



THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT

AWARDS EVENING 2011 Head Teacher's Annual Report

BSK Shakespeare Theatre, 05 October 2011

Honoured guests, parents, colleagues and students –

Welcome to The British School of Kuwait and to this: our annual Awards Evening.

Today we are celebrating the prizewinning Middle and Upper Department students of the academic year 2010-2011.

BSK students are able and hard-working. Our conditions of entry and re-registration require a high academic standard and self-discipline. Demand for places at BSK is higher than ever.

The students here this evening have therefore excelled in the face of fierce competition. To earn their awards, they have had top performances in end-of-year examinations, or other outstanding successes.

Before the Middle Department Coordinator, Mrs Estelle Jones, and the Upper Department Coordinator, Mr John Lambert, introduce the Subject Award winners, I will update you on some of the most important recent developments at BSK.

Development Strands

At last year's Awards Evening, I explained in some detail our four main strands of development:

- our 'Attitudes to Learning' initiative, which provides a common framework and vocabulary by which students and teachers can discuss the process of learning;
- the philosophy and techniques of 'Assessment for Learning', through which teachers involve themselves in cyclical, real-time processes to obtain information about student progress, and then use that information to inform responsive and targeted teaching;
- the use of 'National Curriculum Levels' (up to the end of Year 9) as a mechanism by which students and teachers can understand and discuss each student's progress and the way forward;
- and of course, our uniquely well-developed 'eLearning' initiative, which in addition to supporting and enhancing learning with innovative technologies, is preparing students for an information age which is advancing ever faster with each passing year.

These four linked strands, although whole-school in their scope, are being driven – within the Secondary phase – by the subject team leaders, who are present here this evening. They are doing this in an organic way, according to their teams' own priorities, skill sets and timescales.

In the case of eLearning, this is ably supported by our Senior Teacher, Mr John Leonard.

Each of these curricular leaders brings a remarkable degree of commitment and expertise to their complex roles.

High Standards

I also spoke last year about even more fundamental, underlying issues:

- the need to ensure high student attendance and punctuality;
- the importance of smart uniform and personal appearance to the working culture of the school;
- and the need to ensure that students' behaviour is, at all times, conducive to quality learning.

This year, I can report that we have refocused the role of the class tutor to provide a more personalised, responsive front-line system for:

- tracking attendance and punctuality, and – if necessary – addressing issues;
- for ensuring that students look respectable and professional;
- that they bring a computing device that will enable them to access the curriculum;
- and that they use their student planners to organise their time effectively.

We have also developed statistical tools and processes to ensure that class tutors are aware – before the end of each day – of any problems that have arisen, so that in afternoon registration they can reinforce expectations and offer useful, targeted guidance.

Last year, as you will be aware, we redesigned the House Point system in use within the Secondary phase of the school, so that in each and every lesson the twin pillars on which BSK is built – *achievement* and *attitude* – are acknowledged and rewarded.

This year, we are consulting with staff and students on how best we can strengthen other rewards: for excellent work, achievements or progress.

PSHE

My son is in Year 5 at BSK. Over the years, my advice to him, as we have parted company each school morning, has become rather formulaic.

I usually say something like this: "Stay safe. Be kind to everybody. Do your very best work."

It seems to me that such simple advice is a fair summary of the purpose of our Personal, Social, Health and Economic education programme (PSHE) and the linked Departmental Assemblies.

These are central to the work of the school.

PSHE is the lynchpin component in our social and moral responsibility towards the young people of Kuwait, to ensure that they understand:

- *why* it is important to stay safe, and *how* to live healthily;
- *why* being kind and fair are so important and *how* to achieve that;
- and also the 'why' and the 'how' of doing one's very best work.

To emphasise the centrality of such issues, we have moved PSHE to the central day of the school week, Tuesday, and to the central lesson on Tuesday: Lesson 3 within our five-lesson day.

