



NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT



FESTIVAL OF ACHIEVEMENT 2018 PRINCIPAL'S SPEECH

The Regency Hotel, 10 April 2018

Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al Salem Al Sabah; Dr Khaled Al Fadhel, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; Your Excellency, Michael Davenport MBE, Her Majesty's Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait; Your Excellencies; Honoured Guests; Mr Chairman; Madam Vera; Parents; Graduating students.

The ruby is a precious stone and one of the cardinal gems. Rubies are found mostly in Myanmar but a small and precious source is found in Scotland. And whilst the most expensive ruby, the Sunrise Ruby, sold at auction for US\$30 million, the most valuable rubies per carat were those owned by movie star Elizabeth Taylor.

The ruby is also a celebration stone marking a 40th anniversary and it is to another famous blue-eyed British lady that we reflect pure light tonight. For it was forty years ago that Madam Vera founded The Sunshine School that was to become The British School of Kuwait and The Sunshine Kindergarten that we know today.

From the very beginning, the aim of Madam Vera has been to provide the people of Kuwait with a world-class British-system school, one fit for the twentieth, and now the twenty-first century.

As a consequence, from the outset, the school has been blessed with a culture of development and innovation. These days, the educational acronym STEAM is commonly used to define a school that is dedicated to Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics. (For the scientists, I understand that this is water vapour.) At BSK, these subjects form the core of an expansive curriculum in which students can follow their passions and learn skills that take them onwards to the university degree courses and careers of their dreams.

Perhaps the single most important development since the founding of BSK occurred earlier this year when BSK and TSK formed a partnership with the Nord Anglia Education family of schools. In doing so, BSK has further expanded the opportunities for its students and its staff supported by the most ambitious education group in the world. Comprising 56 schools of the highest quality spread over 25 countries and with more than 50,000 students, Nord Anglia Education is committed to developing opportunities to expand the collaborative experiences that are becoming increasingly important in the modern world.

Partnerships with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which supports the STEAM initiative; the Juilliard School which provides an outstanding music curriculum; collaboration with UNICEF and the United Nations Sustainable Development project; access for teachers to Nord Anglia University to further their own planning and careers; and to the Global Campus that informs students and teachers of events, competitions,

developments and archives. All of this is now available to support the fantastic work already taking place at BSK.

The curriculum at BSK is that of the National Curriculum of England with public examination at GCSE, IGCSE, AS and A-level which is a gold standard respected by university admissions departments throughout the world.

Much of the teaching and learning taking place in our broad curriculum is discreet in order to develop in students a deep understanding of the more difficult concepts within our subjects. Whilst some collaborative and cross-curricular project work takes place within the curriculum, we draw on our vast extra-curricular programme to support our students in gaining vital soft skills such as teamwork and practical problem-solving. We believe that this combination best fits the needs of our students in preparation for university.

However, we are always open to innovative developments in learning and, with the support of our new colleagues at Nord Anglia Education, we intend to offer, in one curriculum area - Design Technology - an approach that is not discreet but, rather, project based. Project Based Learning (PBL) is a learning method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working collaboratively for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. It works best when students are fully involved in choosing the challenge.

A good example would be how to improve the delivery of luggage to passengers at airports. This would involve physically building a working model of the solution and might include technology such as designing baggage tracking software.

So now let us draw our attention to the route these graduates have taken to arrive at their graduation tonight.

For some of these graduates, The Sunshine Kindergarten was not even built when they joined BSK. TSK is the leading Early Years educational facility in Kuwait where the focus has been to engage and educate young parents in their child's learning within the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum. Among the new events for 2018 has been 'Music in Action', in which students are learning to work together; firstly, to keep a steady beat and then to progress to more complex rhythms.

The following section is, of course, just a snapshot of the many, many learning experiences taking place in the school, but it serves to give an impression of the range and diversity of our approach to education.

Our Lower Phase, headed this year by Rachel Sielski, consists of three year groups: Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

In Reception, play is purposeful. Children are encouraged with a motto of 'plan, do and review'. We have embraced this High Scope approach which supports children to think critically, problem solve and reflect on their achievements in each session.

In Year One, classes take part in engaging activities to help stimulate their learning. Capturing their interest in superheroes, a range of cross-curricular topics across English, Science and Physical Education are explored.

In Year Two, students are encouraged to be inquisitive, questioning how things work and why things happen. Students benefit from a wealth of resources, enabling them to set up and carry out their own scientific investigations, a theme that continues into their break-time clubs.

Our Junior Phase, headed by Mark Brisbane, consists of Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5.

In Year Three, a scientific approach to healthy eating has been a major topic and has included visits to the Scientific Centre to gain experience of how our bodies work followed by experiments to determine their Body Mass Index; practical work on preparing healthy smoothies and salads as well as a costume day, dressing as favourite fruits and vegetables.

