

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Wilkinson's English Language School  
Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 21 August 2013

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# Purpose of this Report

*The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Wilkinson's English Language School Limited (WELS)
Type:	Private training establishment
Location:	24 Mona Vale Avenue, Fendalton, Christchurch
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	August 2000
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General English from Beginner to Advanced</li><li>• Preparation for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (level 3)</li><li>• English for Work</li><li>• Workplace Literacy</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory?:	Yes; approved for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students aged 11-13 who are not living with a parent</li><li>• Students aged 14-17</li><li>• Students aged 18 years and over</li></ul>
Number of students:	These student numbers are as at June 2013. Domestic students: 111 (Workplace Literacy, 58; English for Work, 52; ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) English for Migrants, one  International students: 17

- Number of staff: Full-time teaching staff – two  
Full-time administration staff – three  
Part-time teaching staff – 14  
Part-time administration staff – three
- Distinctive characteristics: WELS is made up of three departments:
- The ESOL department offers general English and IELTS preparation classes to international students. It also has a contract with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to provide tuition to migrants through the English for Migrants programme.
  - The Workplace Literacy programme, funded by the TEC, provides 40 hours of literacy and numeracy support for employees. This programme is delivered both in the workplace and on site at WELS.
  - The English for Work department delivers literacy through evening classes. This is funded through the TEC's intensive literacy and numeracy fund which provides for 100 hours per learner. This programme is available for permanent residents and New Zealand citizens.

Since it started, WELS has been a family business. The owner/directors are husband and wife and two of their children are also employed within the organisation.

- Recent significant changes: WELS has undergone recent changes to its management structure which came into effect at the start of 2013. The owner/director stepped back from management and is now concentrating on a governance role. Two new roles were created, being the director of studies role and business manager. These roles were filled internally.

WELS moved to its current address in May 2012 as a result of earthquake-related issues at the previous premises. WELS has moved five times

since the February 2011 earthquake.

Previous quality assurance history: At the previous external evaluation and review (EER), WELS gained a Confident statement in educational performance and a Not Yet Confident statement for self-assessment. The report suggested that the organisation needed a more systematic approach to collation and analysis of learner data. It also noted that the approach to tracking academic, work-related and other outcomes for past students was informal and could be developed to provide further information for identifying valued outcomes and improvements.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The EER examined the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy

The other focus areas were chosen as they gave the evaluation team a view across two of WELS's distinct programme areas and covered those with the greatest number of learners.

- Workplace Literacy
- English for Work

## 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

WELS provided the evaluation team with a range of documents before the evaluation visit. These included a summary of their self-assessment activities and evidence, a quality improvement plan from August 2012, a 2013 strategic action plan and business plan.

Two evaluators visited the school over two days. While on site, the evaluation team interviewed the two directors, the director of studies and business manager, quality manager, student support staff, tutors, learners from the two focus areas,

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and an employer. The evaluation team also viewed a wide range of documentation including tutor and course evaluations, meeting minutes, individual learning plans, programme reports, employer reports, testimonials and other correspondence.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Wilkinson's English Language School**.

There is good evidence that most of WELS's learners and other stakeholders are achieving their goals and gaining valued outcomes. Valued outcomes for learners include improving their literacy and communication skills, enabling them to engage at work, with their families and in the community more effectively. Other outcomes include gaining a better understanding of health and safety rules and other regulations in employment and these impact positively for their employers also.

A notable feature of WELS is the thorough needs analysis that occurs with all learners upon entry. As well as using the TEC's Adult Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool (ALNAT) to look at literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy levels, the organisation talks with learners about their goals and assesses their speaking and listening skills. This in-depth needs assessment is also evident in the workplace, with the workplace coordinator reviewing employer goals and literacy and numeracy challenges. This process feeds into the plan for working with learners. WELS's flexibility enables it to tailor delivery to the needs of the employer, learner or cohort.

