a consequence, students from BSK have continued to be accepted at the finest universities in the world. This year, forty conditional offers have been received from the Russell Group of leading British universities, including the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, King's College, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham, Queen Mary, Southampton, Sheffield, Warwick and York.

And Sixth Form students have also received offers from leading universities from outside the UK including, from the United States, the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA; the University of Boston; Penn State; Notre Dame and the University of Washington.

And from Canada: McGill University, and the Universities of British Columbia, Carleton, Ottawa and Toronto.

Getting to university is just part of the success. In this world of social media, our alumni, the former students of BSK, report how well they are doing in their degree courses, and that the attitudes to studying and work routines they developed at school serve them well in their higher education and often set them apart from their contemporaries.

I am sure that these graduates sitting patiently here tonight will continue that great tradition. We wish them well.

Goodnight.