



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

British Language Centre
Janabiya
Kingdom of Bahrain

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over four days, by a team of six reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions 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 provider and met with learners, parents, teachers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, British Language Centre (BLC) the overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding, as were all aspects of its provision except the quality of training which was judged as good.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Grading scale

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

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Outstanding (1)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Outstanding (1)
Quality of programmes	Outstanding (1)
Quality of support and guidance	Outstanding (1)
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding (1)
Capacity to improve	Outstanding (1)
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding (1)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The overall effectiveness of British Language Centre (BLC) is outstanding, as are all aspects of its provision, with learners developing highly effective skills, knowledge and competency in English and confidently applying the skills gained in achieving their academic goals. Learners are self-confident, show positive attitudes towards their learning and work extremely well during team activities. They achieve high proficiency rates that match the standards of their attainment as seen in the lessons observed as well as in the written and other work produced. However, a small number of learners do not master their writing and vocabulary skills well in comparison to the others. Learners benefit significantly from the experienced and passionate native speaking teachers, who provide a variety of well-structured activities linked to learners' life and culture. Lessons have clear plans and topics to be covered, broken down effectively into ice breakers, reviews and closing, covering all the language skills. Lessons are well informed by the prior and continuous assessment of learners. Teachers manage lessons very well, the objectives are comprehensive and shared with learners at the start of the lesson, and are referred to continuously throughout the learning journey with almost all lessons ending with a purposeful summary. Teachers utilise a wide range of learner-focused teaching methods which are challenging and highly supportive to successfully engage the learners.

BLC offers a progressive range of English courses based on a comprehensive and thorough understating of the educational needs of its learners and stakeholders, using highly reliable market surveys. Courses are well structured and designed, rigorously planned and delivered using learner-centric and highly interactive teaching methods. Learners and parents at BLC have access to comprehensive advice, support and guidance on course selection and throughout their learning journey. Excellent learning support mechanisms with clear policies that are targeted at all learners include comprehensive induction, a useful web site, student handbook and registration presentation. BLC uses a highly effective approach for continuous self-assessment and quality assurance, which is evident from the ongoing improvement actions taken by the management team.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

BLC has outstanding capacity to improve its provision. The management has taken substantial steps towards driving continuous improvement initiatives, and since the last review has revised its current strategic and operational plans and closely applied the required changes. It has used the input from its critical self-assessment team and moderation and verification consultants to update and improve the internal quality assurance procedures, including modifying lesson plans and monitoring the performance of teachers. This results in a highly effective and rigorous quality assurance system for sustaining and growing its provision. The BLC organisation structure is fit for purpose, with highly competent staff being recruited to impact the improvement plans, and a wide range of physical resources are deployed effectively to accommodate the varying learning and teaching needs.

Records of learners' achievements and progress on all courses are consistent and meticulously monitored, and to improve this further the management is now introducing an improved IT system which has an informative dashboard and an effective reporting system. BLC retains enrollment with most of its learners and enrollment during the last three years has increased considerably to the effective links with parents, learners and the community. The self-evaluation form completed for the review is very comprehensive, informative and self-critical. It has identified precisely the areas that need to be improved. The suggested grades mostly match those of the review team.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Learners develop highly effective skills, knowledge and competency in English and apply those skills confidently in achieving their academic goals. They are self-confident and work extremely well during team activities. Learners are able to master given tasks and build competency through the well-structured and rigorous assessment methods of highly engaging learning in class activities. Almost half of them achieve very high proficiency rates which reflect in the standards of learners' attainment seen in the observed lessons and learners' written and produced work. However, a small number of learners do not adequately master their writing and vocabulary skills in comparison to the others. Almost all parents and

learners are highly satisfied with the effective development of skills and knowledge and find courses enormously helpful, confirmed by learners' achievement and the progress they make from their starting points.

Almost all learners obtain the certificate they aim for and achieve course outcomes successfully. For the last three years the overall achievement rate is high at 97% with the retention rates ranging from 95% to 100% across most courses and levels. The Centre has a well-structured and effective assessment process, with a defined minimum pass mark set at 67.5% for each level. The vast majority of learners make considerable progress relative to their prior attainment throughout their course, and most of them maintain continuous improvement over levels, evident from the records of learners' marks on their assessment records. A number of success stories and case studies of learners who have succeeded in achieving course levels, particularly those who are enrolled at BLC over a longer period of time, were cited during the review.