WELS is a small, family-run provider with a small team of dedicated staff. Communication processes and the clarity of roles and responsibilities have improved since the previous EER. In addition, professional development has targeted identified areas for improvement, which has resulted in measurable change. For example, after professional development with tutors, the percentage of learners in one programme making a statistical gain on their ALNAT score increased from 50 to 64. Continuing to perform effectively in spite of the upheaval brought about through the 2011 February earthquake has demonstrated WELS's capability to manage change effectively.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Wilkinson's English Language School**.

WELS was able to demonstrate to the evaluation team that it is collecting useful information to assess key processes and practices and is using the information to plan, implement and evaluate improvements. Since the previous EER, WELS has developed useful tools to better understand outcomes for learners. It has also ensured it has improved systematic processes for analysing and using information to understand quality.

Programme review meetings are a key component of the self-assessment cycle, with key performance information being brought to these meetings for analysis and discussion. All staff are included in these reviews and this transparency has resulted in staff feeling involved in quality improvements. A practical example includes deliberately introducing New Zealand colloquial terms and bringing a focus on cross-cultural communication to the workplace literacy programme. It is likely that this is linked to a notable increase in learners reporting better communication with their workmates in course evaluations.

Learner needs assessment has been improved, with a greater focus on learner goals and regular reviews to determine progress. While tutors are using ALNAT to understand the respective achievement levels of the learners, there is a worthwhile new initiative underway to share the information with learners and to use the information to further develop individual learning plans. While the collection and use of outcomes data has improved significantly, the analysis of this information could be strengthened.



# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

There is strong achievement at WELS. For example, 64 per cent of learners in the English for Work programme showed a statistical gain on the steps of the literacy progressions as measured by the ALNAT. This compares with only 50 per cent in the previous year. Reflected in their end-of-course evaluations, all learners believed they had made gains in speaking and listening and the vast majority believed they have improved reading and writing skills. In particular, they noted that they had improved vocabulary and listening skills and had gained more confidence in communicating at work.

Workplace Literacy learners also achieve strong gains, with over 90 per cent noting improvements in listening, pronunciation and vocabulary in particular. Comments from learners include: 'at work speaking and listening is better'; 'I have gained confidence in writing scientific articles in English'; and, 'I feel more confident writing important letters and emails'. Using ALNAT, learners making statistical gains increased from 25 per cent in 2011 to 40 per cent in 2012. Gains were particularly noticeable in writing, improving from 45 to 66 per cent from one year to the next.

WELS has a range of data to monitor achievement and is using this to inform programme developments. For example, when learners reflected that they would like more grammar or targeted speaking practice, this was incorporated into the programme. Learner goals and progress are carefully tracked through individual learning plans and session records. A strong focus on the writing skills assessed with ALNAT has seen a significant improvement. Improved moderation processes give validity to these gains.

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

## 1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Since the previous EER there has been a concerted effort to understand and evidence the valued outcomes that result from WELS's work. Consequently, there was a range of information available to the evaluation team that addressed outcomes. For example, progress recorded by learners and tutors in the Workplace Literacy programme has been mapped across to social, cultural and economic outcomes. While this process is still being refined, it reflects that learners are able to communicate more confidently and effectively, particularly across cultures. Analysis of the data has also highlighted areas for development, including a need to increase the focus on telephoning skills, although this has already shown a dramatic improvement from 2011 to 2012.

A case study of one particular employer noted better team morale, lower turnover of staff, a reduction in accident-related time off work and faster rehabilitation after injury. Other employers attest to the difference the programme has made to workplace communication, including greater cooperation among staff, improved understanding of health and safety and other regulations and opportunities for further training and promotion.

The English for Work programme also documents value for learners, particularly at the point of exit. Learners attest to improved communication that impacts on their everyday activities and also communication at work. Over half were making plans or had begun further study or training. In the ESOL programme, most learners had met their goals and would recommend the school to others, an indicator that they valued their time with WELS highly.

While WELS could do more to follow up with English for Work learners to understand the medium-term impact of the programme, there is strong evidence that learners and employers who engage with the different programmes gain valued outcomes.

