



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب  
Education & Training Quality Authority  
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

# **Directorate of Vocational Reviews**

## **Review Report**

**Al Noor Education Center**  
**East Riffa**  
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 29-31 October 2018**

VO131-C3-R095

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## Introduction

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The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of four reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed lessons and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the Center and met with learners, parents, teachers, management and support staff.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first review for this Center. This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

## Grading scale

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Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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## Table of review judgements awarded

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Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Inadequate (4)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Inadequate (4)
Quality of programmes	Inadequate (4)
Quality of support and guidance	Inadequate (4)
Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate (4)
Capacity to improve	Inadequate (4)
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate (4)

## Review judgements

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### Overall effectiveness

**How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?**

#### **Grade: Inadequate (4)**

The overall effectiveness of Al Noor Education Center (Al Noor) is inadequate, as are all aspects of its provision including the capacity to improve. The Center offers a range of tutorial courses for the Ministry of Education schools' curricula, particularly in the core subjects (Arabic, English, mathematics and science) for all stages that meet parents and learners needs. However, the achievement for approximately half of learners on these courses is inadequate. During the observed lessons learners are attentive and have positive attitudes towards their learning, and a few of them are able to reflect on their learning and participate adequately while they are solving the in-class activities. However, the progress of a number of learners is minimal and they do not master the required competences. A significant number of them struggle and usually need close teacher support.

Teachers have relevant theoretical knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. However, in English courses teachers demonstrate limited knowledge of the subject. In half of the observed lessons teachers failed to engage a significant number of learners, providing insufficient opportunities for learners to be involved throughout the lesson. During the observed lessons teachers use questioning techniques, activities and worksheets, but these methods were not effectively utilised to monitor learners' understanding and achievement of lesson objectives. In the general English courses the Center uses different formative and summative assessments; however, the reliability of these in measuring the progress and achievement of learners during a course is an issue.

Al Noor does not ensure that learners receive effective support and guidance that help them to overcome learning difficulties and reach their full potential. Communication with parents on learners' performance and progress is verbal and *ad-hoc*. Constructive written feedback about how learners can improve is not provided. The Center lacks effective and reliable mechanisms for designing, updating, reviewing and delivering the courses offered. For the school subjects' tutorial teachers mainly depend on the school curriculum which are supported with relevant worksheets. Course text books are used for the general English courses with very brief course content. Courses are insufficiently planned and structured to include all course elements, including a lack of assessment methods. The materials of IT courses are not up-to-date. The Center's organisational structure is not suitable to meet its day-to-day activities. Recently, the Center reached agreement with an external party to

develop certain practices, including a SWOT analysis and strategic plan, but the plan has not been implemented. There is not a comprehensive quality assurance procedure that monitors the quality of teaching and learning provided to stakeholders.

## **Capacity to improve**

### **How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?**

#### **Grade: Inadequate (4)**

Al Noor's capacity to improve is inadequate. Since its inception the Center's approach to quality assuring its offerings has been inadequate as there are no formal policies or procedures to oversee the quality of performance. In July 2018 the Center signed an agreement with an external party to quality assure the process of learning and teaching, but the Center lacks sufficient human and physical resources to carry out day-to-day activities, with most of activities being handled by the Center Manager. While the Center has recently started using a spreadsheet to store learners' accumulated marks, it lacks a suitable system to maintain data on and monitor learners' achievements and the progress they make from their starting point in order to inform decision making. The total enrolment numbers over the past three years has remained steady, though the Center has discontinued the Information Technology (IT) courses since September 2017.

The Center has recently developed a strategic plan with goals that are related to learners' achievement and the overall provision, but these goals are not implemented yet. A SWOT analysis has been completed with the help of an external party and outcomes of this are utilised to shape the execution plan. However, these plans are not applied yet to the level that would have an impact on the Center's performance. The premises are safe and free from obvious hazard, but the learning environment is not inspiring for effective learning. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) provided for this review is not sufficiently detailed and the stated grades overestimate the provision.

## **Learners' achievement**

### **How well do learners achieve?**

#### **Grade: Inadequate (4)**

Learners' achievement at Al Noor is inadequate overall. The observed lessons revealed that approximately half of the learners do not develop adequate knowledge and competencies relevant to their school grades. Learners face difficulties in acquiring the required skills, especially in the general English and English tutorial lessons. Nonetheless, learners in mathematics and science tutorial lessons gain suitable knowledge and skills. Generally, learners are attentive and have positive attitudes toward their learning. Moreover, a few learners are able to reflect on their learning and participate adequately when solving the in-class activities. However, there are a few cases where learners are insufficiently self-motivated and distracted as they are not focusing enough during the lesson. It was clearly evident during the observed lessons that learners' progress is minimal. They were struggling when solving in-class activities or coping from each other, without achieving the main objectives of the given task. Some learners struggled to complete the assigned tasks without the direct help of their teachers.