Learners show positive attitudes towards their learning and are highly competent. Most of them are self-motivated and show a high level of enthusiasm and interest in their learning. This is demonstrated well in their positive interaction with their teachers during lessons. The majority of learners reflect critically on their learning and what they need to do to improve further. This is very evident in the observed lessons through the way they accurately answer teacher's questions. They present their work in front of their classmates and defend their ideas assertively. Learners are requested to complete a self-assessment form throughout the journey of their course, in which they reflect on their progress and the extent of development of their English skills. From the sample of learners' individual and group work reviewed, learners benefit highly from the knowledge and skills gained that allows them to confidently work independently and collaboratively. The more-able learners take leadership roles when given the opportunity.

BLC has a clear attendance and punctuality policy which is shared with learners and their parents. Attendance and punctuality are regularly checked and accurate records are maintained. Most learners attend regularly and are usually on time; the overall attendance rate is at 86%. The Centre consistently follows up in cases of absenteeism or lateness through the admissions team.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Teachers are native speakers, experienced in both theoretical and practical terms to teach English as a foreign language. They provide a wide range of examples and activities linked to the local culture. Lesson plans are detailed, with the topics to be covered and broken down into warm-up, review and closing, covering all the language skills. They clearly indicate the activities to be covered in addressing the different learning needs, classwork, homework, and the middle and final examinations. Lessons are continuously informed by the prior and continuous assessment of learners. All lesson plans are very well managed, the objectives being comprehensive and shared with learners before the start of the lesson and referred to continuously throughout the learning, with almost all lessons ending with a purposeful summary. Teachers utilise a wide range of learner-focused teaching methods which are challenging and highly supportive, successfully engaging learners throughout the lesson. Most teachers are passionate and responsive to the learners' different needs using a variety of relevant activities such as role-play, educational and physical games for learning by fun, smartboard interactive activities using the 'Clicker', and requiring learners to present their classwork in the form of a poster, flyer, or power-point presentation. These methods are consistently used throughout the learning experience, being well adjusted to the learners' level and age and suitably meeting their specific learning goals.

Teachers use extremely rigorous assessment methods to evaluate learners' understanding and standards of achievement throughout the course. The assessment starts with a thorough written and oral placement test, followed by continuous formative and summative assessments. Throughout the learning experience learners practice activities covering all language skills, using diverse verbal questioning techniques, coloring and drawing, written activities in the notebook and textbook, interactive assessments using the smartboard to perform relevant activities in pairs, groups or as individuals, as well as using the WALT (We Are Learning To), and the 'Big Write'. They are given two classwork activities to complete at home, which are relevant to the subject being studied. Learners are encouraged to be creative and innovative thinkers and to present their work in front of their classmates. Teachers maintain comprehensive learners' performance records on a continuous basis. They provide effective verbal and written feedback during the lessons, on learners' completed activities and classwork, to advise them on how to improve further.

Feedback on learners' performance is provided online after mid and final examinations and upon need, and through progress reports or planned meetings with parents. Teachers are effective in accommodating learners' varying needs. The more-able are adequately challenged by giving them extra activities, allowing them to take lead in a given task, or assigning special responsibilities to them after receiving relevant training by BLC to become a peer mentor with the aim of supporting their colleagues for correcting their work within and around class. The less able are provided with relevant support activities suitable to their level, extra homework to enable them to perform better, or extra support and one-on-one explanation by the teacher or a peer mentor. Teachers stimulate learners' higher order and critical thinking through different tools and techniques and promote their self-learning and life-long learning. This is

conducted through giving learners the opportunity to correct themselves, reflect on their peers and present confidently. Learners are also given the opportunity to become peer mentors, which enhances their self-confidence and leadership skills. They are encouraged to be involved in the Drama Club, thereby utilise the words they study in practical plays and songs. A wide range of available learning resources is effectively utilised to enrich learning, such as pictures, videos, flashcards, audio, laptops, books, notebooks, smart-board with all the relevant interactive games and activities, whiteboards and utilising the open area outside to conduct relevant activities.