In Year Four, in addition to their main studies, students took part in a Book Week that was aimed at guiding their reading. Their teachers needed no encouragement to dress-up as favourite literary characters in support.

Our Year Fives were able to visit the Martyr's Museum as part of their Social Studies curriculum and to gain an understanding of the recent history of Kuwait and how the invasion of 1990 impacted upon the lives of the people.

Our Primary specialist teaching includes Physical Education where new units of work such as manipulative games, loco motor skills and gymnastics have been introduced. More than a hundred of our Junior Phase students took part in the 'Rascal Race' over an assault course co-hosted with CrossFit BSK and our Primary students achieved outstanding success in competition against other international schools throughout the year.

Primary specialist teaching also includes Design Technology where students have been exposed to creative learning through new and challenging projects, exploring and investigating different materials and equipment to encourage creativity and independence whilst allowing them to take measured risks, make mistakes, to reframe and to solve problems. We look forward to the extra dimension of collaboration that Project Based Learning will introduce.

Year Six is a year of transition between Primary Education, mostly based in a single classroom with a Primary Class Teacher, to Secondary Education with subject specialists based in dedicated areas around the campus. This requires the students to be very well organised, able to move across a large but compact campus and organise their homework schedules effectively. Our Virtual Learning Environment, or VLE, plays a vital role in supporting the students and informing parents of our expectations.

Our Middle Phase, led by Head Teacher, Nicholas Smith, consists of Years 6, 7 and 8. Middle Phase Science is currently the only subject that is planned independently of the Higher Phase, though a new development for 2018-2019 will see independent Middle Phase English and Mathematics, following on from the success of the Science pilot scheme.

BSK is a firm advocate of laboratory based Science which is supported by our Whizzes and Bangs extra-curricular club. BSK introduced Astronomy into the curriculum last year and our students have developed practical skills in calibrating Reflector Telescopes as well as being introduced to the UK National Schools' Observatory programme through which

they are given on-line time with the Liverpool Telescope, one of the world's largest robotic telescopes, owned by Liverpool John Moores University and sited in the Canary Islands.

Until Middle Phase gains its new, dedicated English and Mathematics teams next year, all other subjects are taught by subject teams with scopes across the Middle and Higher Phases.

In English, a cross-curricular project saw students design and manufacture a product before pitching their business proposal in the Dragon's Den Enterprise Project. Middle Phase enjoyed a Gothic Horror themed Book Week and Dr Lavinia Davenport was our guest of honour at the Poetry by Heart competition, hosted by BSK and supported by the New English School and eventual winners, The English School, Salmiya.

In Mathematics, in addition to curriculum work, students prepared for the UK Mathematics Trust challenge.

- Higher Phase students attained 5 bronze, 5 silver and 2 gold medals.
- Two students will compete in the Kangourou sans Frontieres Challenge against some of the best young Mathematicians in the World.
- Maths hosted their 3rd annual 'Pi' challenge.
- BSK achieved its 4th consecutive podium finish in the Gulf University for Science and Technology maths championships.
- Indeed, in the last Edexcel GCSE results, BSK student Donovan Lobo achieved the highest mark of any student in Kuwait.

Among the exciting techniques being developed in Biology are those where our Year 12 students produce genetically identical clones of cauliflower plants. These techniques, in combination with genetic modification, are being used by advanced research laboratories across the world to try to improve the nutritional value of common crop varieties such as rice and cassava.

Chemistry has a strong tradition at BSK. Continued investment includes state-of-the-art wireless data-logging equipment and a range of sophisticated sensors. Among other studies, students in Year 13 have gained practical knowledge of hydrogen cell technology. Outstanding Year 12 student, Maryam Safar, gained the highest score in Chemistry in Kuwait at AS level with Roseanne Ismail achieving the same at A-level before joining the University of Bristol for her 7-year degree in medicine.

In addition to their examination studies, our Physics students in Year 11 and Year 12 entered the fifth engineering competition arranged by Kuwait University for Petroleum Engineering. They developed an idea of using piezoelectric crystals to monitor traffic speeds. The University of Oxford organises the British Physics Olympiad, with our Year 13 students taking part for the fifth consecutive year.

BSK is very proud to have been a leader in the move away from ICT in favour of Computer Science. In addition to their curriculum work, BSK students are competing in the Botball Robotics competition hosted by New York University Abu Dhabi. Programming and building key elements of the robot, the students have produced one that combines sensory input and image recognition to autonomously negotiate a course and complete a series of tasks.

BSK was the first school to take part in the INJAZ Young Enterprise scheme that focuses on four key themes: financial education; life skills; entrepreneurship and employment. In

October our Year 10 Economics students took part in a job shadowing scheme with Citibank and in November, our AS Business students participated in a workshop lead by Lena Ramfelt, author and lecturer on entrepreneurship at Stanford University, California. Their project for a luxury resort and water park was the winning submission.

