



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Harmony Music Centre
Abu Saiba
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 8-10 May 2018

VO129-C3-R091

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Grading scale	1
Table of review judgements awarded.....	1
Review judgements	2
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve.....	3
Learners' achievement	4
The quality of provision	5
Leadership, management and governance	8
The provider's key strengths	10
Recommendations.....	11
Appendix	13
Description of the provision.....	13

Introduction

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 five 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, and documents and materials provided by the Centre and met with learners, parents, teachers, management and support staff.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first review for this Centre. 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 Harmony Music Centre (HMC) is outstanding, as are all aspects of its provision. Most learners achieve high level of proficiency in different musical instruments, with a significant number who perform extremely well particularly in the piano courses. They make significant progress from their starting points and achieve the qualifications they aim for. Over time, learners develop the self-confidence to perform well in front of audiences and they demonstrate the acquired musical skills competently. A number of them managed to win top awards in the local concerts and events they participated in.

Courses are delivered by highly specialised teachers in the field of music and performance. They use their international experience to provide effective teaching methodologies such as modelling and a range of highly integrated cooperative learning activities, with hands-on practical exercises, to motivate and raise class participation levels that positively impact performance. They use well-structured lesson plans with clear objectives that focus on knowledge and skills the learners are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson, as was evident from lesson observations. Teachers use rigorous formative and summative assessment methods throughout the learning process to evaluate learners' understanding effectively and ensure consistency. They follow comprehensive guidelines for marking and rubrics to evaluate the practical activities and musical knowledge that learners develop.

HMC provides a highly relevant range of locally and externally accredited courses in different musical instruments for different ages and abilities, with clear sequential instruction and well defined progression routes. These offerings are based on the founder and teachers' extensive international experience in the field of music education for young learners and in-depth understanding of local community requirements. Courses are enriched by a highly relevant range of extracurricular activities that positively impact on the learning experience and confidence. Courses are delivered on a one-on-one basis with focused support being provided to each individual learner to impact their achievements. Moreover, teachers, management and administrative staff are approachable, friendly and highly committed to help learners by providing comprehensive and systematic support and guidance throughout the learning journey, which help learners to achieve the best outcomes.

HMC management implements highly effective strategic and action planning, with relevant targets that are based on a thorough and inclusive self-assessment process. The progress of actions is monitored systematically through regular meetings and progress reporting. An effective range of quality assurance procedures and practices are used to guide HMC's daily operations, these are disseminated well in the areas of the quality of teaching and assessment, programme structure, support mechanisms and delivery, and learners' achievement. While a clear and rigorous assessment scheme is strictly implemented on all courses, the moderation arrangements for the internal courses are not well documented.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

HMC has an outstanding capacity to expand and improve the quality of its provision. The management is very committed to fostering music education as a means for developing young learners' self-sufficiency and the quality of their life skills. Since HMC's inception the management has successfully developed a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan with a number of objectives to guide its operations. These are accompanied by clear accountability measures and agreed timescales and are closely monitored. HMC deploys sufficient human and physical resources to implement its objectives, and the senior management have extensive international experience in the field of music education and performance, being led by a competent management team that has taken considerable steps towards driving continuous improvement initiatives. For example, it has recently introduced more piano courses, added more classrooms, and accordingly recruited additional teachers. There are plans to add more courses from Trinity College to the Center's offerings.

The Centre has a very effective approach to maintaining high achievement rates, as indicated by the records since its inception in 2016. Detailed information about each learners' performance is well documented. Rapid growth in enrolment has been experienced over the past three years, with 718 learners now enrolled in the various courses, most of them young learners. The Centre has gained the trust of parents and awarding bodies by responding swiftly to their requirements and concerns, and as a result repeat business has been high. The HMC management has a very firm approach to critically and continually demonstrating the quality of its provision, with all staff being actively involved in the self-evaluation process and having an important role in the improvement aspects. Quality assurance practices and procedures are amended and changed as required. However, assessments' verification and moderation processes are not applied consistently across all courses.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Learners' achievement is outstanding overall. They develop very effective musical skills, knowledge and capabilities and perform their pieces competently. Most of them achieve a high level of proficiency on different musical instruments, with a significant number who perform extremely well particularly in the piano courses. This shows well in the standards reached by learners, as seen in the observed lessons and their active participation in local competitions and events. Learners significantly improve their level of self-confidence, discipline and organisation to perform in front of audiences, and demonstrate their acquired musical skills professionally. A number of them won high awards in the concerts and events they participated in. They are able to incorporate the required levels of musical skills, such as dynamics and rhythm control, while performing. However, a few learners achieve only adequate skills in comparison to others, with difficulties in mastering reading music and tempo skills specifically. Parents' feedback states that almost all of them are highly satisfied with the learning outcomes of their children and the valuable music skills they gain.

