



# Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

English Language Skills Centre  
Tubli  
Kingdom of Bahrain

**Date Reviewed: 13-15 December 2015**

VO026-C3-R019

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Grading scale .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of review judgements awarded.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Review judgements .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Overall effectiveness .....	2
Capacity to improve .....	3
Learners' achievement .....	3
The quality of provision.....	3
Leadership, management and governance .....	7
<b>The provider's key strengths .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Overview of the provision.....	11

## Introduction

---

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA), conducted this review over three days, by a team of four 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, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) was judged as satisfactory as are all other aspects of its provision.

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
-------------	---	------	---	--------------	---	------------	---

## Table of review judgements awarded

---

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of programmes	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of support and guidance	Satisfactory (3)
Leadership, management and governance	Satisfactory (3)
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Satisfactory (3)</b>

## Review judgements

---

### Overall effectiveness

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

**Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

The overall effectiveness of English Language Skill Centre (ELSC) is satisfactory, as are all aspects of its provision. An appropriate range of local completion English language courses are offered for young learners, teenagers and adults that meet learners' and parents' needs. Recently, based on a survey of parents' needs, the Centre restructured courses levelling system to enable learners and parents to understand the progressions through the levels and courses. All courses are now aligned with the Common European Framework Referencing (CEFR) and increased the course hours from 32 to 36 in order to meet the internationally recommended hours of instruction at each level. These courses are conducted on a suitable learning environment that is well-equipped and delivered by qualified native speaking English language teachers. Teachers are qualified and have relevant background and practical experience in the area they teach. They use a range of stimulating teaching methods to ensure effective participation and interaction of learners during lessons. However, in a minority of the observed lessons, teachers focused largely on speaking skill or vocabulary building. Despite this, the majority of learners develop useful English language skills and make adequate progress over levels. According to parents' feedback and evidence seen on the observed lessons, learners improve their English language skills, knowledge, maintain positive attitude to their learning and enjoy the practical part of their lessons. However, a minority of learners do not master English language skills well, practically on the writing, and do not achieve the course objectives in full.

Learners and parents are provided with clear and useful instructions on the first day of the course. This is to familiarise them with main aspects relevant to learning activities such as attendance and punctuality policy, teaching and assessment methods and marks distribution. This is provided by ELSC friendly and supportive administration staff and teachers. ELSC has recently developed suitable strategic plan, based on a useful SWOT analysis and feedback received from an external consultant as part of their initiative for relaunching and branding of their courses offering. Management monitors learners' achievement and progress for various groups, and ensures smooth running of the day-to-day activities. But, it does not carry

out further analysis on learners' achievements to measure the impact of its operation. The Centre has a brief and relevant policy and procedure manual that includes moderation and verification process; however, these are not sufficiently detailed to ensure consistency of its operation.

## **Capacity to improve**

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

#### **Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

ELSC capacity to improve is satisfactory overall. New management has taken over lately; it has initiated a range of improvement initiatives to address previous QQA recommendations such as introducing new internal quality procedures and forms, and surveying parents' views about the range of course. Nevertheless, the Centre approach to quality assuring teaching, assessments and monitoring of learners' achievements are not fully deployed and its impact is not evident yet. A clear management structure is in place with detailed key responsibilities to carry out the daily activities, but some posts are vacant and some functions are recently introduced. ELSC is guided by a recently developed strategic plan that is based on a useful SWOT analysis and coupled with the feedback received from an external consultant. The Centre has been refurbished to cater for the expanded courses and enrollment; it has enrolled 453 learners since the last review, maintaining effective repeat business. Although the management has introduced a new procedure to seek learners' and parents' views after each course and improve its link with the local community, this is not fully fulfilled.

## **Learners' achievement**

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

#### **Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

The majority of learners develop useful English language skills and make adequate progress over levels. Almost all ELSC learners come from the government schools. According to parents' feedback and evidence seen on the observed lessons, learners improve English language skills and knowledge. However, a minority of learners do not master English language skills well, practically on the writing. Additionally, they do not achieve the course

objectives in full. Whilst the provided Learners' Performance Data (LPD) for the past three years indicates that the overall success rates are high; the majority of learners, pass their final course examinations and obtain completion certificates. The majority of parents confirm that learning at the Centre has a reasonable impact on their children progress given their background, starting point and level.

The Centre utilises relevant initial assessment and a range of formative, in-class activities and periodical tests to measure progress and achievement. However, a few assessments do not reflect the standard required for matching each course level. From the observed lessons, the majority of learners are self-motivated and have positive attitude toward their learning. They enjoy the practical activities of their lessons and particularly the junior learners. Whilst senior learners show less interest and are not sufficiently attentive to their study. A minority of learners during the lessons are able to reflect on what they need to do to improve further, as clearly demonstrated on their contribution and further questioning. Generally, learners are able to work independently through class practical activities. However, in a few cases, senior learners still require teacher's direction to complete their task. Learners and parents are made aware of attendance policy at the start of a course. Attendance is high as expected on such short courses. Relevant records of attendance and punctuality are regularly maintained. Most learners attend regularly, however punctuality is an issue in a few cases only.