## 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Across the different programmes offered by WELS, there is strong evidence of in-depth needs analysis. All learners across the English for Work and Workplace Literacy programmes sit the ALNAT to understand their progress. In addition, a

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one-to-one interview is held to discuss goals. Individual learning plans are developed to meet the specific needs of the learner. This process has been refined through the use of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) criteria and more regular review of progress. For each Workplace Literacy employer, an in-depth needs analysis is conducted and three business goals set. Progress against these goals is regularly reviewed and reported on.

WELS can be flexible in its delivery and the evaluation team saw evidence of how the content and delivery can be adjusted to match the needs of learners or the workplace. For example, for English for Work some learners may already be in work, while others may be stay-at-home parents who are considering work or study in the future. The content focus varies for these different learners. Classes are well planned and structured with clear learning outcomes for the different skills being taught.

With strong needs analysis and flexible delivery as key features, regular course evaluations and feedback from employers' corroborated evidence heard by the evaluation team, that programmes and activities at WELS effectively understand and match the needs of learners.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

There are a range of processes and practices in place at WELS to ensure teaching effectiveness. Tutors are experienced and use a range of teaching strategies to engage learners. There is good evidence of ongoing targeted professional development, with recent examples including workshops on developing writing and a briefing from a staff member on a new publication on dyslexia. Ongoing development is occurring with respect to using ALNAT, and particularly in using the initial assessment diagnostically and for learner feedback.

The curriculum for the three programmes are continuously reviewed and updated as necessary. For example, the curriculum for English for Work underwent an extensive review and rewrite in 2012 in response to new developments in the adult literacy and numeracy progressions, and feedback from learners with regards to content.

Moderation processes have improved since the previous EER and tutors were positive about this, particularly with regards to improving consistency in the assessment of writing tasks. Peer observation is planned and targeted and used to support tutors to develop. These processes and regular feedback from learners and other stakeholders gives assurance that WELS has a good understanding of teaching and continuously works to improve its effectiveness.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

WELS is a family-oriented organisation and all staff take a role in ensuring learners are supported. There is a dedicated administration person, with ESOL qualifications, who is responsible for managing and monitoring student support. The organisation has good processes for ensuring it is compliant with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, and there are wider self-assessment processes in place for the review of student support. For example, a review of the placement test for ESOL has resulted in a new test being trialled and then implemented.

Students are guided through their study with individual learning plans and have multiple opportunities to review their goals and discuss their needs. A pastoral care book is used to record any issues that may arise with students, and a review of issues is a standing item at the regular management team meetings. The organisation has good networks within the Christchurch community, including strong links with the refugee and migrant services and access to translators. Students were clear about who to talk with if they had an issue, and this included those students who study into the evening.

Therefore, with a range of mechanisms in place to support and guide learners, and regular reviews to ensure their effectiveness, the evaluation team rated performance against this question very highly.

## 1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

This organisation has a clear strategic vision and is continually looking at opportunities that present themselves within their community that match to WELS's skills and expertise. It was clear that the directors' vision is shared by the wider team who work hard to implement it.

WELS has been through a difficult two years following the 2011 February earthquake. As well as the numbers of international students dropping dramatically, there was also the disruption of having to move location five times. The team appears to have managed these changes well, and it is a positive

indicator that a number of the staff have remained with the organisation for longer than three years.

There has been a restructure of the management team since the previous EER, and staff noted that these changes have been managed well with communication processes improving and greater clarity about roles and responsibilities. The two owner/directors have moved to less of a management role, but remain committed to the organisation through their governance. The organisation is well resourced, with a commitment to quality staff and appropriate resources.

The management team has worked hard to improve the systematic collection of data, and provides sound evidence of review and quality improvements. A cycle of review appears well embedded into key processes, including programme reviews, management and staff meetings and key planning documents. The collection and use of outcomes data has been strengthened since the previous EER, although further work is needed to ensure the analysis is robust.

## Focus Areas

*This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.*

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

### 2.2 Focus area: English for Work

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

### 2.3 Focus area: Workplace Literacy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that WELS:

- Continue to find ways to understand the medium-term outcomes for learners who have participated in the English for Work programme.
- Continue to refine the processing and analysis of outcomes data for the Workplace Literacy programme to ensure greater consistency and clarity.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.*

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.*

*The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

*External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.*

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

*The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)