Learners at HMC achieve the intended learning outcomes successfully and in a timely manner, with almost all learners who opt to sit the external or internal examinations achieving the certificates they aim for. The overall achievement and retention rates are sustained high, at 100% for the past two years across all levels, with most learners progressing extremely well from their starting points and maintaining high performance over the levels. This is clearly seen through the comprehensive 'teacher's progress report' that assesses and tracks the sub-skills required for the musical instrument levels, and very constructive and instant feedback provided by the teachers. It is worth mentioning that learners who sit for the Associated Board of Royal School of Music (ABRSM) and the Trinity College examinations achieve high proficiency rates and successfully proceed to the advanced levels, with a significant number scoring distinction grades in their final examinations.

Learners are self-motivated and show high levels of commitment towards their learning. They are enthusiastic and show a strong desire to learn. During lessons they are good at reflecting on what they have learnt and what they need to do to improve further. Additionally, they are able to work independently and collaboratively with their teachers during the lessons, or within a group during concerts. Learners attend lessons regularly and on time. The overall attendance rate is high for the past three years, being around 96%. The Centre has a clear attendance policy which is implemented effectively. Punctuality is not recorded, although it was not an issue in the observed lessons.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The effectiveness of HMC teaching and assessment is outstanding overall. Teachers are highly specialised and have theoretical and practical command of the musical fields they teach; being professional musicians. Teachers provide accurate explanations, hands-on experience and act as role models to the learners to observe, follow, and learn. Teachers use structured lesson plans with clear objectives and a list of the relevant knowledge and skills learners are expected to achieve by the end of each lesson. They have clear procedures for the planning the delivery of lessons according to each learners' level and ability, these being continuously adjusted by the outcomes from prior and continuous assessment. Lessons are well planned and highly structured, starting with a very effective recapitulation to check learners' previous understanding, sharing current lesson objectives and ending with an inclusive summary. The time and delivery are managed well throughout the lesson, allowing ample time for activities to be completed.

HMC teachers have high rapport and care while conducting their lessons. They use a variety of different and effective teaching strategies which succeed in continuously engaging and motivating learners to improve their performance. These include further explanations and repeating the musical phrases, breaking them to smaller segments then building them up again to the longer full phrases. Lessons are specifically tailored to the individual learners' needs and capabilities, with the vast majority delivered on a one-on-one basis. Teachers adjust the teaching methods effectively and plan activities and lesson contents based on learners' continuous assessment and according to the learner's musical performance skills and talent. For more practice and for reinforcement, teachers assign certain exercises as homework which are covered again in the next lesson.

Rigorous formative and summative assessment methods are used throughout the learning process to evaluate learners' understanding and achievement. Teachers follow comprehensive rubrics and guidelines for marking in order to evaluate the practical activities and musical knowledge throughout the course. ABRSM and Trinity courses are externally examined by the main awarding bodies, with special assessor reports detailing the specific justification for each skill performance. Before the learners undergo these international examinations they perform in the 'Recital Show' in front of an audience, enabling them to become confident performers and for teachers to judge their readiness to attempt external examinations. Teachers provide comprehensive and critical feedback on what the learners precisely need to do to improve further, using a variety of effective strategies. They maintain

reliable and accurate records on learners' individual performances and continuously update them.

Teachers use effective methods to stimulate learners' self-learning, to critically identify their own mistakes and correct them. Learners are given 'Sight Reading' which is a new external musical piece that is not a part of the course, to practice and perform individually, as well as inviting the learners to the 'Teachers' Concerts' to observe and become inspired. All learners are encouraged to participate in the in-house concerts, recital shows, musician idol and high achievers' concerts to further build their self-confidence and promote life-long learning. Teachers use the available learning resources to promote and enrich the learning experience effectively and extend learners' interests and motivation.