## **The quality of provision**

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

#### **Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

The effectiveness of teaching and assessment in promoting learning at ELSC is satisfactory overall. Teachers are qualified, knowledgeable and have relevant theoretical and practical command in teaching English as a foreign language. This is well-reflected in their explanation, responses to learners' questions, and sharing relevant real-life cases and examples. From the observed lessons, teachers use adequate teaching methods and activities to engage learners to participate throughout the lesson such as discussion, ice-breaker and educational games. As noted during observed lessons, teachers succeed to engage and motivate young learners. However, in a minority of these lessons teachers focused largely on speaking skill or vocabulary building.

Accommodation of different individual learning needs is usually utilised. While the less-abled learners are suitably supported, the more-abled learners are insufficiently challenged and limited extension activities are provided. Occasionally teachers enhance learners' higher order and critical thinking by further questioning techniques and promote life-long learning through the use of relevant leaflets. Lessons are appropriately planned, delivered and managed in a timely manner, where most of the observed lessons start on time with useful recapitulation to link topics. Whilst ELSC old English Language curriculum were well-informed by learners' prior attainment and the outcomes of continuous assessment, the recent lesson plans for the new English language curriculum is just suitable; they do not focus on all English language skills and they are insufficiently informed by the outcomes of learners' prior or continuous assessment to address learners' varying needs. Teachers suitably utilise the available learning resources to deliver the courses and facilitate learning.

Generally, ELSC teachers assess learners' understanding during the lessons through different practices of questioning, in addition to a relevant range of formative assessment methods are continuously used in the form of hands-on learning activities which are directly linked to course objectives to measure learners' performance throughout the course. However, the recently used assessments measures do not cover sufficiently all language skills as they are more focused on grammar, speaking and vocabulary building. Records on learners' performance are regularly maintained with clear rubrics including a useful progress report for each learner. Additionally, a very detailed written feedback has been observed in these records, however this practice is inconsistent among teachers and in a few cases the feedback was generic. Although, the learners' written work is insufficiently detailed with constructive feedback on where learners need to improve further, teachers usually provide instant useful verbal feedback during lessons.

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

#### **Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

ELSC offers an appropriate range of local completion English language courses for young learners, teenagers and adults that meet learners' and parents' needs. The Junior English language courses are aimed for learners aged between 6 and 11, and the senior levels for Intermediate and Secondary school learners. Very recently, based on a survey of parents' needs, the Centre restructured courses levelling system to enable learners and parents to understand the progressions through the levels and courses. Parents' feedback gathered

indicate a high level of satisfaction with ELSC courses that matches the abilities of their learners.

A useful policy for reviewing and updating the courses has been introduced recently, but not fully implemented to all courses, as such; its impact cannot be measured yet. The courses are appropriately structured and planned with suitable course outlines that briefly mention the topics, target language and skills, completion date and homework assignments. However, the course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are not clearly stated. Recently, the Centre aligned the English language courses with the Common European Framework Referencing (CEFR) and increased the course hours from 32 to 36 in order to meet the internationally recommended hours of instruction at each level. The course books are internationally recognized, authentic and well-suited for the target learners' age and requirements. The provider has clear requirements for entry level to courses by specifying the target audience and the prerequisite requirements. The Centre has very recently changed the course books and updated the placements tests. Additionally, a set of useful rubrics has been developed to place the learners accurately. However, a few of the senior levels are insufficiently adjusted to accommodate the outcomes of prior assessment of learners. For example, during lesson observations, it was observed that a minority of the learners' language skill level is below the expected standard in a few of the senior courses and as a result, these learners were unable to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies required at the level of study. Courses are sufficiently resourced and especially in the junior English levels, where an appropriate range of resources such as games, flash cards, CDs and portfolios are utilised to enrich learning. Whilst ELSC has a plan in place to introduce a range of extra-curricular activities to enrich courses such as field trips to relevant places, currently it does not offer any enrichment activities as part of their courses' objectives.

### **How well learners are supported and guided?**

#### **Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

ELSC has recently developed a useful written support mechanism to help learners achieve better outcomes on courses. Learners and parents are provided with clear and useful instructions on the first day of the course to familiarise them with main aspects relevant to their learning such as attendance and punctuality policy, teaching and assessment methods, marks distribution and courses levels. This is provided by ELSC friendly and supportive administration staff and teachers. Moreover, the Centre has recently introduced a one-on-one support to learners through make-up classes for late comers to ensure their suitability to the



levels they are enrolled in, and based on the outcomes of their placement test. ELSC encourages best performing learners by recognising them through the 'star of the month' award. Additionally, the centre has a clear policy and arrangement in place for supporting learners with special educational needs, where needed.

