

Review of private further education colleges and English language schools

Kaplan International Languages, Edinburgh

January 2022

The review process

Education Scotland is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the Home Office to review private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland. This report summarises the findings of the educational oversight review of **Kaplan International Languages, Edinburgh** and follows the quality arrangements for private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland, November 2018. The review was carried out by a team of HM Inspectors during November 2021. Reviews normally lasts for three days. Over the three-day period, the review team:

- engaged with learners;
- observed episodes of learning and teaching and provided feedback to each member of teaching staff or other learning facilitator on strengths and areas for further development;
- conducted interviews and undertook other activity required to determine the extent of concordance between documentary evidence and practice;
- evaluated evidence against the **14 reference quality indicators**; and
- identified key strengths and areas for further development for the organisation.

Reviews are organised under **three high-level principles**:

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 judgement of the centre's **capacity for improvement**.

Education Scotland educational oversight reviews are designed to:

- support and promote quality enhancement in an organisation's ability 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 using the Education Scotland quality framework, November 2018; and
- complement organisation-led internal review and self-evaluation.

Educational oversight review supports objective and reliable reporting on the quality of education provision in English Language schools and private colleges for stakeholders, learners, Government and the wider community. Review takes account of the context of each individual establishment, how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its own success.

The review of the establishment focusses on the quality of learning and teaching and the learner experience. HM 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 statements that express an overall evaluation of learner progress and outcomes, learning and teaching processes and leadership and quality culture.

The report may use 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

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The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

1. Introduction

The organisation and its context

In carrying out the review of Kaplan International Languages (KIL), Edinburgh, Education Scotland HM Inspectors took the following context fully into account.

KIL, Edinburgh is part of Aspect International Language Academies Limited, an international group of private language colleges which became a subsidiary of Graham Holdings in 2013. The college is supported by a central Head Office to implement new strategies, policies and procedures alongside the development of learning and teaching resources. They support a range of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities for staff. The curriculum is agreed by KIL although the college Principal operates autonomously in strategic planning for the college. The college offers learners a mixture of educational, cultural and social activities.

KIL, Edinburgh's premises are located in the centre of the city in Edinburgh's new town. There is a large learner common room and café, a large study centre, computer centre, several classrooms of varying sizes, an accommodation office, and two prayer rooms.

The college promotes itself to international learners as a language college and offers programmes at different levels, from 'beginner' to 'proficient'. It tailors programmes to learners' needs, offering short vacation programmes alongside longer programmes for learners seeking university entrance. The college programmes are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and mapped to a wide range of recognised external testing bodies, including the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

The college Principal is responsible for all the college operations and is supported by an administrative team a Director of Studies and an Accommodation and Welfare Manager.

At the time of review, there were 54 learners in the college, studying under a variety of visa arrangements. Currently, there are no learners who are studying under a Home Office Student Sponsor licence.

The review

The review took place during the week beginning 8 November 2021.

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the learner experience. We evaluated these using the 14 reference quality indicators outlined in inspection arrangements for private further education colleges and English language schools in Scotland, November 2018. The review team talked with learners and staff at all levels in the school. We used information submitted in advance by the school to decide on the scope of the review.

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

Key theme	Grade awarded
Outcomes and impact	excellent
Service delivery	excellent
Leadership and quality culture	excellent

As a result of these grades, Kaplan International Languages, Edinburgh is found to be **EFFECTIVE**.

3. Outcomes and impact

Learner progression and achievement

How well are learners progressing and achieving high quality outcomes?

Areas of positive practice

- Rates of learner retention are high on all programmes (98%) and have been sustained from previous years despite the impact of COVID-19. Almost all learners are making good progress from their prior learning.
- Almost all learners who sit external examinations successfully achieve their awards. Over the last three years all learners who sat the Cambridge Advanced English examination (CAE) were successful. For learners undertaking International English Language Testing System (IELTS) levelling, seven learners were awarded scores from level 6 to level 7, with an average score of 6.5. This is an increase of 1.5 points over a four year period.
- Levels of attainment over the last three years are very high. All learners who complete the programme achieve a school certificate and almost all progress at least one further level in their language placement tests.
- Almost all learners on language programmes develop useful speaking and listening skills through their wider engagement with other learners and staff in the college. They gain confidence in their spoken English and develop greater vocabulary and better understanding of grammar.
- KIL Edinburgh, recently reintroduced the student of the month award to recognise attendance and achievement and the recipient is awarded a certificate of attainment.
- The college meets the requirements of appropriate directives and regulations and they have in place a wide range of comprehensive nationally-produced policies and procedures which are implemented and adapted at a local level by KIL, Edinburgh.
- KIL, Edinburgh have in place well embedded arrangements for safeguarding of young people and vulnerable groups. The Accommodation, Welfare and Student Services Manager understands well the requirements of the role and liaises with staff, homestay colleagues and learners regularly to ensure both implementation of policy and welfare are taken good account of.
- Staff understand well their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. All staff and home stay colleagues have current Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme status.
- College managers monitor and raise awareness by staff and learners of the policies and procedures to support the PREVENT and safeguarding agenda.
- Equality and diversity is promoted very well by staff and is embedded within the culture of the college, supported to good effect through regular CLPL, and clear policies and procedures.
- A recent initiative included a Kaplan-wide promotion of LGBTQI+ pride week, with a range of competitions and fund-raising to support understanding. The college recognise the challenges of presenting this in a multi-linguistic and multi-cultural learning environment and are sensitive to this.