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

HMC provides a highly relevant range of locally and externally accredited courses in different musical instruments such as piano, violin, viola and drums. There are also music theory and vocal courses for learners aged six and above. The Centre has consistent practices to gather and analyse learners' specific needs and parents' requirements which are used effectively to inform the provision. In order to update the quality and relevance of the offered courses, HMC depends largely on the founder's and teachers' extensive international experience in the musical education field and in-depth knowledge of the requirements of the local community. Social media networks and other highly relevant platforms are used effectively to reach the target audiences and precisely sense their needs. Based on this, the Centre gradually has widened its offerings to include a range of specialised music courses for different ages and abilities with defined progression routes.

All courses are very well structured and rigorously planned. The assessment levels of HMC's internally designed courses and the externally accredited examination courses are closely aligned to the courses' intended learning outcomes. The design and the delivery of the courses ensure timely sequence flows of information and accurate progression of knowledge acquisition, and gradually increase the skills development to enhance the practical and theoretical learning, while clear formative and summative assessment methods and clear rubrics are used to evaluate learners' achievements. Courses have a detailed syllabus for each musical instrument, which are made readily accessible for learners and parents upon registration and are also available in the 'Studio Director' online portal.

ABRSM and Trinity externally accredited courses are regularly reviewed and the content and methods of assessment updated. The internal courses are robustly designed, developed and aligned to allow learners to progress smoothly to the externally accredited courses. The Centre has written guidelines to plan and update the internally designed courses, which are

implemented effectively. These includes reviewing the achievement results and identifying areas of difficulty that learners face, and addressing issues pertaining to the courses. Though, HMC does not have a detailed policy regarding reviewing and updating these courses.

A range of well recognised and up-to-date music books are used to suit learners' ages and needs. Course contents are reinforced with a range of teaching and learning resources to international standards, such as high quality musical instruments and CD audios. Courses are enhanced with a range of constructive, engaging and carefully planned extracurricular activities which enrich the learning experience. These include musician idol competitions, school festival, teachers' and learners' instrumental concerts. These additional activities have significant impact on learners' achievements and enhance their capabilities and self-confidence through the public performances.

HMC has a comprehensive entry and access policy, and the mechanism is rigorously implemented to evaluate the competency level of learners' prior learning and their abilities. This is applied to all learners who are new, returning or have achieved a grade level in the ABRSM or Trinity certifications prior to joining HMC. Placement tests with specific criteria are used to ensure that learners are placed accurately within levels.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

HMC has a systematic and comprehensive mechanism to support and guide learners that helps them to achieve the best learning outcomes. The support provided significantly influences the levels of learners' performance and improves their musical skills. A number of examples were cited where learners have obtained high competency rates in the achievement of their certificates. Learners facing learning difficulties are given more practice through additional material such as supplementary pieces, providing useful links of backing tracks and recordings of famous musician's performance to support them and enrich their learning experiences. Learners are encouraged to practice at home and to be prepared for their next lessons through the 'practice challenge board with stickers' as a motivational method where winners are awarded with incentives. Learners' handbook includes steps to be followed by parents and learners at home. Where needed, those learners who miss lessons are provided with make-up classes.

Learners are provided with very focused support and guidance throughout their courses. Courses are delivered on a one-on-one basis, with individual support being provided to learners to enable them to achieve their best potential. Teachers, management and administrative staff are approachable, friendly and highly committed to helping learners during their learning journey. Learners and parents have access to structured advice and effective guidance on course selection, with updated information about the courses on offer

and their progression opportunities; this is through various channels such as discussions, a comprehensive handbook, detailed syllabus, a user-friendly website, informative brochures and social media. At the commencement of a term an induction meeting is held with parents to familiarise them with aspects related to their children's learning process, including holistic information about the HMC regulations and policies. Learners are given opportunities to perform different musical pieces in front of a public audience and their parents, and are regularly encouraged to participate in the different in-house concerts such as the recitals show and high achievers concert. This positively impacts learners' skills and their level of confidence.

The Centre maintains close communication with parents throughout the course to keep them abreast of learners' performance. For this purpose, a comprehensive online 'Studio Director' portal is provided to parents to follow-up on their children's attendance rates and learning achievements. The online system contains all the scheduled lessons and future events. Thorough report cards are shared with parents which indicate clearly what learners need to do to improve further.

