Review of private further education colleges and English language schools

Basil Paterson

14 December 2016
The review process

This review report follows the quality framework for the *review arrangements for private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland, September 2016*. The review normally lasts for three days. Over the three-day period, the review team:

- engage with learners;
- observe episodes of learning and teaching and provide feedback to each member of teaching staff or other learning facilitator on strengths and areas for further development;
- conduct interviews and undertake other activity required to determine the extent of concordance between documentary evidence and practice;
- evaluate evidence against the 14 reference quality indicators; and
- identify key strengths and areas for further development for the organisation.

Education Scotland is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland.

Reviews are arranged under **three high-level principles** which Education Scotland is adopting for evaluative purposes:

**Outcomes and Impact:**
*How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?*
*How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?*

**Service Delivery:**
*How good is the delivery of our learning and teaching?*
*How good is our management of the delivery of learning and teaching?*

**Leaderships and quality culture:**
*How good is our strategic management?*

These are underpinned by a wider principle on the centre’s **Capacity for improvement** and the question, *How good is our capacity to improve?*

Education Scotland reviews are designed to:

- support and promote quality enhancement in organisations to provide the best possible experience for the learner;
- provide information to the Home Office, when required, on the quality of organisations and the learning experience they provide;
- provide an independent evaluation to assist organisations in informing prospective and current learners of the quality of the organisation’s programmes and services;
- evaluate organisations against the *Education Scotland quality framework, September 2016*; and
- complement organisation-led internal review and self-evaluation.

Review provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of education provision in schools and colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to learners, Government and the wider community. Review takes account of the context of each individual school or college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.
The review of the school or college is from an educational perspective and provides limited review of other aspects; though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on learners. The review does not include:

(i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
(ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school or college estate, its services or other physical features;
(iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or college or its accounting procedures; and
(iv) an in-depth investigation of the school’s or college’s compliance with employment law.

This report contains effectiveness statements that express the review team’s overall evaluation of learner progress and outcomes, learning and teaching processes and leadership and quality culture.

The report also uses the following terms to describe numbers and proportions:

- almost all
- over 90%
- most
- 75-90%
- majority
- 50-74%
- less than half
- 15-49%
- few
- up to 15%

Grades are awarded in THREE areas:

- Outcomes and Impact
- Service Delivery
- Leadership and quality culture

Inspectors use a SIX-point grading scale:

- excellent - outstanding and sector leading
- very good - major strengths
- good - important strengths with some areas for improvement
- satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak - important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory - major weaknesses
## Contents

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1  
   The organisation and its context ................................................................................................. 1  
   The review .................................................................................................................................. 1  

2. Outcomes of external review ...................................................................................................... 2  
   Judgement of Grades .................................................................................................................. 2  

3. Outcomes and Impact .................................................................................................................. 3  
   Learner progression and achievement: ....................................................................................... 3  
   How well are learners progressing and achieving high quality outcomes? ................................. 3  
   Meeting the needs of stakeholders ............................................................................................. 3  
   How well do we meet the needs of stakeholders? ....................................................................... 3  

4. Service delivery .......................................................................................................................... 5  
   Delivery of learning and teaching: ............................................................................................. 5  
   How good is our delivery of learning and teaching? ................................................................... 5  
   Management of learning and teaching: ......................................................................................... 5  
   How good is our management of the delivery of learning and teaching? ................................... 5  

5. Leadership and quality culture .................................................................................................. 7  
   Strategic leadership: .................................................................................................................... 7  
   How good is our strategic leadership? ......................................................................................... 7  

6. Capacity for Improvement .......................................................................................................... 8  
   Capacity for improvement: ......................................................................................................... 8  
   How good is our capacity for improvement? ............................................................................... 8  

7. What happens next? .................................................................................................................... 9  

8. Further information ................................................................................................................... 9  

Appendix 1 ..................................................................................................................................... 10  
   Glossary of terms ....................................................................................................................... 10  
Appendix 2 ..................................................................................................................................... 11
1. Introduction

The organisation and its context

In carrying out the review of Basil Paterson, Education Scotland took the following context fully into account.

