



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE BRISTOL

(N/A)

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Principal Mr John Duncan

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Age Range 16+

Total number of students 183

Numbers by age and type of study
16 – 18: 3
18+: 180
EFL only: 183

Inspection dates **15-17 November 2016**

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

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

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The English Language Centre Bristol (ELC) is an independent English language school and was established in 1969. It has been jointly owned by the principal since 1979 and the director became a partner in 1996. The two partners own and govern the school. It occupies two buildings in the Clifton area of Bristol. During the summer months the school also rents classrooms in nearby Clifton College. Students can also use facilities at the nearby university students' union.
- 1.2 The school offers general English language courses from A2 to C2 level and preparation courses for internationally recognised English language examinations. The school does not offer courses for beginners and does not take large groups. It aims to create a stimulating, supportive and active learning environment in which the needs of each individual student can be met.
- 1.3 The school admits students over the age of 17 years and in the summer months from 16 years old. Students can enrol at any time but are encouraged to enrol on three main starting dates during the academic year and four dates during the summer courses. Students must submit an initial self-assessment of their level at the time of enrolment. Pre-enrolment assessment tests are always administered by the school for Tier 4 students and sometimes for students at A2 level who wish to start on a date other than a main starting date and for those who want to join an examination preparation course mid-term. All students have a placement test and an interview with a senior teacher on arrival.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection 183 students were enrolled at the school. One student was studying on a Tier 4 visa. The vast majority of students are over 18 years and the majority are female. The majority of students come from Europe and others from Asia and the Middle East. Six students have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.5 The school was previously inspected on 14 July 2015 when it met all Standards and was judged to exceed expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Accurate and detailed information given to students prior to arrival helps them to choose a suitable course. Initial assessment is excellent and is used extremely effectively to place students at the correct level. Courses are very well matched to students' ages, aptitudes and language capabilities. All courses on offer to Tier 4 international students meet the definition of an approved qualification for Home Office purposes. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. The vast majority of teachers use challenging activities and stimulating resources to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students develop very positive attitudes to and enjoy their learning. Frequent testing and highly individualised and constructive feedback helps students to improve rapidly. Attainment and progress of students in lessons and over time is excellent. The very large majority of students achieve better than expected given their starting points.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. All necessary measures are taken to minimise risks to students and staff from fire and other hazards. The school premises are fit for purpose, secure and well maintained. Registration and admission records are highly accurate and attendance is high. The school makes appropriate reports to the Home Office where students on a Tier 4 visa fail to attend. Pastoral support for students is excellent. Students benefit from a highly effective induction that helps them to settle into the school quickly. They appreciate the varied social programme. Procedures to safeguard students under 18 are excellent. Accommodation is very well managed and maintained. Home stay hosts contribute positively to students' experience of life in the UK. Students feel very safe in the school and the vast majority would recommend it to others.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietors have detailed oversight of the school and ensure an excellent level of care and education is maintained. They provide sufficient financial support, accommodation and resources. All legal permissions are met. Appropriate policies are implemented and monitored effectively. All staff fully discharge their duties to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students and to safeguard students under 18. Self evaluation is accurate and challenging targets are set for improvements. Senior managers now use more detailed analysis to measure students' progress; however this is not yet a focus of lesson observations or appraisals. They use data to evaluate the school's performance but do not yet compare students' attainment in external examinations with national or international success data. Student feedback is used very effectively to drive improvement. The school recruit high quality staff and supports them extremely well. All appropriate checks are made on staff to ensure their suitability to work with students under 18. Provision of information is excellent.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to and on arrival is excellent. Students receive detailed information about the school prior to their arrival from the school's website and promotional materials. They are assessed and advised by one of the school's network of educational tour operators or consultants to ensure their suitability for the course.
- 3.2 Tier 4 students complete pre-enrolment assessment tests and are interviewed by a senior member of the team to ensure they are at the correct level. A2 level students who wish to start on a date other than a main starting date or join an examination preparation course mid-term must also complete a pre enrolment test.
- 3.3 On arrival all students have a placement test and an interview with a senior teacher. The school uses these initial assessments extremely effectively. Consequently students are very satisfied with their courses and few students need to change classes.
- 3.4 Students who have any special educational needs are well identified, both prior to and shortly after their arrival. Information about these needs is well communicated to teachers and other staff and the school makes good provision for them during their stay at the school

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.5 Suitability of course provision and the curriculum is excellent. The school has a clear statement of educational purpose, which is clearly reflected in its curriculum planning. Courses offered are in accordance with those detailed on the website and promotional materials.
- 3.6 Courses offered are appropriate for the ages, interests and aspirations of the students. Courses enable all students to make good progress compared with their starting points. Several examination options enable students to gain appropriate, internationally recognised qualifications such as IELTS. Very few students leave their course early.
- 3.7 Students studying on Tier 4 visas follow courses which meet the requirements of the Home Office. These are well suited to their needs, often resulting in very good examination results which lead to higher education opportunities.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.8 The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge and detailed information about their students in order to meet the needs of the vast majority of students extremely well. They give individualised feedback to

students during each activity, which ensures that learning is outstanding in most lessons.