But more than such symbolism, the Department Coordinators and their teams of tutors have further enhanced the PSHE courses, to better bridge the gap between theory and practice which can sometimes occur when lesson topics relate to what students *should* be doing.

To accelerate the development of Upper Department PSHE, we have this year structured the programme so that class tutors are able to develop expertise in the refinement and delivery of

particular sections of the course. This required some creative timetabling, thanks to our Assistant Head Teacher, Mr Nicholas Smith.

The assessment and grading of PSHE is also under fresh consideration. We believe that it should better assess actual, real-life outcomes of the teaching, not just theoretical knowledge and understanding.

Communications

Last year, I announced to you that the BSK website was to be redeveloped. You will have seen that the new site has now been launched, although it will, of course, continue to grow and develop.

As we were undertaking that project, the importance of communication and shared understanding came to the fore. The idea that teachers, students and parents should have common purpose is by no means revolutionary, but through this project we became aware that it was an area in which we could do better.

So, large LCD information displays have been placed outside the Middle and Upper Department Coordinators' offices. Laminated posters informing students of expectations and procedures have been placed in the appropriate classrooms and corridors. And this year, we have started using social media – *Facebook* – to communicate and better engage with students, parents, former students and other stakeholders in the school.

In all of this, we are aiming to establish a strong common culture, a sense of shared ownership of this school, and a degree of understanding and mutual respect that will underpin the types of positive relationships that are needed for really secure, experiential learning to take place.

Examination Results

BSK's June 2011 examination results were again superb – in fact, another improvement on the previous year:

- 93% A*-C at IGCSE and GCSE, 60% of which were A* or A;
- 97% A-E passes at AS Level;
- and a 100% pass rate at A Level, 93% of which were at C or above.

Once again, our Year 12 and 13 students gained places in quality universities worldwide, and more Year 13 students than ever before decided to pursue their degree courses in the United Kingdom.

Through their own hard work and the rock-solid support of the Sixth Form Coordinator, Mr Mark Leverage, no less than seven of our Year 13 graduates were accepted into 'World Top 100' universities: Toronto, Washington, Glasgow, two students to the University of Nottingham and one each to Pennsylvania and St Andrews.

As you might expect, fuller details are on the BSK website.

Campus Developments

Our Chairman, Director, Executive Director and Principal have continued to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to investment in the infrastructure of the school and the quality of the learning spaces.

Last year, I reported to you about interactive whiteboards, improved wireless network efficiency, the Marble Arch arena and a new Learning Resource Centre.

This year, we have a brand new Sixth Form Centre, Art and Design suite and Business Centre.

To improve students' ability to move quickly and easily around the second floor, Biology laboratories were moved elsewhere, and at the same time made larger.

We will, of course, continue to develop the BSK campus, both to accommodate numerical growth and to enhance facilities and learning opportunities.

Vision

Finally, I should like to say a few words about the 'why' of BSK – our vision.

It is encapsulated in our claim to be 'Kuwait's Premier School'. And in this, our marketing objectives and educational mission align perfectly.

The desire to live up to such a bold claim permeates everything the teaching staff does:

- how they establish and maintain positive and forward-looking relationships with their students;
- how thoughtfully they plan and conduct their lessons;
- how much effort they take over effective feedback to students;
- the seriousness with which all the teachers (not just class tutors) take their pastoral responsibilities;
- how the subject leaders and subject teams treat curriculum development as a never-ending task;
- and how teachers give up their valuable time to broaden and deepen students' experiences through extracurricular activities and clubs.

So our commitment to remain as 'Kuwait's Premier School' is also a commitment to Kuwait itself: to raise the bar, to advance the quality of education available to the children of this country, and in doing so, to support the economic, cultural, social and environmental development of Kuwait and the wider Gulf region.

So, we are proud of what we're doing here. But even more importantly, we are exceptionally proud of your children – both in the here-and-now, and as an expression of hope for the future.

And we are extremely grateful to you: our valued parents. 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 sincerely.

Andrew Moulden

Head Teacher