Effective mechanisms are in place to identify and support learners with special educational needs, with relevant policy and procedures. These include arranging meetings with parents to discuss the needs, adjusting the regular assessments for a trial class, searching for suitable learning materials and adapting the teaching strategies with the use of individualised plans. Arrangements for the delivery and scheduling of the courses are highly flexible and are always negotiated with learners and parents to suit their needs and specific requirements. HMC's learning environment and facilities are fit-for-purpose, with a sufficient number of classrooms that are well equipped and inspired with relevant educational posters and displays of learners' achievement. However, the room used for practicing the drums is not sound proofed.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

HMC management has clear vision and mission statements that are well aligned towards improving learners' musical skills and fostering development of a strong foundation for young learners and the continuous improvement of its provision. A 5-year strategic plan with a number of objectives is in place and mapped to comprehensive action planning where tasks are identified for each strategic objective. These have clear accountability measures and

agreed timescales. The progress of actions is monitored systematically through regular one-on-one meetings and progress reporting. The Centre has sufficient human and physical resources for the nature of the provision and meet its aims. HMC has detailed job roles and responsibilities for each post, who are provided with very clear written rules and regulations. Most senior management have extensive international experience in the field of music education and performance. HMC health and safety procedures and practices are detailed and well managed; as such the management maintains a healthy and safe environment with learners being made aware of the procedures at the start of their course. However, the Centre does not employ a certified first aider.

HMC has an effective range of quality assurance procedures and practices to guide its daily operation. These cover the areas of quality of teaching and assessment, programme structure, support mechanisms and delivery, and learners' achievements. A clear and rigorous assessment scheme is implemented on all courses. Additionally, the Centre conforms strictly to the accrediting bodies' quality assurance standards and requirements. However, verification and moderation arrangements for the assessment of internal courses are not well documented. Highly effective procedures are in place for assessing, analysing and utilising learners' prior attainment and interest in the field of music

The self-evaluation process is comprehensive and critical; the Centre undertakes a critical SWOT analysis that is taken into consideration in revising its strategic direction. Additionally, HMC seeks the views of its teachers on a continuous basis, including the HMC self-assessment at the end of each event, Halloween fun, the Musician Idol competition 2016 and Teachers Concert. This reflection includes notes about individual learners and is concluded with an event report clearly identifying areas where there is a need to improve further. The Self-Evaluation Form submitted for this review is sufficiently detailed and provides very useful information about HMC's operation. Suggested grades mostly match those of the review team.

The management maintains comprehensive records about learners' achievement and the progress they make on courses. Learners' data is aggregated and analysis is carried out as required, with a 'progress report', 'report card' and 'portfolio' being generated and made available in the online 'Studio Director' portal. HMC recruits qualified staff, and teachers and are deployed according to their specialisations. Staff are developed through effective coaching and a range of relevant courses to improve their performance. To closely monitor trainers' performance during lessons, HMC deploys a detailed and a thorough lesson observation process. Teachers are visited at least once each term and provided with instant and constructive feedback, with agreed improvement actions being implemented on a timely basis and followed up by the management team.

Highly productive links are maintained with parents, relevant part of the community and local feeder schools. A Parents-Teachers meeting is held twice a year at the beginning of each

term and points raised are addressed by the management team. Parents' comments are addressed promptly.

The provider's key strengths

- The effective skills and knowledge developed by most learners in different musical instruments, who perform their pieces very well.
- The rigorous formative and summative assessment methods that are used throughout the learning process to evaluate learners' understanding, measure their achievement and ensure consistency.
- The highly relevant range of extracurricular activities that enrich the learning experience and positively impact learners' achievements and self-confidence.
- The comprehensive and systematic support and guidance provided to learners throughout their learning journey that helps them to achieve the best outcomes.
- The effective strategic and action planning with relevant targets that are based on a thorough and inclusive self-assessment process.

Recommendations

In order to maintain its outstanding performance, **HMC should:**

- further improve the implementation verification and moderation for all courses and ensure consistency.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Harmony Music Center (HMC) was established in 2016 and licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer music education for children and adults on various musical instruments, such as piano, guitar, drums and violin as well as vocal. The courses are either internally designed or externally accredited by the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music (ABRSM) of the United Kingdom and Trinity College of Music. Course durations extend from 15 to 60 hours.

HMC operates from one centre located in Abu Saiba and is owned and led by the founder. It employs a director, administrative staff, and six teachers all on full time basis. Since inception the Center has enrolled 718 learners in various courses, mostly young learners.