- 3.9 Teachers confidently plan and deliver a wide range of challenging and well-paced activities, which students find stimulating. Students develop highly positive attitudes towards learning and are fully engaged in their activities. Teachers use interesting topics very effectively to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students appreciate the teachers' consistent approach to teaching phonology, so they are not confused by different methods. The majority of teachers use high quality resources and technology effectively to enhance their lessons. Students value opportunities to use computers independently in the multi-media centres.
- 3.10 In a few lessons, teachers do not check students' understanding of vocabulary thoroughly enough before moving on, or do not provide sufficiently differentiated resources. A small minority of teachers talk too much, or spend too much time on one activity. In these lessons students do not make maximum progress in the time available.
- 3.11 Assessment of students' progress is excellent. Teachers set relevant homework tasks regularly, which extend students' learning very well. Homework is marked effectively and teachers' constructive written and verbal comments help students to improve. Students are tested frequently and receive helpful feedback on their progress, advice and guidance during the Friday afternoon meetings with their teacher.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.12 Attainment and progress of students are excellent. The large majority of students' who take IELTS and Cambridge examinations achieve better than the examination board's average expectations.
- 3.13 The very large majority of students on non-examination courses make very good progress from their starting points. In classes observed, an extremely high proportion of students achieved better, or much better, than expected given their prior levels of attainment. The school uses CEFR levels effectively to measure students' progress.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Health safety and security of premises are excellent. Students and staff receive high quality information on health and safety during induction. The school regularly reviews its very effective policies on health and safety and implements them consistently. It takes all necessary measures to reduce risks from fire and other hazards. Staff undertake fire drills and regular checks on equipment diligently. Sufficient staff are trained as fire marshals. Managers carry out detailed risk assessments, including for activities outside of the school. Students report that they feel safe in the school and their accommodation.
- 4.2 Arrangements for first aid are excellent. A suitable number of first aiders and first aid boxes are in place. The policy and procedure for first aid is appropriate and is well communicated to all staff and students. Managers keep meticulous records of any accidents or incidents. Appropriate arrangements for assisting students who are ill or injured.
- 4.3 The school premises are fit for purpose and well maintained. The school maintains the buildings in a clean, tidy and hygienic state and promptly addresses any deficiencies. Classrooms and common areas are comfortable, suitably decorated and furnished. Lighting, ventilation and sound insulation are adequate in all parts of the premises. There are sufficient, hygienic washrooms. The school maintains adequate security arrangements to ensure that students can enter and leave safely, including those with SEND. However due to the nature of the building wheelchair access is not possible.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Arrangements for student registration and attendance recording are excellent. The school keeps highly accurate admission and attendance records. Staff monitor student's attendance carefully and implement very effective procedures for contacting students who fail to attend classes. If a student under 18 is not present, contact is made very promptly to ensure their welfare and safety. Attendance is high.
- 4.5 The school has appropriate procedures to make the required reports should a student studying on a Tier 4 visa fail to meet Home Office requirements.
- 4.6 Fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees are provided for students on the school website and in its terms and conditions.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.7 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Students feel, and inspectors agree, that the school cares for them on a personal level extremely well. All staff members provide effective support and respond quickly if students have any problems.

Comprehensive records are kept of any welfare issues, especially those involving students under 18. Students have an emergency telephone number they can contact 24 hours a day and can see the principal at any time. The school has links with other organisations to provide additional support with personal issues if required.

