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External Evaluation and Review Report

English Voyage Academy Limited
trading as EVAKONA Education

Date of report: 14 May 2019

About English Voyage Academy Limited trading as EVAKONA Education

EVAKONA provides preparation in general English skills, including NCEA achievement and unit standards, for mostly young Japanese students to prepare them academically and socially to attend high schools in New Zealand.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	18 South Highway, Whitianga; temporary site at 425 MacKay Street, Thames
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: nil International: 35 (24 High School Preparation; 11 General English); 97 per cent Japanese, 1 per cent Chinese, 1 per cent Thai, 1 per cent Saudi
Number of staff:	Seven full-time equivalents, plus some part-timers
TEO profile:	See NZQA: EVAKONA Education The General English (GE) and High School Preparation (HSP) students attend morning classes together. Afternoon classes are divided into HSP and GE. The HSP focus is to attain unit standards and upskill students' soft skills in preparation for daily life in New Zealand high schools.
Last EER outcome:	At the most recent EER in 2015, NZQA was Confident in EVAKONA's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	HSP and the GE morning programme that is shared across GE and HSP students
MoE number:	7471
NZQA reference:	C33585
Dates of EER visit:	5 and 6 March 2019

Summary of Results

EVAKONA consistently meets its vision and purpose. Governance and management and experienced, well-qualified academic and support staff work collegially and proactively to support students' academic and social outcomes. Self-assessment is embedded and used to inform ongoing change and improvement.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Students progress one English language level in around 11 weeks. This is consistent with internationally accepted practice for English language achievement, indicating that EVAKONA is assessing appropriately.
- Post-HSP, most students are at a level of English language that enables them to complete NCEA level 1 or 2 at their high school of choice. This indicates that students' needs are well met.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Soft skills development, orientation to New Zealand culture, and increased levels of independence mean that students are well-prepared for high school life in New Zealand.
- Several factors contribute to positive student outcomes: highly effective leadership at governance, director of studies and principal levels; motivated, well-qualified, enthusiastic staff; and strict student entry criteria.
- Stakeholder feedback, both formal and informal, is used to make improvements to all aspects of students' experience, including programme design and delivery and social activities.
- Pastoral support is comprehensive, seamless and ongoing. Support staff are located at EVAKONA teaching sites and in the communities where students attend high schools.
- Management of compliance obligations is thorough. Regular systematic review processes involve all staff.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EVAKONA meets its academic target that students attain an English pre-intermediate level or above before they go on to high school. For 2016-2018, of 50 students, most reached this goal. Those still at a lower level may have started later in the year, have learning difficulties, or be developmentally delayed.</p> <p>Student progress is tracked closely. HSP students with fewer than 20 credits by mid-year are offered extra support and informed that they may not gain entry to high school year 12-13 in the following year. In 2018, four students were moved out of the HSP course to the GE programme to focus on English only. These students went on to high school after an extra year's tuition.</p> <p>Post-EVAKONA, NCEA² results demonstrate the effectiveness of the HSP programme. For 2014-2017, of 34 students, 89 per cent gained NCEA level 1; and of 23 students who continued study, 81 per cent gained NCEA level 2.</p> <p>Placement and leaving assessments are used to show student progress over their time of study. Academic achievement is benchmarked against the levels and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Most students progress one English language level in around 11 weeks. This is consistent with international provision.</p>
Conclusion:	A range of data is collated and analysed to measure student progress and to identify interventions for individuals not progressing as expected. A holistic approach to student progress demonstrates that academic progress and individual confidence and wellness are closely related and need to be promoted together.