Learners Performance Data (LPD) provided for the purpose of this review indicates that both success and retention rates are high at 98% and 99% respectively for IT and general English courses. However, the samples of learners' work in general English provided to the review team, reveals that the standards of work and the value-added from attending these courses is minimal. Moreover, the Center lacks rigorous assessment methods and clear rubric to measure the achievement of the courses and/or lesson objectives. Although the Center does not have a formal attendance and punctuality policy attendance is recorded, though punctuality is not. From the observed lessons, learners attend their lessons regularly and are generally on time, with a few cases of learners who arrive late for lessons.

## **The quality of provision**

### **How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?**

#### **Grade: Inadequate (4)**

The effectiveness of training and assessment is inadequate overall. Generally, teachers have relevant theoretical and practical knowledge of the subjects they teach, but in the English courses they show limited practical and theoretical expertise in addressing the varying needs of the learners. Teachers apply suitable teaching methods such as questions and answers,

getting learners to solve class activities and problems on work sheet and the whiteboard, but the lessons are teacher-centred and fail to provide an appropriate level of interaction to sufficiently engage a significant number of learners, witnessed in half of the lessons observed. Lessons are not effectively planned; lesson plans used are neither informative nor updated in response to learners' prior attainment or continuous assessment, and do not clearly state the lesson objectives, identify the teaching methods and resources, or indicate the assessment methods to be used. Furthermore, the delivery of lessons is not properly managed, with teachers not always beginning the lesson with sharing of objectives and recapitulating the previous lesson objectives or ending the lesson with a summing up of the outcomes. Moreover, in a few of the observed lessons, time management was an issue due to the inappropriate allocation of time for class activities.

In the tutorial courses, teachers generally use relevant verbal questioning techniques and in-class practical activities such as solving worksheets to monitor learners' understanding and achievement of lesson objectives and assess their progress throughout the lesson. However, use of these assessment methods is not systematic nor focused. In the general English courses, the Center uses different formative and summative assessments which include grammar and vocabulary, reading and writing skills, but the outcomes of these assessments are not reliable in measuring a learners' progress and attainment throughout the lesson and the course, as there is no standardised marking scheme or clear rubric to ensure the validity of the marks or the relevance of the assessment tool to course objectives.

In half of the lessons observed teachers did not give useful or timely verbal feedback to learners to support their learning and understanding of the topic. Correction of learners' worksheets is not systematic or consistent, and there is no evidence of any written feedback to learners during the lessons observed or at the end of the course to inform them about their weak areas and how to improve further. Records of learners' performance are insufficiently documented. In most lessons insufficient challenges are provided to stimulate self-learning and promote life-long learning skills, and teachers do not accommodate the needs of the less and more able learners, though in the better sessions teachers generally support learners who are facing difficulty through repeating explanations and providing more opportunities to practice while the better learners are challenged through questioning techniques or peer correction activities. In general, teachers use the learning resources provided and teaching aids appropriately to deliver the lessons.

## How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

### Grade: Inadequate (4)

Al Noor offers a range of tutorial courses covering the Ministry of Education's school curricula, particularly in the core subjects of Arabic, English, mathematics and science. These courses are offered in different forms, such as regular tutorial courses, homework support lessons, private lessons and revision classes to prepare learners for final and mid-term examinations. They cover all government school grades from primary up to secondary. The Center also offers general English and IT courses. The majority of learners and parents interviewed indicate that courses on offer meet their needs and requirements. The Center senses the local community's educational needs on an *ad-hoc* basis by responding to requests received from parents and learners, particularly for examination revision subjects. However, the Center does not have a formal procedure for analysing and gathering stakeholders' specific needs and requirement.

The Center lacks formal mechanisms to design, approve, update and regularly review its courses. The course development processes including course planning, delivery and assessment of learners' performance is entirely left to the teacher, with no oversight from the Center to ensure that the courses offered are covering the required acquisition of knowledge in response to the learners' school grades and varying needs of learners. Class worksheets used for the delivery of the courses and handouts for examinations' revision are reviewed and updated individually by the assigned teacher on an *ad-hoc* basis, and as a result vary in quality and relevance. The range of quality resources available is not sufficient to meet the different needs of learners. While the general English and IT courses have relevant course textbooks with very brief course content, the course documentation lacks main components such as specific course objectives, clear course outlines to include the duration for each sub-level, required units and assessment methods to be used. They are supported with limited extracurricular activities to enrich the learning experience. Learners are enrolled in the tutorial courses according to their current school grades, with no prior assessment being carried out to assess the level of the learner. Moreover, the results of the placement for the general English courses is not used effectively to place learners in the right level and there are no clear access and entry requirements for the IT courses.

## How well are learners supported and guided?

### Grade: Inadequate (4)

Learners at Al Noor are not sufficiently supported or guided to achieve better outcomes. The Center does not have a formal support and guidance mechanism that help learners to progress further and reach their full potential and lacks follow-up arrangements that enable learners to overcome their learning difficulties and achieve better. There is no induction programme before registering in a course, with most of the support provided being left to the teacher's own initiative. From the lesson observations there was evidence of teachers providing adequate support during break time to the less able learners who were struggling to complete the given class work successfully, and the Center provides compensation lessons to learners who are absent or have missed their classes for a valid reason.