- 4.8 The school fosters extremely positive relationships between students and staff within an atmosphere of mutual respect. There is a very clear policy on bullying and harassment and incidents of unacceptable behaviour in the school are very few.
- 4.9 Students benefit from a comprehensive and highly effective induction which prepares them well for their studies and life in the UK. They appreciate a varied social programme, which is linked to their academic programme and provides useful opportunities to extend their learning.
- 4.10 The school provides effective advice and guidance to students on their next steps in education or employment. A job club teaches relevant employment skills and assists students whose visa permits them to work in the UK. The school uses an external agency to provide guidance on progression to higher education when required.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.11 Safeguarding is excellent and has a high priority within the school. Managers have developed comprehensive policies and procedures to safeguard students under 18, which are clearly understood by all staff. Managers are proactive in identifying potential risks, such as the use of social media and social activities outside of the school, and take effective steps to keep students safe.
- 4.12 The safeguarding team understand and discharge their responsibilities extremely well. The designated safeguarding lead has useful links with the local safeguarding board and other sources of support and advice. All staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and minimising the risks to students associated with radicalisation and extremism.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.13 Residential accommodation is excellent. Accommodation is well managed and maintained to ensure the safety and welfare of the students. Self-catering premises are appropriately registered with the local authority as houses in multiple occupation (HMO). Students speak well of their accommodation, and in the largest property, appreciate the support of two live-in wardens.
- 4.14 Homestay hosts are recruited and effectively supported so that they contribute positively to the students' language development and experience of life in the UK. All the required DBS checks are made on families who host students under the age of 18. They receive helpful advice and training on safeguarding so that they meet the specific needs of younger students extremely well.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight of the school is excellent. The proprietors are also the principal and director and are fully involved in the day to day running of the school. The partners retain overall responsibility for financial planning and ensure sufficient investment in high quality staff, accommodation and resources.
- 5.2 Communication between the proprietors and senior managers is highly effective. Jointly they review key performance indicators to assess the schools strengths and areas for improvement. The proprietors have ambitious plans and set targets for the future development of the school. They provide and review appropriate policies and procedures to ensure a high standard of education and care for students is maintained in line with the aims and ethos of the school.
- 5.3 The proprietors fully discharge their duty to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students. A safeguarding team, led by the vice principal, ensures that the school's duty to safeguard students under the age of 18 is fulfilled.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. The school's management structure, roles and responsibilities are clear. Staff understand, and are committed to, the school's stated aims and ethos. They implement school policies and procedures diligently and provide a very high standard of care and education to their students.
- 5.5 The school's self-evaluation is accurate and takes into account all areas of its operation. Data is used very effectively to inform self-assessment and the school's quality development plan. However the school does not yet evaluate students' attainment compared to national or international success data in order to drive further improvement.
- 5.6 The school recruits well qualified and experienced staff. Proprietors and managers provide very effective support which is highly valued by the staff. They receive high quality training and professional development that enables them to do their job to an excellent standard.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Quality assurance including student feedback is excellent. The school collects detailed and frequent feedback from students and uses this to make improvements to the curriculum, social programme and accommodation. Feedback from staff, parents and educational tour operators is also collected and used effectively. Students are very satisfied all aspects of their experience at the school and the very large majority would recommend the school to a friend.

- 5.8 Following a recommendation arising from the previous inspection, the school has introduced a more detailed analysis of initial assessment and exit tests to measure students' progress. The school is using this effectively to compare performance year on year. However this is not yet tightly aligned to other quality assurance measures such as lesson observation and appraisal.
- 5.9 Staff value regular appraisal, which they find is a positive and supportive process. Appraisals result in negotiated goals for improvement and suitable training to meet any identified training needs. Regular lesson observations inform the appraisal of teachers. However lesson observations and appraisals do not currently focus on measuring the progress of students in lessons or over time.
- 5.10 A well communicated complaints procedure is highly effective and extremely well implemented. The principal responds promptly and very appropriately to all complaints. Detailed written records of any incident, whether trivial or serious are kept securely. None have remained unresolved.
- 5.11 The school provides a fee protection scheme through English UK.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.12 Staff recruitment and suitability are good. All appropriate checks have been made on staff prior to their appointment to ensure their identity, right to work, qualifications and suitability. Systematic records are kept to ensure that all necessary references and documents have been gathered and verified.
- 5.13 Safer recruitment guidelines are followed and the required DBS checks are made on all staff who have unsupervised access to students under 18.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.14 Provision of information is excellent. The website contains comprehensive, accurate and detailed information about the school and life in Bristol, which is helpful to students and prospective students. Detailed and well organised information was provided to inspectors prior to and during the inspection.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the language school should:

- Use the progress of students as a measure of quality when conducting lesson observations and appraisals
- Evaluate the students attainment in external examinations in comparison to national and international success data

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, teachers and with the proprietors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Angela Moir	Lead Inspector
Mrs Janet Simms	Team Inspector
Mr Harvey O'Leary	Team Inspector