Basil Paterson is an autonomous college, established in 1929, in Edinburgh. It is part of Instill Education, an Oxford-based company, which owns a group of private colleges and English language schools across the UK. Basil Paterson has two main divisions, a school of English and a tutorial college. It also is an open examination centre for English language testing for both Cambridge and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Basil Paterson's premises are located in the centre of the city of Edinburgh and has a number of classrooms of varying sizes. Learners have access to a common room and a well-resourced self-study area. The premises have good wifi connections and learners are able to use this to connect their own portable devices to support learning.

The school of English and the tutorial college are led and managed by two separate principals who are assisted in their roles by two academic managers, a support team and teaching staff. Within the school of English, learners study English as a foreign language (EFL), from elementary to examination preparation at higher levels. The school also provides the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA). The tutorial college offers a range of qualifications in a variety of subjects at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 5, 6 and 7. It is an approved Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) centre and offers qualifications from other nationally recognised awarding bodies. Subjects offered include, modern languages, science and social sciences.

Basil Paterson has current accreditation from both the British Council and the British Accreditation Council. It currently has one learner who is studying under a Home Office tier 4 licence.

The review

The review by Education Scotland took place during the period 1 - 3 November 2016.

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the learner experience. We evaluated these against outcomes and impact, service delivery and leadership and quality culture using the 14 reference quality indicators outlined in Inspection arrangements for private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland, September 2016. We used information submitted in advance by the organisation to decide on the scope of the inspection. The inspection team talked with learners and staff at all levels in the organisation.

The inspection included the school of English and the tutorial college. It did not cover the organisation’s CELTA programmes or open examination centre.
2. Outcomes of external review

Judgement of Grades

The review team awarded grades for each of the three key themes based on the following criteria.

- **excellent:** outstanding and sector leading
- **very good:** major strengths
- **good:** important strengths with some areas for improvement
- **satisfactory:** strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- **weak:** important weaknesses
- **unsatisfactory:** major weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Grade awarded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes and Impact</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service delivery</td>
<td>very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and quality culture</td>
<td>good</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Outcomes and Impact

Learner progression and achievement:

How well are learners progressing and achieving high quality outcomes?

Areas of positive practice

- Retention rates for learners on all programmes are high and all learners are making good progress from their prior learning.
- Most learners in the tutorial college who sit external examinations, successfully achieve their awards. In 2015, around 76% of learners who were presented for SQA Higher examinations successfully gained a pass at A-C level. For learners undertaking A-level examinations, 88% achieved a pass at level A-C.
- Most learners who successfully complete tutorial college programmes, progress to further study in higher education.
- Learners on language programmes gain confidence in their spoken English and develop greater vocabulary skills and better understanding of grammar. They develop useful speaking and listening skills through their wider engagement with other learners in the school and with staff. They also develop other skills, such as teamwork, and gain confidence in making presentations to their peers.
- On completion of their programme, all learners receive a school certificate which states the period of study and their level of English language skill, measured against the Common European Reference Framework.

Areas for development

- Just over half of learners who are enrolled for preparatory classes for Cambridge examinations successfully achieve the award.
- Success rates for learners undertaking IELTS programmes is unknown.
- There are insufficient opportunities for learners on tutorial college programmes to gain essential skills such as employability and citizenship.

Meeting the needs of stakeholders

How well do we meet the needs of stakeholders?

Areas of positive practice

- Safeguarding arrangements for young people and vulnerable groups are comprehensive and robust. Staff have a good awareness of procedures and understand their responsibilities and have undergone training to update their knowledge of this area.
- All staff are part of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme and managers who are designated safeguarding officers, have all received further training reflecting their roles.
- Staff are aware of their responsibilities under the PREVENT agenda and additional training is planned to further support this.
- The language school and tutorial college offer a suitable range and level of programmes that meets the needs of their learners well.
The language school offers an appropriate range of general English language programmes which includes a rolling programme of intensive English language, providing learners with flexibility. Learners are able to join classes at a level appropriate to their needs for period of time that suits their circumstances.