Prior to the start of a course, learners and parents are given general advice on courses on offer; the course information is provided upon request. The Centre's website and various social media accounts although suitable, they are insufficiently detailed. Regular communication with parents is maintained to inform them about their learners' performance through useful learners' performance report. Whilst teachers maintain a daily record for evaluating learner's performance in all skills, with useful comments on the individual progress, the provided written feedback in these records varies among the teachers, as they do not indicate specific details about what the learner need to do to improve further. The absenteeism or lateness is communicated on a daily basis and follow-up calls are made in a timely manner to their parents. The Centre is very flexible in the arrangements of course delivery to suit the needs of learners and parents. ELSC learning environment is fit-for-purpose and is well-equipped; it has a small library that contains suitable range of books to support learners' level and age on the current courses.

## **Leadership, management and governance**

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

**Grade: Satisfactory (3)**

ELSC has clear mission and vision statements that focus sufficiently on raising learners' achievements and the quality of its offerings to fulfill the requirements of developing English language skills for young learners. The Centre has recently developed suitable strategic plan, based on a useful SWOT analysis and feedback received from an external consultant as part of their initiative for relaunching of their courses offering. It identifies the priorities for improving its provision and establishes a set of key performance indicators (KPI). However, the operation plan and measurement of KPIs are not implemented in full. A clear management structure is in place detailing specific responsibilities, but some posts are vacant and some functions are recently introduced and not yet fully embedded or consistent across the organisation.

The Centre has a suitable procedure to recruit qualified full-time and part-time teachers who have adequate English language teaching experience and are deployed accordingly. The management has lately run useful workshops for teachers as part of introducing new approaches for improving aspects of teaching and learning at the Centre. The management team keeps track of learners' achievement and progress for various groups, and monitors their day-to-day activities, ensuring the smooth running of classes, but it does not carry out further analysis on learners' achievements to measure the impact of its operation.

Although the management quality assures teaching through random visits by a senior teacher to lessons, and uses a fit-for-purpose lesson observation form and shares the outcome of these visits, an action plan for improvement is not documented or followed up. The Centre has relevant quality policy and procedure manuals that include moderation and verification processes; however, these are not sufficiently detailed to ensure consistency.

All learners need to set for a placement test at an entry to a course. As a result, they are placed according to their age groups and English language abilities. The recently introduced placement tests have been updated along with rubrics for placing learners in a particular level. However, the criteria for placement decisions within levels are not explicit enough. As a few learners who have scored different marks, are placed in the same level.

The Centre relies entirely on the informal contact it maintains with parents; the management has recently addressed a few of their comments, such as improving the learning environment. Notwithstanding the above, the management has now introduced a new procedure to seek learners' and parents' views after each course which has yet to be implemented in full. The premises are free from hazards and necessary health and safety measures are in place. Administration staff adhere to clear safety procedures for dealing with young learners on their arrival and departure from the Centre. Nevertheless, formal risk assessment is not conducted specially for an environment dealing with young children.

Useful self-evaluation processes are carried out. The submitted Self Evaluation Form (SEF) provides sufficient details about its operation. However, the identified areas for improvements are not critical enough and given grades overestimate the provision.

## The provider's key strengths

---

- Qualified teachers are recruited who are knowledgeable of the subject they teach and provide relevant real-life cases and examples to enrich young learners' experience
- Highly flexible arrangement for courses delivery to accommodate the needs of learners and parents
- The detailed strategic and operation plans which are based on a useful SWOT analysis.

## Recommendations

---

### In order to improve, ELSC should:

- ensure that learners develop all English language skills and knowledge further and achieve their course objectives
- Improve teaching and assessment by:
  - ensuring better utilisation of the outcome of prior and continuous assessment in lesson planning to address learners’ varying needs
  - providing relevant extra-curricular activities to enrich learning experience.
- Strengthen the leadership and management by:
  - enhancing the approach for gathering and analysing learners’ achievements across the Centre and ensuring the outcomes are used to trigger further improvement
  - improving the internal quality assurance system to monitor and improve the placements, assessments and verification procedures.

## Appendix

---

### Overview of the provision

The English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) was established in 1996. The Centre is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer English language courses to learners aged 6-16. It has recently revamped its courses and provision offering by renovating the Centre which now also includes a lending library. The Centre utilises a pool of native English speaking teachers. Since November 2015 the Centre has introduced new course materials with progression levels. Courses are offered at three levels: beginners, juniors and seniors. The duration of courses is 36 hours. The Centre has enrolled a total of 453 learners since the last QQA's review, 56 learners in 2013, 180 in 2014 and 217 in 2015 up to the date of this review.

The Centre operates from one location in Tubli, and employs a principal who is also the owner, a full-time managing director who manages the Centre, one full time senior English teacher, an academic advisor, an administration staff, part-time external quality auditor and a part-time cleaner.