Art and Design has benefitted from a complete refurbishment of the Euston Gallery and the Spring Exhibition of Art and Design Technology was met with outstanding reviews from the hundreds of visitors that have witnessed the astonishing work of the students. The GCSE Photography students held an evening fieldtrip to the Souk Al-Mubarakiya to put their new DSLR skills to the test, with amazing results.

In Design Technology, students have had the opportunity to work with new materials such as resins and photo-luminescent pigment powders that represent cutting-edge technology. Of course, our students continue to use a wide variety of machinery and tools in the D&T workshop, gaining many of the practical skills for STEAM learning.

Drama is a key component of both our curricular and extra-curricular programme. Our GCSE students gained technical skills from the British School of International Arts and used them in their GCSE practical examinations. Yesterday (09 April) BSK hosted the Young Shakespeare Company and their production of *The Tempest*. Professional actors from the Company led workshops for the students following the performance.

Curriculum Music has a long and proud tradition at BSK and we are looking forward to collaborating with the Juilliard School, through our partnership with Nord Anglia Education, to provide even greater opportunities for our students in the coming years.

Geography students have been integrating fieldwork into their studies taking a scientific approach to their understanding of the local urban environment; desert profiles as well as the inter-tidal zones. GCSE students return to fieldwork in the Brecon Beacons in the New Year.

In addition to the teaching and learning of English and Arabic, our Modern Language team add French, German and Spanish to our subject options. BSK's status as a German Government Partner school is now in its ninth year. The Goethe-Institut scholarship programme enabled three students to attend an all-expenses paid visit to Baden-Wuttemberg last summer and in October, five students attended the Language Camp in Wadi Shab, Oman, along with students from other partner schools.

In sport, teams from BSK won the Kuwait International School championships in Under 15 Boys' Football, Under 15 Girls' Basketball and Under 19 Girls' Basketball, with finals still to be contested in U13 Boys' Basketball, U15 Boys' Basketball, U19 Boys' Basketball, U13 Girls' Volleyball, U15 Girls' Volleyball and U19 Girls' Volleyball.

Our sports students attended two overseas competitions, the BSME Under 13 Games in Muscat and the Under 15 BSME games in Abu Dhabi. The skiing party went to Gstaad, Switzerland and enjoyed the snow as well as cultural experiences such as accidentally hitting the statue of Freddie Mercury in Montreux with a snowball. I'm sure Freddie would have seen the funny side.

While the work taking place within the curriculum provides the gold-standard of depth of learning for which the National Curriculum is renowned with its public examinations at

GCSE, AS and A-level, our astonishingly extensive extra-curricular programme provides the framework in which essential soft-skills are further developed:

BSK joined the Council of British International Schools, COBIS, last year with the aim of exposing our students to challenges and competition on the global stage. The first such event saw our Music team travel to Murcia in Spain where:

- Vivian Sequiera achieved first place in the Senior Strings Solo;
- Hai Wei Li second places in both Junior Violin and Piano Solo;
- and our groups, 'I Piccoli', and 'La Camerata' both gaining first places in the small and large ensemble categories.

Essentially, BSK dominated the entire event against teams from Moscow, Prague, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Madrid, Valencia and the hosts, a truly superb display of musicianship. The continued success of our students in the Young Musicians of the Gulf competition is extraordinary with La Camerata winning the competition for the fifth year. Last month, our Music Festival Week delighted sell-out audiences and culminated with a public performance in the 360 Mall to enthralled shoppers.

Our Drama Productions involved literally hundreds of students and covered the full range of student ages from Reception to Year 13. In addition to the actors on stage, valuable teamwork and problem-solving experience is gained in vital areas including stage-design, lighting and sound, stage management, make-up, marketing, media and hospitality.

For many students, their first experience of expressing themselves by performing to an audience comes with the Reception 'Movement to Music'. At BSK we value the building of confidence in our youngest students.

The Junior Phase production of 'Mystery at Magpie Manor' in February had students dancing and singing their way through a fast-paced, energetic script with fantastic songs, humour and a fabulous twist at the end.

The Middle Phase Variety production showcased an extraordinary range of talents from speed-cubing to hand-jiving. This show is an invaluable platform for students to gain confidence on the stage and to present their own material to a wider audience.

The Arabic and Islamic Studies team produced a well-received celebration of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day in a setting that included an active souk, diwaniya and a welcome garden featuring classic Kuwaiti architecture with guests enjoying traditional coffee and dates.

Incidentally, in the National Islam Recitation competition for all schools in Kuwait, public and private, BSK gained one 3rd place, two 2nd places and three 1st places. For Year 10 Abdulrahman Fares, 1st place in Koran memorisation and for Year 6 Lujine Elsayed, in Hadith recitation and in Koran memorisation.