The language school also offers several programmes which prepare learners for external examinations.

Learners in the tutorial college are able to choose an individual programme that is tailored to their ability and aspirations. The programme allows them to gain qualifications that provide pathways into further study.

All learners are positive about the learning and support they experience during their time in the school and are satisfied with the service.

The tutorial college has a broad a range of subject choices available at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level. Although it has focused on SQA qualifications in recent years, the college also offers qualifications validated by three other awarding bodies.

All learners express high levels of satisfaction with their programmes and confidence in their teachers.

Areas for development

None identified.
4. Service delivery

Delivery of learning and teaching:

**How good is our delivery of learning and teaching?**

**Areas of positive practice**

- Learners are very motivated and participate purposefully in a range of learning activities. They work together well, cooperatively and enthusiastically.
- Learners use a range of appropriate resources effectively, including text, to support their learning and develop their subject knowledge and skills.
- The majority of learners are developing important independent learning skills to support further study. In the language school, all learners speak and contribute in class, developing their spoken English well.
- Learners integrate well with other learners from different countries and cultures. They encourage and help one another well through peer support.
- Most learners are making good progress towards the achievement of their learning goals during their period of study at the language school and tutorial college.
- Teaching staff use their experience well to make lessons interesting and stimulating for learners. They use well an appropriate range of teaching approaches to engage learners purposefully in learning and use questioning techniques effectively to encourage learners to contribute to class discussions.
- All teaching staff set high standards and expectations for learners and provide sufficient challenge to help them to achieve their learning goals.
- Most teaching staff use ongoing assessment approaches effectively during lessons to check learners’ understanding of learning and their progress. Learners on English language programmes, complete a weekly assessment that helps them reflect on their progress and set new learning targets for further study. Learners in the tutorial college undertake regular evaluation and review activities which results in a helpful progress report which staff share with learners.
- All teaching staff mark learners’ homework promptly and provide useful written and verbal feedback to help learners understand and correct any errors.

**Areas for development**

- Although information and communications technology (ICT) is available in some classrooms, the majority of teaching staff do not make sufficient use of ICT in class to support learning. Only a few learners use ICT resources to enhance their learning.

**Management of learning and teaching**

**How good is our management of the delivery of learning and teaching?**

**Areas of positive practice**

- The co-location of the *English language school* and *tutorial college* provides a diverse environment and ethos for both sets of learners. Staff successfully encourage learners from different cultures to work together well and learn from one another’s cultures.
Positive and respectful relationships between learners and teaching staff contribute to a relaxed and purposeful environment for learning.

- All teaching staff plan lessons well to ensure that programme aims are met. Learners are involved in planning some aspects of their learning such as themes or types of activities. In language classes, the weekly coaching session provides a good opportunity for learners to influence topics and activities for the following week’s classes.
- All learners receive accurate and useful information about the school and their programme prior to commencing through external agents, the school website or direct contact with school staff.
- Language school learners complete a written assessment prior to arriving to allow staff to determine an appropriate level of study. On arrival, the level of spoken and written English of each learner is further assessed to confirm the correct class placement. On EFL programmes, tutors support and coach learners in weekly one-to-one tutorials, when they jointly review the learner’s progress and set goals for the following week.
- All learners are well supported by the staff team who provide a range of practical support during the initial induction period and throughout the programme. Learners provide regular feedback on ways to improve their learning experience. Questionnaires and surveys are used extensively. Staff also ask learners directly for their views. Staff use this feedback to make changes to improve the experience for future learners.
- Weekly language school staff team meetings and fortnightly tutorial college staff team meetings are a useful vehicle for communication and to discuss classroom issues.
- All teaching staff take part in an annual formal lesson observation scheme which identifies strengths and areas for development in teaching approaches. This is discussed during end-of-year review meetings. Progress on previous targets for improvement are also discussed.
- Some staff also take part in a voluntary peer-review process which is useful to further support staff to reflect on and discuss classroom practices.