Learners and parents have access to general information about the courses offered through communication with the Center's Manager. Social media such as 'Instagram' application is in place, but the displayed information is not regularly updated. A promotional basic brochure is made available only for the general English and IT courses. Communication with parents to inform them about learners' performance and progress throughout the course is insufficient and mainly done verbally and on an *ad-hoc* basis. The Center Manager follows up on lateness and absenteeism through telephone calls when needed. Arrangements for the courses delivery are sufficiently flexible to suit the needs of learners and parents by offering different modes of tutorial courses and timings.

The Center has a sufficient number of classrooms and one computer laboratory with a sufficient number of Personal Computers and a narrow reception area. Although the classrooms are of an appropriate size and are equipped with (just) the necessary resources, they are crowded with chairs and tables and the learning environment is not sufficiently inspiring, nor is it comfortable due to noisy air-conditioning and weak ventilation in some of the rooms. The Center recently introduced ramps to facilitate the movement of learners with physical disabilities, but it lacks relevant procedures to identify and accommodate learners with special needs and ensure equal learning opportunities.

## **Leadership, management and governance**

### **How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?**

#### **Grade: Inadequate (4)**

The effectiveness of leadership, management, and governance is inadequate. Although the Center has vision and mission statements that focus on raising learners' performance and developing their knowledge and skills of the core school subjects, the management practices and directions are not guided by these statements. Recently, Al Noor has developed a strategic plan with stated goals, but these goals are not clearly defined nor measurable. Since its inception, the Center's approach to quality assuring its offerings has not been suitable, as there are no formal policies or procedures to maintain the quality of the provision and the overall performance. Al Noor recently signed an agreement with an external party for the purpose of developing formal quality assurance processes, and as a result some initiatives have been adopted and are stated in the Center's operating plan. A SWOT analysis which explicitly highlights the current status of the provision and identifies areas for improvement, has also been completed. The findings of the SWOT analysis are in line with this review's findings. Moreover, some of the outcomes of that analysis have been used to shape the operation plan. However, the implementation of this plan is not yet apparent, while the SEF submitted for this review is not sufficiently detailed and the grades overestimate the provision.

The current organisation structure consists of the Manager, who is the owner, a secretary and an office boy, with the Manager conducting most of the day-to-day activities. The Center employs part-time teachers who have experience in government schools. However, there are no policies and procedures to select, recruit and induct them and no systematic monitoring system processes in place to ensure an adequate level of performance and guide further improvement. For instance, the Center has no internal lesson observations system to ensure the quality of teaching.

Arrangements to monitor learners' achievement and progress are also inadequate. There is no effective mechanism to measure learners' prior attainment before the start of a course and the management keeps only limited records of learners' performance, and then only for current courses. Trend analyses are not implemented and as a result they do not inform improvement actions. Suitable links are maintained with learners and their parents, though the views of learners' and parents are irregularly sought, aggregated and analysed. The views of learners were recently collected using a very basic form but improvement actions have not been triggered by these views. The Center premises are safe and free from obvious hazard, but the learning environment is not pleasant as some classrooms are cramped and equipped with unnecessary tables and chairs.

## **The provider's key strengths**

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- The flexible arrangements for course delivery to meet learners' and parents' needs.

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, Al Noor Education Center should:**

- ensure that learners develop suitable skills and knowledge and make sufficient progress compared to their prior attainment
- ensure that learners are rigorously assessed with a clear rubric, and utilise the outcomes of the assessments in lesson planning to address learners' varying needs
- ensure that the courses are well planned and structured to meet learners and stakeholders' different needs
- devise and implement a formal and effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better outcomes, including learners with special needs
- strengthen the leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that learners' achievement data and records for all courses are accurately maintained throughout the course, closely monitored and analysed to inform improvement decisions
  - improving internal quality assurance systems, including policies and procedures to monitor the overall performance of learners and teachers effectively
  - ensuring that strategic planning is informed with a clear self-evaluation process and has measurable goals and performance indicators.

## Appendix

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### Description of the provision

Al Noor Education Center (Al Noor) was established in April 2016. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to offer a range of non-accredited general English and Information Technology (IT) courses. The Center also offers tutorial courses covering the MoE school curricula for main subjects (Arabic, English, mathematics and science) for all stages. Most learners come from government schools and are aged seven and above.

Since its inception and up to the date of this review the Center has enrolled 1,579 learners, broken down as 655 in 2016, 532 in 2017 and 392 in 2018 to date. Tutorial courses represent 93% of the total enrolment, general English 6% and IT courses 1%. Al Noor's organisational structure consist of the Center Manager, who is the owner, a secretary, and office boy. A pool of part-time teachers is used as and when needed. The Center operates from one location in East Riffa.