The Secondary production of 'Annie' took place in December and was an ideal piece in the lead-up to the festive season, bringing to wider public attention the standout talents of a superb cast. The smiles on the faces in this photo say everything you need to know about the joy of their success.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is the world's leading youth achievement award. The impact that completing the award can have is profound and life-changing. This year the students have held their weekly training sessions with:

- the bronze-level team then completing their final expedition at Wadi Rum in Jordan;
- the silver-level team in Cyprus;
- and the gold-level team in Nepal.

Our gold-level students helped re-build the Shree Yagymati School, in Nepal, which had been devastated by an earthquake. The three days of hard, manual labour, digging and rebuilding the school's foundations both physically and spiritually was an experience our students will never forget.

Three of the five-strong team representing Kuwait in the World Schools' Debating Championship in Bali this year were students from BSK. Indeed, there has never been a Kuwait team that has not included students from BSK.

Our Model United Nations teams involve students from Year 9 to Year 13 and provide another opportunity to learn how to conduct a structured and compelling argument, often empathising with a position that is not necessarily accepted personally. Our MUN teams had great success at the conference held in Kuwait and are looking forward to the forthcoming Nord Anglia Education event in Dubai.

In support of the many examples of STEAM education taking place within the curriculum, our Year 7 students have been taking part in a project which has seen them combine skills in science, engineering, arts and business to operate a Formula One racing team.

The students gained sponsorship from outside companies; they learned CAD CAM software to design their cars; manufactured their cars using their Design Technology skills; branded and marketed their product and, of course, raced their cars. So successful has this pilot piece of Project Based Learning been that it will become part of the main curriculum for all Year 8 students to experience.

Miss Lindsay Gilmour not only drives the F1 project forward, but has championed the British Science Association's flagship Crest Awards for the fourth consecutive year. Crest is the UK's only nationally recognised accreditation scheme for STEM work with over thirty thousand participants.

This year, the gold award students are involved in problem-solving projects: investigating complex chemistry, analysing foodstuffs, testing and manufacturing anti-bacterial products for use in developing countries.

Our Year 11 student, Maria Elias has secured a collaboration with Kuwait University using UV spectroscopy to conduct chemical assays of generic and brand-name medications.

The silver award students are on a path towards developing a simple and cheap technique using chromatography to detect specific drugs; to research robotics and to solve a problem close to the British heart, making a perfect tea bag.

What has been reported tonight is a mere snapshot of the work taking place at our school. The British School of Kuwait is an outstanding school by any measure. Our reputation for innovation and excellence has been established both within Kuwait and abroad. Our longstanding memberships of the BSME (of which we are founding members), the Council

of International Schools (of which we are founding members), the Association of British Schools Overseas (of which we are founding members) and COBIS ensure that reputation survives and grows stronger.

Recently, we have linked with eight leading universities and with Buckinghamshire Learning Trust to attract new, young teachers, trained in the latest techniques and technology, to continue with our aim to provide the people living in Kuwait the best possible teaching and learning experience.

None of this would be of any purpose if the outcomes of the public examinations at GCSE, AS and A-level were anything other than outstanding and that our students are offered places at the world's leading universities:

In the last session of public examination, summer 2017, our students achieved the following results:

- at GCSE and IGCSE, an A* to C pass rate of 95% with A* to B at 83%;
- at AS, an A to E pass rate of 97% with A to B at 55%;
- and at A-level, an A* to E pass rate of 100% with A* to B at 62%.

Earlier in this address, I stated that BSK is committed to GCSE, AS and A-level because we believe these public examination are gold-standard and offer the in-depth learning so valued by top universities. So far this year, our 22 students at A-level have been offered 94 places at Russell Group universities, better than 4 offers per student.

- The University of Birmingham
- Bristol
- Cardiff
- Exeter
- Imperial College London
- King's College London
- The University of Liverpool
- Manchester
- Newcastle
- Nottingham
- The University of Oxford
- Queens University, Belfast
- Sheffield
- Southampton
- University College London
- and the University of Warwick.

We are delighted to be joined this evening by Mr George Ghantous, the European and Middle East Regional Director of Nord Anglia Education. You are most welcome.

The motto of Nord Anglia Education is simple and direct. It encapsulates the very reason for our kind of education and serves to be a target for people of all ages: 'Be Ambitious'.

Well, I'm sure that you would agree that the students sitting in front of you are living up to that noble principle.

Their time at school is almost at an end, but their journey of discovery continues and we hope that, at BSK, we have played some small part in forming their attitudes to life-long learning. The school has played just a small part in their success, for without the continued support of our parents, whose trust we value greatly, our mission would not be possible.

So graduates, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to know you and we wish you every success at university and beyond.

Goodnight.