Areas for development

- The school has insufficient ICT facilities to fully support learning activities. The absence of computers and data projectors in most classroom limits the range and quality of learning and teaching.
- Some teaching rooms have poor décor and are uninspiring for learning.
5. Leadership and quality culture

Strategic leadership:

How good is our strategic leadership?

Areas of positive practice

- The two principals and senior managers have a clear shared understanding for the direction of the school’s curriculum. This is partly informed through the academic board of the school’s parent company. For example, in EFL programmes, the school has adopted the parent company’s Teaching English as a Life Skill (TEALS) approach to delivery.
- Managers have clear strategies and approaches for improving the quality of learning and teaching. These include supporting staff through reflection on their observed classroom practice and a suitable range of continuing professional development activities which most teaching staff participate in.
- All staff work well as a team and are committed to a culture of quality improvement and ongoing development of the school’s programmes and activities. The views of learners are used well to inform the review of the quality of learning provision and other school activities. Regular staff meetings are particularly useful for identifying any issues for concern and solutions are usually quickly implemented to resolve matters.

Areas for development

- Strategies and arrangements for improving attainment levels on externally assessed examinations are not sufficiently developed. Currently the language school is unable to collect information on the success of all of its learners sitting external examinations. This makes it difficult to analyse attainment trends over several years with a view to measuring learner success and identifying areas for further improvement.
- Self-evaluation is not sufficiently systematic. Changes to practice tends to be more reactive to the views of learners or issues raised by staff.
- The impact of the school’s quality improvement activities are not always evaluated sufficiently by managers. This makes it difficult to determine which actions have been successful and where further actions are required.
6. Capacity for Improvement

Capacity for improvement:

How good is our capacity for improvement?

Basil Paterson continues to deliver high quality learning and teaching which benefits those learners who choose to study there. Teaching staff reflect regularly on their classroom practice and can point to changes they have made to respond to the needs of individual learners. The internal arrangements and culture of cooperation help foster a reflective style of teaching delivery. The organisation responds well to each learners’ needs. On English language programmes, learners are placed in classes at the appropriate level of ability. In the tutorial college, bespoke pathways and programmes are organised to meet individual learner’s requirements. However, there is insufficient ICT facilities to fully support learning activities.

Learners are making good progress on English language programmes, developing their spoken and written skills and gaining confidence using English as a life skill. In the tutorial college, most learners who undertake examinations with national awarding bodies, pass them successfully.

Basil Paterson has undergone significant change in its leadership team in the previous two years. The new senior management team articulate a clear vision for the direction of its curriculum and services which support learning. The institution should continue to develop its self-evaluation process to be more systematic and also look at ways of assessing the impact of changes that it has introduced to bring about further improvements. Evidence evaluated during the inspection would indicate a continued confidence in the organisation’s capacity to continue to improve.
7. What happens next?

This review report is valid for four years.

Education Scotland may engage at regular intervals to monitor progress, if invited by the organisation.

Any significant material change within the organisation should be reported to Education Scotland immediately.

Dr John Bowditch
HM Inspector
Education Scotland

8. Further information

This review and judgements relate to the service area as a whole. For further information about Education Scotland, the external review methodologies, or other information about reviews, see www.educationscotland.gov.uk
## Appendix 1

### Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
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<tr>
<td>CELTA</td>
<td>Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a foreign language</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communications technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCQF</td>
<td>Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>SQA</td>
<td>Scottish Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>TEALS</td>
<td>Teaching English as a Life Skill</td>
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</table>
# THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCQF Levels</th>
<th>SQA Qualifications</th>
<th>Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions</th>
<th>SVQs/MAs</th>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>Professional Apprenticeship</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See <a href="http://www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner">www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner</a></td>
<td>Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5</td>
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