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The Centre has very effective and consistent systems to gather and analyse feedback from learners, parents and teachers to inform the provision of its courses. Focus groups from the BLC learners' and parents' community are periodically surveyed in order to establish potential language learning needs. In addition, to be abreast of Bahrain's changing education sector, the Centre uses highly reliable market survey study sources such as Oxford Business Group reports and other skills gap surveys. As a result of comprehensively understanding the educational needs of its learners and stakeholders the Centre has implemented very useful changes to the English language courses, such as introductory levels Foundation 1 and 2 for adults and a three-level Phonics course for children. It has also recently conducted a course to develop goal setting and reflective thinking skills for young adults to enable them to cope with their future university studies, and intends to include this course in its annual course schedule.

There is an explicit and robust mechanism for designing, approving, reviewing and updating the courses, effectively and consistently implemented for all courses. The Centre conducts periodic and focused curriculum reviews. Course components such as lesson planning, methods of assessment and teaching methodologies are thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness against the outcomes of data analyses of learners' performance in each course and over courses. For instance, it was found that learners in Adult Starter Course (ASC), which used to be one level until 2014, were performing below the required standard. The course was split into two levels (ASC1 and ASC2) in order to plan lessons more thoroughly and allow learners more time to practice and consolidate the learning outcomes; as a result, learners' achievement averages improved significantly.

Courses are very well structured and rigorously planned and delivered, using learner-centric and highly interactive teaching methods. Each course has clear scheduling of tasks,

assessments are linked very systematically to learning outcomes and the information is taught in a sequence that encourages a progressive acquisition of knowledge and language skills. BLC courses are referenced to the Common European Framework. Detailed course outlines and schedules are readily accessible to learners and parents upon registration. A range of internationally recognised, visually appealing and highly appropriate course books are used which are well suited to the target learners' ages and requirements. Course content is reinforced with a wide range of highly customised teaching and learning resources of international standard. These include interactive smart board, educational games, manageable chunks of reading texts for less able learners and film clips. Courses at BLC are engagingly supported with a range of carefully planned extracurricular activities such as Crystal Maze, which is adapted for different age groups, to enhance critical thinking and team building skills. The Book Club and Time2Talk develop the reading and oral communication skills of BLC learners. Through a peer mentoring programme BLC trains selected learners to mentor low achievers in the starter levels to improve their language skills and self-confidence, and for mentors to gain employability skills. The Drama Club aims to enhance learners' self-confidence through acting. In the 'Discover UK' programme, learners are given the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom and practice English in authentic situations and also develop life skills and appreciation for other cultures.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Learners and parents at BLC have access to comprehensive advice, support and guidance on course selection. The Centre has very useful learning support mechanisms such as structured policies, inductions, informative web site, student handbook, registration presentation, peer mentoring, Drama Club and Book Club. Prior to choosing a course a registration presentation to parents and learners enlightens them on courses on offer and what suits them. After registration, learners and parents attend a very effective induction programme. BLC premises and facilities provide an inspiring learning environment. Classes are decorated with teaching aids, educational posters, and examples of learners' work. The classrooms are spacious, equipped with high-tech smartboards, white boards, clipboards, projectors, and other teaching aids and stationery. The corridors are wide enough and decorated with learning posters, learners work, and a TV that shows some films. A comfortable waiting room for parents and a study room for learners are also in place. Learners and parents have access to highly effective and updated information about courses on offer through different means such as BLC website, social media and brochures. Learners are also advised effectively and receive guidance on their further studies.

BLC maintains highly effective communication with stakeholders to inform them about attendance, assessment results, performance, support for special needs and learners'

achievements throughout their learning journey via various communication channels. Stakeholders are mainly reached via phones, face-to-face meetings and personalised protected online accounts. BLC provides highly flexible arrangements for courses delivery, negotiated with parents to suit their needs in terms of course days and timing and general support to learners.