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

² New Zealand Certificate in Educational Achievement - Levels 1-3

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EVAKONA is an integral part of the Whitianga community. It contributes and connects to the community in various ways, including through homestay families. These families (about 100) are recruited, managed and police-checked annually. Some families have other roles, such as a homestay parent who also picks up students from Auckland airport on their arrival in New Zealand.</p> <p>EVAKONA's extensive HSP afternoon activities programmes provides interactions with a range of community groups including conservation, local health care, police, St John, water safety, lifesaving and marae stakeholders. Students are introduced to the 'outdoor kiwi culture' in the form of camping, hiking and water sports. These are experiences that challenge students, many of whom are from a city and culture where these activities are not commonplace. Several staff members are very experienced in outdoor education activities. This adds value to both students and staff as they each apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts and staff share their passion with students.</p> <p>International directors from high schools confirmed that students from EVAKONA are the best prepared of all the international students they receive. EVAKONA students contribute to their schools because they socialise easily with other international students and participate in outdoor education and sports.</p> <p>Reporting on outcomes to stakeholders is well-developed. Students' parents are kept well-informed by regular emails and updates. Students benefit from the practical application of the EVAKONA vision of promoting personal growth and well-being alongside meeting academic goals.</p>
Conclusion:	Self-assessment has clarified and highlighted the relationship between the EVAKONA vision and valued outcomes for stakeholders in a way that has been quantified, analysed and used to make ongoing changes and improvements.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The GE assessment tasks are generated by Oxford University Press or Pearson. Therefore, they are already benchmarked against CEFR. English language assessments for HSP are benchmarked against the CEFR using English Grammar Profile, GSE Teacher Toolkit, and English Profile Text Inspector websites. This is considered best practice.</p> <p>Formative and summative assessment includes fortnightly tests that monitor the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. HSP afternoon activities are aligned and mapped to the unit standard curriculum and assessments and soft skills development. This analysis informs programme and course design. For example, camping involves teamwork and self-management. This links to the appropriate unit standard/s. Preparation includes team-building, self-management, meal planning, development of relevant vocabulary, and follow-up written self-reflections post-trip.</p> <p>These experiences collectively help preparation for high school, as students complete challenging tasks and grow in independence and confidence. Some students choose to continue these activities at high school. Students are also introduced to the New Zealand system of NCEA, and self-study is an expectation in New Zealand schools.</p> <p>In the HSP programme, 40 per cent of the unit standard assessments are internally and externally moderated by teachers at partner high schools. Any issues are addressed before further delivery occurs. Test analysis from both informal and formal testing is used to find trends and weaknesses.</p>
Conclusion:	Formal and informal feedback from parents, students and high schools is used to inform ongoing programme review. Staff also provide feedback via annual performance appraisals and regular teacher meetings.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EVAKONA has always provided an alternative for students who do not fit into the education system in their home countries. In response to poor NCEA outcomes by the 2015 intake, EVAKONA has strengthened the vetting process. In order to gather more information, students complete a pre-arrival form which has more questions about life skills and mental health issues. The marketing team now aims to interview each student prior to arrival. The benefit is that the student is clearer about EVAKONA's expectations pre-arrival and EVAKONA is able to prepare more thoroughly to meet students' needs on arrival.</p> <p>Orientation involves students setting short and long-term goals with the aid of a teacher. These goals are monitored at formal meetings each term. Students are encouraged to self-assess their own academic progress and complete self-reflection forms following activities.</p> <p>HSP students visit high schools, receive guidance on future pathways, and have lessons on high school life which cover bullying, drugs and alcohol and time management. Students are provided with specialist help and extra classes if required. Support staff are located at EVAKONA teaching sites and in communities where students attend high schools.</p> <p>The learning environment is inclusive, with wheelchair access, specialist teachers for dyslexia, maths and science and language support on site. New students have a buddy and teachers check on new learners' progress daily and at teacher meetings. Feedback from students at week one, mid-course and end-of-course interviews are used to inform changes. Progress tutorials check students' well-being and academic progress.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>EVAKONA has created a teaching and learning environment which is welcoming, relaxed and professional. Gathering more in-depth information on students pre-arrival has enabled the organisation to assist learners more promptly and effectively. EVAKONA has achieved the balance between supporting students well and encouraging their independence and self-reliance so they are well-prepared for the New Zealand high school experience.</p>

1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EVAKONA's vision, purpose and direction effectively support educational achievement through leadership that encourages ownership by staff of this vision. The leadership team has facilitated an open and inclusive culture which is reflected in the interactive and collegial staff team and the satisfied students.</p> <p>This culture is informed by high expectations and systematic processes. Annual performance appraisals for all staff (administration and academic) are used to both support and understand staff needs and check whether any improvements can be made. Problems are addressed and actions required are allocated to staff with timeframes that are rechecked and reviewed. All staff are observed annually and new staff are observed after one month to ensure they are competent and well-supported.</p> <p>Feedback is sought across all stakeholder groups. Homestays are organised directly by EVAKONA, which is a strength as communication is directly with the school. Outcomes from the annual stakeholder meeting that discusses ways to improve services are brought to management meetings to ensure review and changes occur. Parents are surveyed both in writing and verbally. The director of studies ensures teachers are supported by weekly meetings and professional development with outside organisations.</p> <p>Resourcing for teaching and learning is generous. Full-time staff have flexibility with leave as there is a pool of relievers. Internal and external professional development is supported and varied. It includes upskilling around assessing standards and sharing ideas in-house and with the other language school in Whitianga, through webinars and education consultants.</p>
Conclusion:	EVAKONA operates a sustainable business model which is responsive to change, proactively engages with stakeholders, and actively supports local businesses. It both benefits the communities it operates in and benefits from this supportive community. It is strategically well-placed to market more widely with its robust and comprehensive systems and processes.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>EVAKONA has effective compliance management processes. These include regular annual police vetting of homestays, clear student attendance records, and engagement in internal and external moderation. All GE writing assessments are moderated before a level change is made for a student. Staff training is matched to appropriate professional specialists such as a specialist in unit standards and programme design.</p> <p>The Code of Practice (for the pastoral care of international students) is reviewed annually and any issues discussed with relevant staff. Support staff check on HSP students at homestays and report to their parents a minimum of four times a year. This level of attention is necessary as 90 per cent of students are under 17 years of age. This is supplemented by support staff sharing break times with students to get to know them well. This proactive approach lessens the chance of problems going undetected. The student handbook contains information on the complaints process and this is also discussed at orientation.</p> <p>Compliance accountabilities are shared. Staff review policies and procedures for their areas annually and make changes. These changes are discussed at the annual meeting. A number of improvements have been made since the last EER in 2015. These include more formalised and quantifiable feedback from homestays which is analysed and informs homestay policies and procedures. Greater attendance at NZQA workshops has upskilled staff knowledge of NCEA and Code of Practice compliance issues.</p> <p>Relevant rules and regulations are complied with. Formalised compliance management systems that are student-centred help to monitor the student experience and identify areas for improvement.</p>
Conclusion:	Management of compliance is guided by a self-assessment calendar to ensure activities are time framed and methodically applied. This has led to a more accessible and embedded approach as staff are more directly involved and understand the value of compliance for informing improvements.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: High School Preparation Course

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that English Voyage Academy Limited, trading as EVAKONA Education:

- Consider clarifying and assigning staff role titles and responsibilities to assist external stakeholders' understanding of communication from the school.
- Consider clarifying and facilitating the current transition of key staff by shared agreement of timelines for completion of this transition.

Requirements

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud³*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

³ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1) (pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and

maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and

maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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