



الهيئة الوطنية  
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب  
National Authority for Qualifications &  
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

# Directorate of Vocational Reviews

## Review Report

English Language Skills Centre  
Tubli  
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 25-27 February 2013

VO026-C2-R054

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## The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

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The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the DVR's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a four-point scale:

| <b>Grade description</b> | <b>Interpretation</b>   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1: Outstanding           | This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.  |
| 2: Good                  | This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.                               |
| 3: Satisfactory          | This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good. |
| 4: Inadequate            | This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.  |

## **Introduction**

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### **Description of the provision**

English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) was established in 1996. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer English courses for students aged 5-18 years. Recently, ELSC started offering pre-school English courses for children aged 3-5, in addition to tutorials for private and government schools. Most courses offered are mainly very short and non-accredited. Courses are offered at three levels: beginners, juniors and seniors. The duration of courses is 20 hours.

ELSC operates from a single branch in Tubli. The organisation structure consists of a principal who is the owner of the institute and a full-time director who manages the institute as well as the quality assurance, a recently employed full-time senior teacher who is responsible for academic matters as well as the follow-up of other teachers' performance. ELSC employs a full-time office manager who is responsible for human resources, administration and marketing, health and safety and finance. The institute uses up to seven part-time teachers who are used as and when needed.

During the last two years, ELSC enrolled 320 students, the majority of them enrolled in the junior levels and the rest in the beginners. Most students enrolled are children aged three to 14 years old and very few are adults.

### **Scope of the review**

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers attended lessons and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications students achieve, examined students' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the institute and talked with staff, parents, students and trainers.

In the previous review, overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory. Aspects of provision were all also judged as satisfactory.

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

## Table of review judgments awarded

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|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Overall Effectiveness</b>   |                       |
| How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs? | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |
| <b>Learners' Achievement</b>   |                       |
| How well do learners achieve?  | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |
| <b>Quality of Provision</b>  |                       |
| How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?   | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |
| How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?  | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |
| How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?   | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |
| <b>Leadership and Management</b>   |                       |
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?                                  | Grade: 3 Satisfactory |

## 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: 3 Satisfactory

All aspects of provision are satisfactory and there are no major weaknesses that affect students' achievement. The majority of students develop appropriate knowledge and skills and make sufficient progress considering their levels and their starting points. Teachers have sufficient experience in education and teaching although only a few are expert in teaching English as a second language. Although lesson plans used are appropriate and lessons are managed well enough, students' varying needs are not always accommodated. Although ELSC has no systematic approach to collect the needs of their stakeholders, courses are offered in response to informal comments and gauging of the local community needs. Appropriate support is provided to students although this tends to be *ad-hoc* and varies according to individual teachers. The institute has no formal system for support outside classrooms. Parents and students have access to appropriate guidance on courses and are kept informed of student performance through verbal feedback on class activities and a report on completion of courses. The performance of teachers is monitored but the current system does not always identify areas for development. Parental feedback is mainly gathered informally.

ELSC's capacity to improve is satisfactory. During the last two years the management has done some relevant improvements to the provision which include expanding the range of courses offered and the appointment of a qualified full-time senior teacher who is currently working on further development of a useful range of quality assurance documents. In addition, ELSC has recently received Tamkeen's approval for quality improvement initiatives such as rebranding and marketing and purchasing 'smart boards' in all the classrooms and a local consultant to develop its strategic plan. Success and retention rates have remained high at 86 and 85 per cent for the last two years and repeat business is satisfactory. Human and physical resources are adequate for the type and range of courses offered and the number of enrolments. The institute has appropriate quality assurance measures in place.

## **Learners' achievement**

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

#### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

The majority of students develop useful English language skills and make sufficient progress considering their starting points. Most students are motivated, attentive in class and are enjoying their learning. They are able to work independently when required. The majority of parents interviewed stated that their children develop relevant language skills in writing, reading and speaking. A few however, stated that their children's speaking skills could be improved further, or the *added-value* from attending ELSC courses is minimal as their children go to private schools where English is mostly used as the language of instruction.

In the lessons observed, students made satisfactory progress considering their starting points. Although the majority were able to work independently without direction, a minority needed teachers' support to complete their tasks. Progression data and the standard of students' work confirm this adequate progress over the levels. Students' achievement is measured with class activities and final examinations which are appropriately focused on the four main skills and relevant records are kept of this. The records show that the majority of students achieve their course objectives with overall success rates of 86 and 85 per cent for 2011 and 2012 respectively. Students' attendance is satisfactory according to lessons observed and the records kept with the rate ranging between 81 and 85 per cent for the last two years. ELSC has a clear policy on attendance and punctuality; students who miss 50 per cent of the course hours are not allowed to sit for the final examinations. Not all students arrive on time for their classes with some between 15 and 30 minutes late.

## **The quality of provision**

### **How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?**

#### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

The majority of teachers have relevant theoretical and practical experience in the field of education although only a few are experts in teaching English as a second language. During the lessons observed, teachers provided accurate explanations and delivered the course objectives well enough. Appropriate lesson plans are in place; these include the learning outcomes, class activities and the material to be used. However, they are not informed by prior or continuous assessment. As a result, students' individual needs are not always accommodated. In the observed lessons, there were a few cases of the more able students being insufficiently challenged, and less able students who needed further individual

support. Class activities are mostly designed for an average level student rather than accommodating different students' needs. Lessons generally start on time by recapitulation of the previous lesson, and are managed well enough.

Teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods to engage and motivate students such as class activities, role play, and learning by playing and singing. A few students however were insufficiently engaged during the observed lessons. Although assessment of students' work is accurate, there is no clear marking scheme used by the teacher and insufficient written feedback is provided. Recently, the senior teacher started to develop a rubric for evaluating students' performance. Assessment during the observed lessons was appropriate; there were a few cases seen where assessment was carried out by closed rather than open questions, or based on recalling information rather than practical application. Students' progress records are kept which include their grades in each main skill and the teacher's evaluative remarks on general performance. Although the institute has relevant visual and audio learning resources, in a few cases these were insufficiently utilised to promote effective learning.

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

### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

ELSC offers a range of non-accredited English language courses which includes children's English for students age three to 11, seniors for students aged 12 to 15, and general English for adult students aged 16 and above. However, most of the courses conducted so far have only been beginner and junior level courses. Courses are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). ELSC has no systematic approach to collect stakeholders' needs although courses are offered in response to parents' informal feedback and gauging of their needs. For example, ELSC have recently offered a pre-school English course based on parents' requests.

Courses are appropriately planned and structured to meet the needs and abilities of students; they are suitably structured in a sequence that encourages a progressive acquisition of knowledge and skills. Courses start with a beginners' level which deals with the basic concepts such as letters, numbers and colours, followed by junior levels which the focus is equally targeting the four main skills of language. The majority of parents interviewed are satisfied with the range of courses offered. Courses are resourced sufficiently; these include workbooks, extra material from different resources, instructional material and games, a pictures dictionary, relevant DVDs, audio CDs, toys for the nursery level, flash cards and story books. Courses are reviewed but not in any systematic or regular way.



## **How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?**

### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

Students at ELSC receive appropriate support to help them achieve better outcomes; this support is mainly offered by the teachers through verbal feedback provided on class activities, which is the same approach that they use to keep them aware of their performance throughout the course. However, this support is *ad-hoc* and varies between teachers and the institute does not have a formal system for support outside classrooms. However, teachers usually communicate any performance problems to parents to secure their cooperation to improve students' achievement and they sometimes provide less and more able students with extra time before or after the lesson to address areas of concerns. ELSC has recently developed a suitable students' handbook which provides useful information about assessment, distribution of marks, and attendance and punctuality.

Upon course completion, parents receive a report of students' marks which also includes some general comments on performance. Most parents interviewed also stated that they have the opportunities to discuss with teachers about their children's performance when they take them to the institute. Communication about courses is appropriate and available in advance using different modes such as direct guidance from administration staff, leaflets and brochures or through the use of social media. ELSC uses 'Primary Colours' as the main course book for beginner and junior levels which is suitable for the targeted age groups. Arrangements for the delivery of courses are flexible to suit the needs of students and parents. The learning environment is fit for purpose although a few parents stated that the premises are small and located in a residential area where parking is sometimes an issue.

## **Leadership and management**

### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

#### **Grade: 3 Satisfactory**

Most aspects of leadership and management are in place and there are no major weaknesses. ELSC's operational plan is appropriate; the vision statement is appropriately focused on students' achievement and the set goals are relevant. However, progress monitoring is only carried out informally. Currently, the management is in the process of developing its strategic plan with the help of a local consultant. The management structure is fit for purpose considering the type of courses offered and the number of enrolments. ELSC has recently recruited a full-time qualified senior teacher who is currently working on the

development of relevant quality assurance documents such as a clear rubric for evaluation of students' performance at each course level. Teachers recruited are suitably qualified with relevant teaching experience and their deployment is appropriate. Their performance is monitored through students' feedback and internal lesson observations, however, the completed internal lesson observations do not identify areas for development.

Students' achievement is monitored well enough; relevant data are kept and the management oversees the average final test grade for each level per year. However this does not necessarily provide a sufficiently clear picture of fluctuations between groups to be investigated and addressed. Placement tests are in place, however, linking junior and senior placement tests to students' age does not always place them at the appropriate course level. In addition, the outcomes are not used in lesson planning.

Health and safety essentials are in place to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment, although the staff are familiar in dealing with children, the institute does not have a certified first aider. Parents find ELSC premises a safe place for their children to attend courses. Children are observed carefully during breaks by a dedicated member of staff. The institute resumed gathering students' feedback from July 2012, and parents' feedback from October 2012 after a break in 2011. ELSC maintains relationships with parents although a few parents interviewed stated that their feedback has not been sought. The ELSC self-evaluation form (SEF) identifies some areas for development and refers to supporting evidence but it slightly overestimates the grades of a few aspects of the provision.

## The provider's key strengths

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- Students' useful progress reports
- Courses delivered are resourced sufficiently to meet the needs of students
- Assessment is focused equally on the four main language skills
- Courses are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, ELSC should:**

- raise students' achievement
- ensure that students' varying needs are accommodated through effective use of prior and continuous assessment
- establish a system to ensure that courses are regularly reviewed and updated
- improve leadership and management by:
  - improving the current internal lesson observations to identify areas for development to promote continuous improvement
  - ensuring that parents' feedback about the provision are regularly collected and utilised for further improvement
  - improve the current placement test to ensure that all students are placed at appropriate levels and the outcomes are effectively utilised to support students' achievement.