Areas for development

- None identified

Meeting the needs of stakeholders

How well do we meet the needs of stakeholders?

Areas of positive practice

- The college offers a wide range of programmes and examination opportunities that are well-structured and meet the needs of learners from beginner to proficient level. Programmes are mapped to the CEFR and support progression effectively within and through the various levels of study.
- Programmes preparing learners for further study, including at university and for employment, are effective in supporting learners in achieving their identified goals. Programmes recently introduced include English for maritime and medical employment.
- The college has further developed its tracking and monitoring of progress and attainment and staff are using this very effectively to better understand the differentiated need of learners and put in place more timely interventions.
- The college continues to work effectively in partnership with Kaplan International College, Glasgow to offer a range of appropriate qualifications to assist transition to higher education opportunities. However, due to COVID-19 numbers transitioning to university have been limited. Learners making the transition are supported well by a placement advisor.
- The college has a well-embedded student representative role in place that supports learner engagement and ensure all learner views are listened to and actioned.
- The college has extended its provision to develop employability skills through the use of My World of Work which is raising awareness of opportunities available for employment progression.
- Staff have introduced a range of opportunities for learners to participate in social and cultural events during COVID-19 included quiz nights, virtual pub nights and coffee mornings. These were highly effective in developing relationships and addressing welfare issues for isolated learners.
- Engagement in a well-developed social programme is helpful in immersing learners in the cultural and linguistic environment for learning. This helps to build relationships amongst learners and ensures they acquire a wider knowledge of Scotland and its culture.
- Learner progress is assessed and monitored systematically through engagement in the classroom or online. Level testing is undertaken every 5 weeks with follow up tutorials to set achievable learning targets.

Area for development

- Online delivery during COVID-19 has not been fully evaluated by all staff to support the development of new approaches to a blended learning and teaching experience for learners.

4. Service delivery

Delivery of learning and teaching:

How good is our delivery of learning and teaching?

Areas of positive practice

- The college has in place comprehensive measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. All staff and learners are aware of the measures and take good account of these to meet public health requirements.
- All teaching staff use learner profiles well and have an in-depth knowledge of the learners in their groups. This is used well in the planning of learning and teaching to support a differentiated learning experience.
- Teachers set high standards for learners and provide appropriate challenge to support them in developing a wide range of English language skills.
- All learners are fully involved in the planning and context of learning activities. For example, the theme of climate change was evident throughout the school and across lessons which aligned well with the COP 26 conference.
- Learning is enriched and supported well by the effective use of digital technology. Online resources are supplementing the classroom experience well and supporting learners to access additional materials to reinforce their learning.
- Independent learning is encouraged through the use of Kaplan online resources and homework activities. Teaching staff support and challenge learners appropriately to make use of these extra resources and provide feedback on homework activities to inform progress in learning.
- All learners are making good progress in developing their skills in listening, reading, writing, speaking and grammar. They meet regularly with tutors to review their progress and plan their next steps for learning.
- Teaching staff promote equality and diversity well in lessons. They provide a safe environment to explore understanding of different cultures. This is supported by the use of high quality learning and teaching materials which promote diversity.
- Strong and respectful relationships are evident and learners comment on how they feel supported and part of the Kaplan community.
- All learners are highly motivated and participate well in classroom activities including working in pairs or groups. They work well together and challenge each other, further encouraging high standards.
- Learners speak out and contribute well in class, helping to develop their spoken English. An additional conversation class is offered to all learners to further support the development of spoken English language skills.
- Assessment for learning is used skilfully by all teaching staff throughout lessons to promote confidence, check on learners understanding and to provide further support where necessary. Learners provide peer support and challenge in their interactions in groups
- All teaching staff draw on their own experiences well to make lessons interesting and stimulating for learners. An appropriate and well considered range of teaching approaches is used effectively to engage learners purposefully in developing their English language skills.