BLC has a structured policy on supporting learners with special educational needs, with effective arrangements in place. Support is provided to those with special needs as the need may arise. There is also an effective mechanism to identify learners with special educational needs, either before the course starts or during the course. Meetings with parents are held to discuss the need and agree on the solutions. Follow up meetings are held regularly to monitor the progress in those cases. The minutes of meetings are all recorded.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The management at BLC is guided by fully integrated strategic and operational plans with well-defined vision, mission and objectives statements. These are focused on continuous improvement of learners' achievements and the quality of English programmes that fulfil the specific needs of learners and parents. The management conducts continuous and critical SWOT analyses to determine any required strategic and operational changes, and measures its provision impact effectively. Action planning is developed for each year, where tasks are identified and accountabilities, timescale and progress are closely monitored, all in relation to the overall strategic plan. The Centre deploys sufficient human and physical resources to fulfil operational requirements and meet its aims. Senior management and teachers have extensive experience in the teaching and learning field, and staff job roles and responsibilities are precisely defined.

BLC has a coherent range of well-articulated internal quality assurance policies and procedures to conduct its operation. A comprehensive teachers' manual is in place to guide teaching and learning. The range of the QA system includes well-defined placement tests, self-assessment and evaluation processes. Seemingly, verification and moderation arrangement are continually carried out across all courses. Effective procedures are in place for assessing, analysing and utilising learners' prior attainment before the start of each course. Learners' achievement is meticulously monitored, analysed and verified and the outcomes are used to influence improvement decisions. BLC has a systemic approach for continuous self-evaluation

and has carried out several SWOTs to shore up its SEF, while using the input from the External Advisory Board to evaluate its operation further.

BLC's health and safety procedures and practices are highly systematic to ensure the wellbeing of learners and all work spaces are tidy. Regular risk assessment and fire drills are conducted and evaluated for improvement purposes. BLC has a detailed and clear policy for recruitment of staff. Qualified staff and native speaking teachers are recruited, being deployed effectively according to their specialisation. Once employed, teachers are provided with ample development opportunities on a continuous basis to acquaint them to the BLC teaching approach. A comprehensive lesson observation scheme to quality assure teaching and learning is firmly in place. Teachers' performance is closely monitored through random visits, with identified areas for improvement being shared with teachers, along with input from learners' feedback. Achievement results are also aggregated to measure teachers' overall performance.

Highly productive links are maintained with parents, learners and the local community. Likewise, the management has a systematic approach to collect and aggregate learners' and parents' feedback after each course and the outcomes are thoroughly analysed, with trend analysis being identified and improvement actions being driven by the resulting input. Fit for purpose governance arrangement is in place, with the performance of the Center being overseen by the External Advisory Board who provides effective advice on on-going basis and contributes to the development of the provision.

The provider's key strengths

- The highly effective skills, knowledge and competency developed by learners in the English language that helps them with school study, with almost half of them achieving very high proficiency rates.
- The qualified and experienced teachers who utilise highly innovative teaching techniques and rigorous assessment to positively impact the learning experience.
- The progressive range of effective and customised General English and communication skills courses offered, based on a comprehensive understanding of the local market requirements.
- The comprehensive and systematic support and guidance provided to learners throughout their learning journey.
- The comprehensive strategic and action planning, with highly relevant targets that are monitored very closely to assure the impact of the provision.
- The highly systemic approach for self-assessment processes that are critical and conducted on a continuous basis to inform improvement decisions.

Recommendations

In order to sustain the high quality provision, British Language Centre should:

- Spread the outstanding teaching and educational practices and leading projects of the Center to other educational institutes in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- Further ensure that learners master their writing and vocabulary skills in all courses.

Appendix

Description of the provision

The British Language Centre (BLC) was established in 2009. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer general English courses for children aged five years to adult and which are aligned to the Common European Framework (CEF). All BLC courses are 30 hours duration and categorised to three groups according to age group; children's courses for learners aged five to 11 years and including phonics and general English, general English courses for young people aged 12 to 15 years, and English courses for adult learners aged 16 years and above. Adult English courses include general English, conversation, business English, preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and report writing courses.

BLC operates from one centre located in Janabiya. It is owned and managed by the Strategic Director and the Operational Director. It employs an education and quality assurance coordinator, six teaching staff, a finance officer, administration team leader, security staff and a caretaker. All staff are employed on a full-time basis.