



GFH ACQUIRES ATHENA PRIVATE SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION



Manama – 30 November 2020: GFH Financial Group (“GFH” or the “Group”) today announced the acquisition of Athena Private School for Special Education (“Athena” or the “School”) in the Kingdom of Bahrain further building the Group’s regional education portfolio valued at more than US\$250 million.

Athena, which began operations around one year ago, has quickly established itself as the premiere K-16+ school providing full-time educational resources and support to students with a broad range special needs. This includes students with: Dyslexia, Autism and Spectrum Disorders, Asperger’s Syndrome, PDD/PDD-NOS, Language Delay/Disorders, Developmental/Physical Disability, Specific Learning Disability/Others, Down syndrome and Academic and Non-Academic Giftedness, among others.

The School offers a host of unique features – making it the most comprehensive and best equipped of its kind in Bahrain. It is located in Bu Quwah on a 91.043 square meter area. The school has a capacity of 1,455 students, making it the largest school in terms of capacity and number of educational buildings which are well equipped for special needs students in the Kingdom. Athena also provides house boarding facilities, which can accommodate up to 80 students in separate gender wings; with up to 40 girls in the Pearl Wing, and 40 boys in the Palm Wing.



The School has also been designed as a state of the art facility that caters specifically to the special needs of its students by providing an optimal learning environment. The campus is fully monitored with cameras throughout ensuring maximum care and safety. Furthermore, it has the most extensive range of programs for special needs students in Bahrain including more courses varied by stage for autistic students than any other learning center in the Kingdom. All programs are delivered according to a rigorous and world-class curriculum that has been developed according to the highest international standards. Athena provides comprehensive teaching and learning across core subjects with an emphasis on key competencies in English, Math and Science as well as the Arabic language. The School's English Language, Arts and Mathematics curriculums are aligned with the US Common Core Standards while its Science programme is delivered in line with Next Generation Science standards. Ensuring the most personalised care and attention, the School maintains a very small teacher-student ratio, with only five students per class.

Athena's programs are further enhanced by a broad range of support services to ensure the most enriching experience and learning process for students. This includes access for students to individual education plans, on-site speech, occupational and physio therapists as well as applied behavior analysts. Students also engage in and take part in regular physical activity and are provided with a host of life skill support and training in-class and on an individualized basis. This ranges from helping them establish dynamic linkages with families and communities through direct contacts, consultations and school-wide events, mainstream integration opportunities, mentorship in varied areas of expertise and transition support in traversing the academic path and post school options.

Commenting, Ms. Fatema Kamal, Senior Executive Director at GFH said, "We're pleased to announce the acquisition of Athena Private School for Special Education, which provides a unique and holistic approach to delivering educational services and support to students with special needs. This is the 6th school acquisition for GFH's education platform in less than 18 months. Athena has already established a strong position in the education market for excellence as underscored by a highly-qualified teaching staff and specialist experts, first rate curriculum and strong capacity for growth and competition. With our investment in Athena, we will work closely with the School's management team, teachers, parents and students to further develop its offering and expand the base of enrolled students. In doing so, the focus will remain on world-class standards that raise the bar in the region for special education and the delivery of learning and support services that foster every student's well-being and potential to learn, grow and live fulfilling and productive lives."



Dr. Gene Rose Yanga, Principal of Athena, added, “Already a center for excellence in education for students with special needs, Athena looks forward to further building on the strong foundations we have established in order to provide and even greater number of students and families in Bahrain with access to our unique learning environment and approach. We are confident that the educational expertise, resources and commitment GFH will bring to Athena through this investment will only serve to support our mission and accelerate the rate at which we can serve the community.”

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About GFH Financial Group B.S.C.

GFH is one of the most recognised financial groups in the Gulf region. Its businesses include Asset Management, Wealth Management, Commercial Banking and Real Estate Development. The Group’s operations are focused in the GCC, North Africa and India. GFH is listed in Bahrain Bourse, Boursa Kuwait and Dubai Financial Market. For more information, please visit www.gfh.com

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