Area for development

- None identified

Management of learning and teaching

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

Areas of positive practice

- All learners receive useful and clear information on their programme in advance, and participate in a comprehensive induction programme on arrival.
- Learners take an initial placement test to determine the starting point for learning. This is reviewed every 5 weeks and used effectively to plan learners' progress to the appropriate level of study.
- Teaching staff provide high levels of feedback, guidance and support throughout the course to identify with learners their future study needs. These are used well alongside learner profiles to co-design future learning. Learners value these meetings and feel they have a personalised experience at the college.
- Teaching staff regularly evaluate provision and action change where required. The Principal and Director of Studies lead the school evaluation activities using a range of data and give clear direction to staff where action is required to improve outcomes for learners. This approach is highly effective in influencing learner success and outcomes.
- Curriculum design is determined by the learners and staff regularly adapt Kaplan materials to fit the context and emerging, relevant social and cultural influences. For instance, COP 26 was used as a teaching context and gave learners the opportunity to discuss the implications of climate change for their own countries.
- Pastoral support is well-coordinated and staff and management work well together to ensure a wrap-around service for all learners. They work well with external agencies where required.

Area for development

- None identified

5. Leadership and quality culture

Strategic leadership:

How good is our strategic leadership?

Areas of positive practice

- The Principal and Director of Studies have a clear, shared aspiration for the college and communicate this well with staff. Direction from the parent company takes good account of the local context and the college management ensure this is reflected in their planning and strategic direction.
- All staff feel well supported by the parent company and management and regularly use the policies, processes and curriculum resources and advice. Some staff lead Kaplan-wide training sessions, for example teaching staff sessions on digital online delivery and engagement.
- The management team track and analyse a wide range of data. This is impacting well on the learner experience, through the provision of a differentiated learning experience, which is improving outcomes and is valued by learners.
- The management team have continued to develop strategies and approaches for improving the quality of learning and teaching. Regular CLPL sessions have continued throughout the pandemic to ensure staff are upskilled in delivering programmes online.
- Staff regularly engage at a national level in sharing practice and writing of learning and teaching and support materials.
- All staff work well as a team to support each other and are highly committed to the delivery of a high quality curriculum and a culture of quality improvement.
- Teaching staff meet regularly with the Director of Studies to discuss progress on identified actions and monitor progress of individuals and groups. These meetings are effective in ensuring staff are empowered to plan and deliver programmes for learners.
- The college regularly gathers the views of learners and these are used well to inform the review of the quality of the learning experience. Weekly staff meetings are particularly useful for identifying any operational issues and solutions are implemented to resolve matters.

Areas for development

- None identified

6. Capacity for improvement

Capacity for improvement:

How good is our capacity for improvement?

There is continued confidence in the organisation's capacity to improve.

The Principal and *Director of Studies* have a clear shared aspiration for the college and communicate this well with staff. Direction from the parent company takes good account of the local context and the college management ensure this is reflected in their planning and strategic direction. The college meets the requirements of appropriate directives and regulations and they have in place a wide range of comprehensive nationally-produced policies and procedures which are implemented and adapted at a local level by KIL, Edinburgh. The management team track and analyse a wide range of data. This is impacting well on the learner experience, through the provision of a differentiated learning experience which is improving outcomes and is valued by learners.

Rates of learner retention are high on all programmes (98%) and have been sustained from previous years despite the impact of COVID-19. Almost all learners are making good progress from their prior learning. All teaching staff use learner profiles well and have an in-depth knowledge of the learners in their groups. This is used well in the planning of learning and teaching to support a differentiated learning experience. Teachers set high standards for learners and provide appropriate challenge to support them in developing a wide range of English language skills. KIL, Edinburgh have in place well embedded arrangements for safeguarding of young people and vulnerable groups. Equality and diversity is promoted very well by the college and is embedded within the culture of the college and supported through regular CLPL, policies and procedures.

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 HM Inspectors immediately.

Barbara Nelson
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.education.gov.scot

Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

CAEE	Cambridge Advanced English Examination
CEFRL	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLPL	Career Long Professional Learning
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
KIL	Kaplan International Languages
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
PVG	Protecting Vulnerable Groups
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Appendix 2

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.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12			Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate
8	Higher National Diploma		Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher			Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3			
2	National 2, Awards			
1	National 1, Awards			